

**Submission  
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## **REDUCING TRAUMA ON LOCAL ROADS IN NSW**

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## **Reducing trauma on local roads in NSW**

### **Submission to NSW Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety**

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#### **NSW Local Roads-Definition**

The management of the road network in NSW is shared between the State Government through Roads and Maritime Services and Local Government through local councils. Administrative classification of NSW roads provides for three categories: State, Regional and Local roads (NSW Road and Maritime Services, 2019).

**State roads:** are the major arterial links throughout the state and within major urban areas. They are largely managed by the state government with funding contribution from the federal government.

**Regional roads:** are of secondary importance between state roads and local roads. Together with the state roads, regional roads provide the main connections to and between smaller towns and districts and perform a sub arterial functions in major urban areas. They are largely under the responsibility of councils and are capitalised as a council asset but are eligible for annual assistance grants from the State Government in recognition of their relative importance.

**Local Roads:** comprise the remaining council-controlled roads which provide for local circulation and access. The State Government provides only limited assistance under special programs. Federal Government also provide financial assistance under special programs such as “Black Spot” and “Roads to Recovery”. Local roads make up approximately 80% of the 185000 km long NSW road network (table 1).

**Table 1 Type of Local roads managed by local councils in NSW (Office of Local Government, 2019).**

<b>Local road type</b>	<b>Distance (km)</b>
Urban Network	33,622.6
Non-Urban Sealed Network	35,000.8
Non-Urban Unsealed Network	78,376.0
<b>Total Local Road Network</b>	<b>146,999.4</b>

## Local roads and road trauma

While crash reports routinely published by Transport for NSW do not provide specific breakdown by administrative road type, data obtained and published by the NRMA showed that over the period 2013-17, the Regional and Local roads network accounted for 68.9% of all fatalities and 77.6% of all injuries ( table 2).

**Table 2 Proportion of different type of crashes for each road type, NSW 2013-2017 (NRMA, 2019).**

Road type	Fatalities	Serious Injuries	Moderate Injuries	Minor Injuries	Total Injuries
Freeways/Motorways	2.1%	3.5%	3.1%	4.5%	3.6%
State Roads	28.9%	17.6%	19.5%	18.2%	18.7%
Regional Roads	33.3%	34.6%	34.4%	37.9%	35.5%
Local Roads	35.6%	44.3%	43%	39.4%	42.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Using the NRMA Cost of Crashes methodology (NRMA, 2017), the annual average cost of lives lost and injuries in NSW totalled \$5.4 billion for the same period 2013-2017. The cost of road trauma on roads managed by local governments equates to approximately 3.9 billion (\$1.8 billion for regional roads and \$2.1 billion for local roads).

## Local road safety

Road safety on local roads is currently supported through a combination of state and federal governments initiatives. The Federal government’s “Local and State Government Road Safety Package” focuses on improving local roads and allows local governments to invest in the safety and quality of local roads, especially on local country roads where there is a disproportionate number of death and serious injury related crashes (DITCRD, 2019).

Programs under the package include “Roads to Recovery”, “Black Spot” and “Bridges Renewal Program”. While the Black Spot program is funded through the assessment of submitted applications, Road to recovery supports the maintenance of the nation's local road infrastructure by directing funding to local councils according to a formula based on population and road length set by the Local Government Grants Commissions in each state and the Northern Territory.

However, there has been calls from various local governments in NSW and elsewhere in Australia for the need to make the application process to federal road safety programs, such



Other suggestions to deal with issue include the provision of a small portion of fuel excise (2-5 cpl) to local councils to assist with maintenance of local roads and the acceleration of the federal government programs, such as road to recovery, by linking finding directly to road backlog estimates as compiled by councils (NRMA, 2019). In general, there is a need for an investigation into various aspects of the relationship between local councils, state and federal governments in the area of road safety and how various levels of government can work together effectively to deliver safer local roads.

Federal and state governments support for road safety on local roads is largely geared towards infrastructure and particularly building and maintaining roads for motor vehicles. It has been established that an increase in the capacity of roads for motor vehicles can induce demand, lead to more traffic, congestion and poor road safety outcomes (Lee et al, 1999; Gilles & Turner, 2011).

Building and maintaining facilities that encourages active transport, cycling and walking, on local roads receive a very small fraction of overall transport infrastructure funding in Australia, including in NSW. The United Nations has recommended that governments dedicate 20% of transport funding to non-motorised or active transport (UN Environment, 2016). With the exception of ACT, the only place that has gone a long way in achieving the UN Target (14% of road infrastructure dedicated to cycling facilities), most states devote less than 2% of their transport budget to cycling and walking (Pojani et al, 2018). Figures at the local government level are difficult to obtain but there are positive signs in large local city centres such as Sydney and Melbourne where an increasingly large proportion of their transport budget in devoted to active transport (Pojani et al, 2018). This needs to be adopted across the state of NSW and the rest of the country in order to further improve safety on local roads.

Other measures that can be implemented on local roads in order to promote active transport include the lowering of speed limits, particularly in residential areas, in addition to the introduction of congestion fees or taxes and a reduction in the availability of parking spaces and/or an increase in parking costs.

Policies that aim at reducing speed levels on urban roads where vehicles meet vulnerable road users, have been shown to significantly reduce the risk of road crashes for all road users with marginal impact on traffic flow as long as adequate changes to road design and traffic calming measures are implemented (Jones & Brunt, 2017; Turner et al, 2017; Archer et al, 2008). For instance, a Swedish study has found that a reduction of speed limits on local roads from 50km/h to 40 km/h can reduce the number of crashes resulting in serious injury by up to 11% and that road geometric characteristics have a much a larger impact on traffic flow than changes in speed limits (Silvano & Bang, 2016).

The current practice of setting speed limits according to the 85th percentile free-flow speeds, without consideration of other road characteristics also needs to be revisited. Alternative speed limit-setting methods in urban areas that allow engineers and planners to

account for other road characteristics such as intersection spacing, number of adjacent driveways and the level of pedestrian and bicyclist traffic need to be implemented to support local communities looking to lower speed limits and improve road safety on local roads (Hu & Cicchino, 2019)

Countries, such as Sweden and Norway, that have adopted policies that promote active transport on local roads, including the provision of adequate infrastructure and the lowering of speed limits on local roads, are leading globally in road safety for all road users (International Transport Forum, 2019). Over the period 2010-2017, Norway managed to reduce their road toll by nearly 60 per cent compared to nearly 10 per cent reduction in Australian. Following their lead will not only result in road safety gains, but also to reduced congestion, increased productivity and improved environment.

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