

REVIEW OF ROAD SAFETY ISSUES FOR FUTURE INQUIRY

Organisation: COTA NSW

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To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to propose a future inquiry with a dual focus on the issues of older driver and pedestrian safety. To date, the Road Safety Committee has not conducted an inquiry that specifically related to the experiences of older pedestrians and drivers. It is well known that our population is ageing (it is estimated that from 2021 to 2031 there will be a 45% increase in people aged 75 to 84 for example) COTA NSW asserts that it is an opportune time to examine the road safety issues related to this age cohort.

Pedestrian safety for older people is an area that warrants further attention. The *Pedestrian Trauma Trends* report published by Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety highlighted that the largest proportional increase in pedestrian fatalities by age and gender over a period of five years were females aged 70 or older – with an annual average of 5.3 in 2008-10 increasing to 10.3 in 2014-16. Additionally, this age cohort was also the highest percentage of female pedestrian fatalities by age.

The vulnerability of older pedestrians is increased by factors such as visual acuity, physical frailty and reduced mobility. Older people tell us that the length of time to cross at signalised pedestrian crossings, vehicle speed and adequacy of the footpath network are some of the factors that prevent them from getting around their communities.

Access to a driver's licence has notable benefits to older peoples' quality of life and their ability to remain connected to their communities - particularly in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW. COTA NSW supports the right of older people to remain independent through retention of licences but contends that the development of strategies and interventions to reduce fatalities and injuries in this age group is needed.

The *Older driver trauma trends – Report (February 2017)* published by Centre for Road Safety outlines some key trends to consider. Although the number of people aged 60 and over (the definition of an older driver as specified by the Centre) involved in fatal and serious injury crashes is small relative to younger age groups, as a percentage of all licenced drivers it is proportionally higher. For example, 6.55 drivers per 10,000 licences aged 60 and over were involved in fatal crashes, this compares to 3.67 per 10,000 licences aged 34 and younger. The data also indicates that the trend is increasing for older drivers as a percentage of all drivers to be involved in fatal and serious crashes from the period 2008 to 2016. The trends evident in this data necessitate further discussion and inquiry to support the development of strategies to address these concerning statistics.

A key objective of the NSW Ageing Strategy is that 'Older people in NSW travel safely and appropriately to participate in social and economic life and access services'. An inquiry into older people and road safety by the Road Safety committee would be an important commitment in supporting this objective to be realised.

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