

REVIEW OF ROAD SAFETY ISSUES FOR FUTURE INQUIRY

Organisation: Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW)

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13 September 2018

Mr Greg Aplin, MP

Chair

Staysafe (Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)

Parliament House

Macquarie St

Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Aplin,

Submission to Staysafe review of road safety issues for future inquiry

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA NSW) is a not for profit, membership based, professional organisation representing engineers and others involved in the provision of public works and services predominantly in the local government sphere.

We appreciate the invitation to provide this submission to the Staysafe Committee. We would welcome the opportunity to address the Inquiry to provide further details on the issues raised within this submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mick Savage on tel: [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED] in relation to this submission.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Garry Hemsworth
Director IPWEA NSW Board

Mr Mick Savage
Roads & Transport Directorate Manager

Funding local roads to reduce fatalities

Why the issue is important

Road fatalities and injuries in NSW communities could be further reduced if more importance was put on local roads. Local government manages 90% of the public road network which suffers from general deterioration of road surface and varying patterns of use as the population grows. This has resulted in increased volumes of traffic especially in areas where the design is unable to cope. Improving the surface condition by sealing, increasing width and alignment of many local roads, implementing local area traffic management, upgrading dangerous intersections and clear and better signage and delineation, can make a big difference to the safety of the local road network. However, for this to be achieved, it is necessary to have a continuous and sustainable funding source to address these issues.

The 2017 Road Asset Benchmarking Report¹ shows that NSW councils are responsible for managing 165,347 km of regional and local roads. The estimated investment to replace these roads and related infrastructure is \$73.1 billion. The assets are reported as being consumed at an estimated \$943 million per annum.²

The funding shortfall between what is needed and the current expenditure has led to the deteriorating conditions of the local and regional road networks, thus producing a corresponding deterioration in the safety of the network for road users. In fact local councils are reporting \$5.5 billion (8%) of their road assets are in a poor to very poor condition.³

While both the Australian and NSW governments have increased spending on roads in NSW, a sustainable funding model that addresses the growing infrastructure backlog and infrastructure maintenance is necessary to ensure that safer roads are provided for the community.

Why it should be investigated by Staysafe

Available data show that the local road network has a higher percentage of fatalities and injuries compared to state roads in NSW. Road crashes cost the NSW economy a total of \$7.1 billion/annum. The cost of road trauma on local council roads is estimated to be \$5.3 billion, representing 75% of the total cost.⁴

¹ IPWEA (NSW). "Road Asset Benchmarking Project: 2017 Road Management Report", Roads & Transport Directorate, Sydney p.16 available at https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/IPWEA/c7e19de0-08d5-47b7-ac3f-c198b11cd969/UploadedImages/Asset%20Benchmarking%20Project/2017_Road_Management_Report_May_2018.pdf

² Ibid., 17

³ Ibid., 41

⁴ NRMA (2017) The Cost of Crashes – An analysis of lives lost and injuries on NSW roads, May 2017 p.2

Given these, there is a need for long term solutions to address road infrastructure deficits to support communities and ensure road safety on local roads.

How Government Policy and Practice will be improved

State Government has acknowledged that a large proportion of road fatalities occur on roads managed by local government⁵. Thus a thorough investigation into the causes, whether there is a link between road safety and road conditions, will help establish strategies that can help address this growing concern.

How the issue supports the NSW / National Road Safety Strategy

Both the NSW and the National Road Safety Strategy aim for zero deaths from road crashes⁶. Thus, inquiring into the road safety aspects of local government roads and understanding why road crashes predominantly occur on local roads is in line with achieving the objectives of the NSW/National Road Safety Strategy.

Benefits to the Community

Establishing the link between road safety and road conditions can justify the need for a sustainable funding model that addresses the growing infrastructure backlog and infrastructure maintenance. Ultimately, this would ensure that safer roads are provided for the community.

⁵ NSW Road Safety Plan 2021

⁶ <https://towardszero.nsw.gov.au/>