

Additional comments from the Australian Greens

1.1 The Australian Greens would like to acknowledge the committee's ongoing work on this inquiry into aspects of road safety in Australia. The interim report is an excellent summary of issues associated with road safety in Australia, including the social and economic cost of road-related injury and death; the importance of design standards; the impact of new technologies and vehicle design and different considerations affecting road safety in urban, regional and rural areas.

1.2 The Greens support all the recommendations in the interim report.

Safety of cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists

1.3 The Australian Greens endorse recommendation 2 of the interim report relating to safe passing distances between cyclists and motor vehicles; and recommendation 3 recommending that the National Transport Commission re-establish a national consultative committee on motorcycle safety.

1.4 The Australian Greens believe that in the light of the considerable evidence presented to the committee,¹ further recommendations are required to improve the safety of vulnerable road users, particularly pedestrians, cyclists and motorcycle riders.

1.5 We particularly note that the aim of the *National Cycling Strategy 2011–2016* was to double the number of people cycling in Australia by 2016.² Accordingly, the Australian Greens agree with the committee in relation to 'the potential of improved road safety for cyclists to incentivise active transport and better health outcomes, and reduce overall road system congestion'.

1.6 Research is unequivocal that the biggest barrier to people cycling is that they do not feel safe.³ As such it is critical that we improve safety and perception of safety by cyclists if we are to increase the numbers of people riding bikes.

1.7 Unfortunately, far from doubling, the most recent biennial National Cycling Participation Survey found that the cycling participation rate in Australia has dropped in recent years. Cycling was at 18.2 per cent in 2011 and only 17.4 per cent in 2015.⁴

1 Bicycle Transport Alliance, *Submission 20*; Bicycle Network, *Submission 32*; Amy Gillett Foundation, *Submission 35*.

2 Austroads, *National Cycling Participation Survey 2015*, p. 4, www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au/items/AP-C91-15 (accessed 2 May 2016).

3 Dr David Bissell, Australian National University, *Submission 18*, p. 3; Bicycle Network, *Submission 32*, p. 8; Amy Gillett Foundation, *Submission 35*, pp 8–9; Link Place, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

4 Austroads, *National Cycling Participation Survey 2015*, p. 4, www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au/items/AP-C91-15 (accessed 2 May 2016).

1.8 The connection between safety and cycling participation is further underlined by the statistics relating to road deaths. Since the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 was implemented, road deaths have dropped for all categories of road user except bicycle riders.⁵ The Amy Gillett Foundation highlighted that:

There was a 55% increase in the number of bike riders killed in Australia (2012-2013) with an additional 45 losing their lives while riding their bikes in 2014.⁶

1.9 In addition to the human trauma, there is also a large economic cost to the community of road deaths and serious injuries to cyclists. The Amy Gillett Foundation provided estimates that:

...a fatality costs \$2.4 million and a hospitalised injury costs \$214,000. This leads to an economic cost of \$120 million for bike rider fatalities in 2013 (50 bike riders killed) and \$2.04 billion cost of bike rider serious injuries in 2008-09 (latest national figures).⁷

1.10 We note the evidence provided to the committee that road safety for cyclists is not just an issue for major cities.⁸ Victorian evidence provided to the committee shows that cyclists on regional and rural roads account for almost half of bike rider fatalities.⁹

Investing in infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists

1.11 The committee heard evidence of a range of measures and classes of measures that would increase the safety of cyclists.¹⁰ These include road sharing initiatives that either:

- separate the different road user groups using designated spaces; or
- foster awareness and an inclusive, respectful attitude between the groups where road user groups share space.

1.12 The Greens support the contention of Bicycle Network that:

The Australian Government must ensure that infrastructure projects funded through its funding programs demonstrate the consideration of all transport modes – particularly bike riding and walking.¹¹

5 Link Place, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

6 Amy Gillett Foundation, *Submission 35*, p. 1.

7 Amy Gillett Foundation, *Submission 35*, p. 3.

8 Amy Gillett Foundation, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

9 Megan Garrett et al, *Road crashes involving bike riders in Victoria, 2002–2012: an Amy Gillett Foundation report*, September 2015, p. 47, www.amygillett.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Road-crashes-AGF-Report-FINAL-Sept-2015.pdf (accessed 3 May 2016).

10 See, for example, Bicycle Network, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

1.13 It is our view, supported by evidence put to the committee, that infrastructure projects which separate cyclists and pedestrians from other road users have the greatest probability of ensuring safety.¹² Fostering awareness and an inclusive respectful attitude is critically important but achieving such attitudinal change is likely to be slow in having an impact on the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. Significant changes in attitudes and the cultural change required to support these are sadly only most likely to occur only after the number of cyclists has substantially increased.

Recommendation 1

1.14 We recommend that the Australian Government through the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development should allocate dedicated funding to the improvement of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

Reducing speed limits

1.15 The committee noted the evidence received as well as international research that contends that reducing speed limits on local streets and other streets with high numbers of pedestrians and cyclists has great potential to reduce death and injury by pedestrians and cyclists.¹³ The committee heard that:

Besides the 25km/h speed limit in South Australia, other states and territories across Australia have yet to broadly apply world's best practice of 30 km/h speed limits (or less) for roads with high numbers of pedestrian and bike riders and for pedestrian and bike riding priority streets, mainly local streets.¹⁴

Recommendation 2

1.16 We recommend that the Australian Government actively encourage state and territory governments to reduce speed limits to 30 kilometres per hour on local roads and roads with a high volume of pedestrians and cyclists.

Pedestrian safety

1.17 The Pedestrian Council of Australia put forward a range of proposals to increase the safety of pedestrians as road users. These include banning lane filtering

11 Bicycle Network, *Submission 32*, p. 3.

12 Mr Garry Grossbard, Road Trauma Advisory Subcommittee representative, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, *Committee Hansard*, 3 July 2015, p. 37; Mr Matthew Fulton, Chief Executive Officer, WestCycle, *Committee Hansard*, 18 February 2016, p. 1; Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Submission 51*, Attachment 1.

13 See for example University of Adelaide Centre for Automotive Safety Research, *Submission 40*, p. 5; GTA Consultants, *Submission 45*, pp 3–9.

14 Bicycle Network, *Submission 32*, p. 5.

and lane splitting, renaming 'shared zones', a review of illegal parking and the use of modified traffic light timers in Australia.¹⁵

Recommendation 3

1.18 We recommend that the Australian Government review the implementation of measures to improve the safety of pedestrians proposed by the *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020*, informed by current statistics on road death and injury by pedestrians.

Better data on cyclist and pedestrian travel

1.19 The Greens support the views of submitters that better data relating to levels of cycling and walking is needed if we are to take meaningful and evidence based steps towards making bike riding and walking safer.¹⁶ The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development noted in its submission that:

...there is a limited amount of data collection and publication relating to participation rates and the extent to which people choose to cycle to work or study and/or for recreation or exercise.¹⁷

1.20 In order to improve the quality of data on walking and cycling, the Cycling Promotion Fund proposed data collection that incorporates the positive benefits of 'active travel' methods.¹⁸

Recommendation 4

1.21 We recommend that the Australian Government allocate funding to the collection of meaningful national data to enable evidence-based decision making on measures to improve safety and participation rates for walking and cycling.

Senator Janet Rice
Australian Greens Senator for Victoria

15 Pedestrian Council of Australia, *Submission 58*, pp 10, 17 and 18.

16 Bicycle Network, *Submission 32*, p. 9; Amy Gillett Foundation, *Submission 35*, p. 5; Tasmanian Bicycle Council, *Submission 43*, p. 3; Cyclists' Rights Action Group, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

17 Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, *Submission 51*, p. 20.

18 Cycling Promotion Fund, *Submission 60*, p. 5.