

**Submission  
No 17**

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

**Organisation:** Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW

**Date Received:** 3 February 2020

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

## **Submission to Staysafe (Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)**

**February 2020**

Prepared by: Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations  
of New South Wales

**FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

Locked Bag 5114, PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Telephone: 1300 885 982

Fax: 1800 655 866

Website: [www.pandc.org.au](http://www.pandc.org.au)

ABN: 37 439 975 796

## Introduction

Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales (P&C Federation) is thankful to the Staysafe Committee for this opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into reducing trauma on local roads in NSW. P&C Federation supports the position of individual educational and developmental needs met by a range of differential services expressed through appropriate and well-planned curricula, programs and environments conducted by sensitive and well-trained personnel in conjunction with parents<sup>1</sup> and families.

The core belief of P&C Federation is that the education of our children and youth is the most fundamental means of ensuring individual and collective success and, as a result, our greatest national resource. We also support the concept that it is primarily the responsibility of governments to ensure education is well rounded and fully funded. Our submission is focussed on local road safety as it relates to public schools.

### Submission

There are at least four road safety issues that are important for students:

#### School drop off and pick up zones

We have been alerted by numerous members to either the absence of school drop off and pick up zones, or to existing zones having inadequate safety protections for students, or to principals closing off access to carparks that provide the only safe space for dropping students due to the school being located on busy main roads that have high levels of heavy vehicle traffic. Some zones require urgent repairs and maintenance, which local councils may be excessively slow in implementing.

In 2011, P&C Federation gave evidence to the Staysafe Committee for its Inquiry into School Zone Safety, in which we noted a common problem: *“you have three car spaces and you have 400 students and three car spaces for kiss and drop, how does that work?”*<sup>2</sup> This is still a commonly seen problem.

#### School parking

Some school drop off and pick up zones are also plagued by illegal parking, due to a lack of available parking elsewhere. This can exacerbate the chaotic traffic conditions around schools during drop off and pick up times, and endanger pedestrian students who must navigate hazardous traffic conditions, due to their parents being forced to park a further distance from the school gate.

In our 2011 submission to the Staysafe Committee for its Inquiry into School Zone Safety, P&C Federation described the experiences of NSW public schools around parking, such as councils creating no parking zones on school streets during school zone hours, which means parents cannot walk with their child to the school, and schools with rapidly growing student numbers increasing safety risks. We noted that *“the main characteristic seems to be that there is lack of consultation or when consultation*

---

<sup>1</sup> “Parent” refers to anyone with legal care of a child, such as a parent, carer or legal guardian

<sup>2</sup> Inquiry into School Zone Safety. Transcript of Evidence. 16 November 2011, p.32

*occurs there is little notice given to the actual needs of the school community.*"<sup>3</sup> We see little sign that this general pattern has changed.

### **Pedestrian crossings**

There is much anecdotal evidence spanning many years that unsafe crossing is a common problem for school communities. We noted to the Staysafe Committee in 2011 that numerous schools lack suitable pedestrian crossings, and that students are forced to cross busy roads dodging traffic. More recently, we were aware of schools in which traffic wardens operate on only one side of busy roads, and this school has struggled for the local council to address this.

A case that was recently raised in the NSW Legislative Assembly involves Canowindra Public School. Each year there are numerous cases of students narrowly avoiding being struck by passing vehicles as they attempt to cross the road on which the school entrance is located. The school and P&C Association have spent thirteen years advising the State and local governments of these incidents and lobbying for safety measures, however there has been disagreement between the State and local governments over who has responsibility. The school's call for a zebra crossing on the designated crossing point has been rejected by Traffic for New South Wales (TfNSW), on the (in our view) weak grounds that "*motorists may become accustomed to not seeing pedestrians and fail to take due care*" and that "*pedestrians may become overconfident and step out onto a zebra crossing without checking to make sure vehicles will stop*". On 14 November 2019, a motion in the NSW Legislative Assembly calling on the Government to install a supervised zebra crossing on this street was not successful, meaning that as of writing, the lives of students in Canowindra Public School are still endangered by government inaction.<sup>4</sup>

We assume the community of Canowindra Public School is not the only one which has had such experiences.

### **Speeding in school zones**

Some school zones are very close to roads with a 100km/h speed limit, and P&C Associations at these schools inform us that this makes it difficult for vehicles to slow down quickly enough, and speeding near the school is therefore common. Other issues include a lack of fixed speed cameras in many school zones, which makes enforcement of school zone speed limits more difficult. TfNSW states only that the criteria for fixed speed camera installation is based on "*crash speeds and travelling rates.*"<sup>5</sup> More detail was given in the 2011 inquiry into school zone safety, in which a representative of TfNSW gave the following criteria for installing fixed speed cameras in school zones:

*A single "length" of road is selected which includes a school zone. This "length" achieves maximum road safety benefit from the installation of the camera around the school. That "length" must also meet the following: the number of crashes along the selected road within*

---

<sup>3</sup> Inquiry into School Zone Safety. Submission no.7, p.5

<sup>4</sup> New South Wales, Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings No. 36, 14 November 2019, pp.25-31

<sup>5</sup> Transport for NSW, Fixed Speed Cameras <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roads/safety-rules/speeding-camera-enforcement/fixed-cameras.html> (accessed 19/12/2019)

*the school zone must exceed 10 crashes for a three-year period and include at least one crash in school zone times. The annual average daily traffic volume must exceed 10,000<sup>6</sup>*

This is unnecessarily restrictive. It is unclear what constitutes a 'crash' (i.e. if a vehicle dinging another would qualify), and the annual daily traffic volume average of 10,000 is excessively high. TfNSW has previously reported that within five years after fixed speed cameras are installed, 36 lives and 549 injuries are saved in those locations.<sup>7</sup> We consider it imperative that school zones be prioritised for such life-saving technology. The Final Report of the Inquiry into School Zone Safety did not recommend changing this criteria, and it is unclear to us if this is still the selection criteria for installing fixed speed cameras in school zones.

## **Recommendations**

### **P&C Association representation on committees relating to roads or traffic near the P&C Association's school**

In the four areas described above, there are several common patterns in the above matters:

1. The evidence is largely anecdotal, however the similarity of cases across many years and jurisdictions in NSW indicates the problems are common.
2. Governments, whether local or State, are often very slow to respond to community needs.

There are some blanket policies the NSW Government should implement or investigate, including:

- Speed zones in or next to a school zone must only be 50km/h, to allow for safe slowing down. Alternatively, where a speed zone near a school zone are over 50km/h, there must be signs within at least 100m before a school zone warning that a school zone is ahead.
- The criteria for installing fixed speed cameras in school zones must prioritise the safety of school children. If the selection criteria for these cameras in school zones remains the same today as was reported in 2011, this must be amended.

Generally, however, matters relating to school road safety are inherently local, so a one-size-fits-all solution that addresses all, or even most, problems is not feasible. One of the most effective steps the NSW Government can take is to ensure that local school parents have as much say as possible in these matters.

A viable way of achieving this is to require parent representation on the Local Traffic Committee (LTC) of each local government area, where a matter involves roads or traffic near a school. While the most relevant legislation, the *Roads Act 1993*, does not require community consultation on anything except for a small number of specific matters, TfNSW's policy requires LTCs in every local government area to advise local councils on matters involving roads or traffic. Although councils are not bound by advice given by LTCs, they must inform TfNSW if they wish to act contrary to advice of the LTC.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Inquiry into School Zone Safety. Transcript of Evidence. 16 November 2011, p.16

<sup>7</sup> Transport for NSW. 2012. *A way forward for speed cameras in NSW – The NSW Speed Camera Strategy*, p.11

<sup>8</sup> Transport for NSW. Traffic committees <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/about/what-we-do/committees/traffic-committees.html> (accessed 19/12/2019)

LTCs are comprised of four members with one vote each: a representative from council, from the Police, from TfNSW and the Local State Member of Parliament or their nominee. It would be a sound and viable step to amend the policy to require a parent representative on LTCs for any road or traffic matter that impacts schools.

This would be a commendable recognition that the people with the most knowledge of and the most at stake in matters relating to school road safety are the students and their families who use these roads. Arguably more than most stakeholders, school parents can be counted on to be motivated first and foremost by a desire to protect students' lives, and to not block or delay measures that protect students' lives for bureaucratic reasons or because of preconceived notions.

We therefore strongly recommend the following:

- for any road or traffic matter that would impact a school, the LTC must include representation from that school's parent body. For a government school, this would be taken to mean the school's P&C Association;
- the regulations must explicitly make clear that no decisions regarding traffic or roads shall occur unless the LTC includes representation from a parent of any school affected;
- the criteria for whether a road or traffic matter would require a parent representative on the LTC should include (though not necessarily be limited to) whether the matter affects traffic in school zones or any roads directly adjacent to school zones;
- policies should also be implemented to prevent governments from rejecting decisions of LTCs for reasons that do not prioritise the safety of students.

A broadly similar recommendation was made to this Committee in 2011 by the then Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW, now Catholic Schools NSW), in their submission to the Inquiry into School Zone Safety. They recommended that 'Regional School Zone Advisory Committees' be established which would comprise key stakeholders, including school parent associations, for road matters in school zones.<sup>9</sup> In a public hearing of this inquiry, a TfNSW representative considered such committees unnecessary, as they "*would just be another layer of bureaucracy*" and the current LTCs already have "*all the key players involved.*"<sup>10</sup> When this was put to CECNSW in this hearing, CECNSW representatives stated that their proposed committees "*need not necessarily be a new committee but an enhancement of (existing) committees.*"<sup>11</sup> This is consistent with our recommendation, though the Staysafe Committee at the time apparently rejected the idea, as it appears nowhere in that inquiry's final report.

We believe this is an opportune time for the Staysafe Committee to reconsider this idea. Contrary to the statements of TfNSW, we do not believe inclusion of a parent representative on LTCs for some matters would constitute another layer of bureaucracy, and we do not consider current LTCs to involve all key players if there is no school parent voice for matters affecting schools.

---

<sup>9</sup> Inquiry into School Zone Safety. Submission no.22, p.4

<sup>10</sup> Inquiry into School Zone Safety. Transcript of Evidence. 16 November 2011, p.18

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.24