

**Submission
No 26**

REDUCING TRAUMA ON LOCAL ROADS IN NSW

Organisation: Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Snowy Valleys Council
and NSW Police: Snowy Valleys Sector

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Joint Submission

STAYSAFE COMMITTEE

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council,

Snowy Valleys Council and

NSW Police: Snowy Valleys Sector

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Foreword from Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Mayor Abb McAlister

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council takes the safety of all residents and visitors on our roads seriously. We are all impacted in some way when a tragedy occurs within our region. Whether it's directly on family and friends or the impact on our emergency service personnel, the trauma is real and long lasting.

As a Council we are committed to improving road safety. Too many people lose their lives or are hurt as a result of road crashes occurring within our region.

We are aware that our region is 5 times the rate for fatalities. Our challenge is to reduce the fatality and injury rate in our region. Most crashes occur due to speed, fatigue and drink driving. As a community we are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring road users are educated, informed and have the resources to reach their destinations safely.

Our Council actively engages in road safety initiatives offered by Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW), and other groups. We employ a road safety officer, who is very active in the community. Our traffic committee meet regularly and report back to Council on issues that may affect the safety of road users and community members. Examples of the Council's commitment to road safety include the introduction of a 40KM/H High Pedestrian Area (HPA) in Gundagai's main street (Sheridan Street), partnering with the SARAH Group and the Little Blue Dinosaur Foundation, promoting each groups individual road safety initiatives and educational programmes and actively promoting the What's Your Plan B? Anti-Drink Driving campaigns at Easter and Christmas holiday seasons.

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council is pleased to be part of this submission to the Stay Safe Committee.

Mayor Abb McAlister, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council

Foreword from Snowy Valley Council Mayor Mayor James Hayes

The Snowy Valleys Council LGA covers distances over remote mountainous terrain and highly populated forestry areas providing some unique challenges for road safety.

Our region is popular for tourists and holiday makers in all seasons, as well as extremely large numbers of motorcyclists, heavy logging vehicles and local traffic. Mountainous, narrow roads, wildlife and weather conditions such as black ice, snow, and rain make our roads a recipe for disaster, especially when speed is involved.

Council maintains an ongoing roads maintenance and improvement program as per our business as usual operations and we are working in partnership with Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council sharing a Road Safety Officer.

We know that speed is a factor in local crashes at six times the state average, and additionally trauma assistance takes longer due to remoteness and communication challenges.

2019 was the highest year of trauma on our roads for many years and there is definitely more that can be done in the area of Road Safety to reduce this impact.

Mayor James Hayes OAM , Snowy Valleys Council

Background Information of Roads in the Local Government Areas

The Snowy Valleys and Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Councils are situated on the foothills of the Snowy Mountains, approximately 400 kilometres south west of Sydney, cover an area over 20,000 square kilometres and have a combined population of approximately 25,000 residents. The key industries of the area are forestry and associated industries, traditional agriculture, horticulture, retail, government services and tourism.

The two councils road network include the Transport for NSW managed Hume Highway, Olympic Highway, Burley Griffin Way and Snowy Mountains Highway plus numerous other main roads. The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council manages local roads comprising of 710km of sealed roads and 606km of unsealed roads while the Snowy Valleys Council manages 1026 km of the roads.

The managers and owners of the roads within the local government areas include the Transport for NSW, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, Snowy Valleys Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Forestry Corporation of NSW, Snowy Hydro Limited and private road owners who include Visy Australia and Tegra.

Information about Roads and Road Users Within the Council

The primary sources of data using roads within the two councils are road counters that are installed by council employees and the Transport for NSW website tool Traffic Volume Viewer. The volumes and proportion of road users obviously are factors in the safety of roads.

Road usage volumes range within Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council between the Auslink National Network Hume Highway with an annual average daily traffic count of 11021 vehicles to local roads such as Frampton road where it intersects the Olympic Highway that has only an annual average daily traffic count of 31 vehicles. Road usage and proportions can be seasonal on some roads such the Snowy Valleys Council's Tooma Road when in the month August 2019 there were 5067 vehicles recorded with the traffic counter with 113 (2% of total volume) of the vehicles being motorbikes compared with the month of April 2019 when 8550 vehicles were recorded at the counter and 2489 of them (29% of total volume) were motorbikes.

Information about road users can also be gleaned by the public's comments, requests and complaints made directly to the council or letters to the four local newspapers or posts on the numerous social media platforms. Community presentations including the NSW Police community updates, council information sessions and the road safety presentations are a forum for the audience to express opinions, make observations, share anecdotes and ask questions about roads and such interactions influence the selections for road safety initiatives.

Applications for Heavy Vehicle permits through the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator provide a snap shot of the industrial traffic is operating on the locally managed roads and reveal how the industry interact with other road users.

Surveys of road users have been utilised in the past with the most significant survey being the research report prepared for The Snowy Region Motorcycle Safety Group in December 2005 when 211 motorcyclists were questioned regarding their experience, types of riding, fatigue, speed and exposure to crashes. There are plans

to conduct another survey of motorcyclists in the next few years in order to make a more accurate profile of road users.

Historically there were road safety initiatives in collaboration between Forestry Corporation, councils and media regarding the movements of heavy vehicles however these initiatives have not been continued in the last few years. Surveys and reports were prepared and acted upon however these have not been accessed since the amalgamation of the councils.

There have been plans over the years to investigate the characteristics RV operators (caravans and speed boat owners) however formal investigation conclusions have not been published.

A surprisingly useful source of information about road usage are the entry forms to the “What’s Your Plan B: Win a Swag” promotion where the patron’s frustration of finding safe travel home from remote destinations in the late weekend evenings is plainly evident.

Further sources of information regarding road users are available but have not been accessed by the councils road safety officers. These sources include NSW Police records including Mobile Speed Camera reports, collaboration with other road managers including Forestry Corporation of NSW and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, professional driver groups including taxi drivers, school bus operators and heavy vehicle operators, interaction with enthusiast clubs, and negotiation with industry groups especially the Softwood Working Group.

Information Regarding Road Safety in the two Councils

Road crash reports are developed from the statistics that are collated within the Transport for NSW from information generated by the reports NSW report from crash sites that they attend. Further information regarding road safety may in future possibly be sourced from collaborations with NSW Health regarding hospital admission, NSW Ambulance, insurance companies, industry bodies, State Emergency Services and auto repairers.

The Role of Local Communities and Partnerships in Promoting Road Safety Initiatives

The Role of the State Government in promoting road safety is appreciated and acknowledged however is beyond the scope of this submission. Transport for NSW is a valuable source of bipartisan road safety campaigns and the resources and support in promoting from South West Regional Office in Wagga is to be truly appreciated and is highly commended.

Transport for NSW promotes and resources local councils to adopt the Safe Systems approach to Road Safety within the Towards Zero campaign.

NSW Police Riverina District

NSW Police are proactive in promoting road safety by using a wide range of strategies including enforcement, visible presence, community engagements and presentations, high print media presence and frequent radio sessions. NSW Police follow a full calendar of operations targeting specific causes of road trauma. Police officers

continue to be proactive in forging strong community links and take the initiative in creating partnerships with other community groups.

Community Strategic Plans

The two councils' Community Strategic Plans highlight the need for safe and accessible local roads, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has this as objective 3.2d as a component of objective 3.2 "part of our built environments support and enhance liveability" and the Snowy Valleys Council prioritizes "ensuring the safety of drivers" (p15 Brungle) and has the supporting strategy 5.1 "provide a program to improve local roads" and strategy 5.3 "provide and partner with other agencies to deliver an effective, safe, local transport network" as part of the councils theme 5 to "Continually improve our local infrastructure".

Some of the councillors are appointed to be involved in road safety initiatives and are active proponents within the Local Traffic Committees and formulating the Local Government Road Safety Plans.

The role of council directors and managers is to delegate and support the role of the road safety officer and to promote the road safety campaigns to the councillors. The NSW Government's Towards Zero campaign and component Road Safety Plan 2021 have been integral to the local council management, support and implementation of road safety initiatives. Support and delegation from councillors, directors and managers includes attending, contributing and co-ordinating Local Traffic Committees, attending and contributing to Steering Committees for the role of Road Safety Officer, authorizing the purchase of resources and membership of professional organizations, collaboration with road safety projects and general encouragement of staff affiliated with road safety. The executive of council authorize policies that incorporate the safe use of roads by employees.

Local Government Policies

The local government councils expect safe driving from their employees as described for example in the Snowy Valleys Council Use of Council Vehicle Procedure 2018 part 6.1.4

"Drivers of Council vehicles are expected to adopt conservative and safe driving techniques at all times".

Details of safe driving techniques and road safety campaigns are shared at staff meeting, both 'toolbox' meetings and 'staff morning teas'. These toolbox meetings allow managers, Road Safety Officers, asset engineers and road crew to interact and share ideas pertaining to road safety.

Council Engineers are an integral to the Safe Systems approach to road safety and actively investigate engineering designs that makes roads safer. The Black Spot and Making Country Roads Safer programs require engineering staff to identify and describe frequent and problematic crash sites on roads, investigate and propose designs for funding applications that will eventually become part of the work plans.

Further Partnerships

NSW Health:

Murrumbidgee Local Health District partnerships with the Road Safety Officer are within the fields of the Physiotherapy team and Community Support as part of their “Stepping Out” program that aims to keep older residents as members of the community.

Schools:

Schools are an active part of the Road Safety promotion and the NSW Department of Education has a dedicated Road Safety Officer. Local schools have been the venues for Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers campaigns, driver training with Rotary and hosted several joint road safety presentations between the NSW Police and the council’s road safety officer.

Liquor accords and licensees:

Liquor accords and individual licensed venues have actively promoted the “If you are Drinking Don’t Drive” message of the council and Transport for NSW. Eighteen venues, with a focus of the venues in remote settings, have been conducting the What’s Your Plan B: Win a Swag promotion during the early Christmas season. Degrees of the participation in the promotion ranges from using “What’s Your Plan?” beer coasters at venues to be involved in the actual swag promotion right through to displaying 5m by 1m banners in front of venues.

The entry forms to this promotion have been a rich source of information about how road users meet the challenges of travelling home if they have been drinking alcohol. There have been a surprisingly high number of entries to this promotion and a report collating the participation of participating venues patrons is being prepared.

Industry groups

Industry groups such as the Softwood Handling Groups have road safety initiatives including the publication of safe handling and loading of heavy vehicles within the timber industry. The group meets regularly and road safety is a significant part of these discussions.

Motorcycle Council of NSW

Consultations with the Motorcycle Council of NSW have revealed that a group Snowy Mountains Rider Safety Group existed but has ceased to meet in the last few years. This group met regularly and discussed researched formulated plans and put into practice road safety initiatives. A report into the group’s effectiveness concluded that

“Whilst we are not able to attribute this reduction in crashes solely to the introduction of the Snowy Region Motorcycle Safety Group in September of 2002 and the implementation of their safety strategies it is interesting nonetheless to note, that from the period of the first Action Plan being implemented, motorcycle crashes have trended downwards.” Ref: Mircromex 2005 p12

There are plans to resurrect the Snowy Mountains Rider Safety Group in 2020.

SARAH Group (Safer Australian Roads and Highways)

The organization has partnered with Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council in promoting safer driving within the council through workshops, media releases, events and the distribution of resources notably the yellow ribbon car and truck stickers that promote safer driving.

Little Blue Dinosaur

This organization has partnered with Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council in promoting safer supervision of children on roads around playgrounds and other zones where there is a significant number of children through signage, banners, events and media events.

Other Community Groups

Valmar Support Services, Intereach Community Hubs, University of the 3rd Age are community groups that provide services to the population that are “at risk”. These support groups have conducted road safety presentations and resources in partnership with the councils Road Safety Officer.

Service Clubs

The service clubs are active in promoting road safety whether it is Lions with the sponsorship of Driver Reviver sites and co-ordinating with NSW Police Highway patrol to have displays at community markets or Rotary with the provision of their driver simulators at secondary schools and TAFEs and contributions of appropriate learner driver students to advanced driver training.

The Causes of Crashes and Corresponding Road Safety Initiatives

General crash information

All information in this section is from Crash Reports 2014 to 2018 that are distributed by Transport for NSW and are derived from NSW Police reports.

In the five year period from 2014 to 2018 there were 29 fatalities and 420 injuries recorded across the two council areas on all roads. Of these statistics, 16 fatalities and 155 injuries occurred on the local roads and 19 of the fatalities and 217 injuries occurred to the residents of the councils. These statistics emphasise the responsibility of local areas in promoting road safety to their residents.

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Population (2016 census)</i>	<i>Crashes (2014-2018)</i>	<i>Crash per capita</i>	<i>Fatalities (2014-2018)</i>	<i>Fatalities per capita</i>
NSW	7480228	135651	0.0181	1644	0.00022
CGRC	11141	307	0.0276	13	0.00117
SVC	14395	382	0.0265	16	0.00111

When measured per capita, fatal crash rates per resident capita are 500% above the state rate while crashes are approximately 50% above the state rate. Crashes are more likely to occur than the expected frequency and when they do they are significantly more likely to result in fatalities. There is a justification for Local Governments and other community groups to be involved in road safety in local contexts.

The biggest proportions of crashes in the councils are single vehicle incidents with 217 single vehicle crashes out of the total 307 crashes (70.7%) occurring in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, 276 single vehicle crashes out of the total 382 crashes (72.3%) in Snowy Valleys Council while the rest of NSW is 34929 out of 125651 (27.8%).

Where crashes occur is idiosyncratic of the two LGAs with a high proportion of single vehicle accidents occurring on curves and straights. In the CGRC 36.1% and in SVC 44.5% of crashes occur on curves compared to the state average of 11.5%. In the CGRC 28.7% and in the SVC 18.6% of single vehicle crashes occur on straight roads compared to the state average of 16%. The crashes are seasonal in nature especially for the Snowy Valleys Council with a significant increase in crash rates occurring from October from the low incident months of April till September. Delivery of road safety initiatives are timed to match this seasonal nature of the crashes.

Speeding

Speeding is the key factor in 109 out of 307 (34.8%) crashes in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and 173 out of 382 (45.3%) crashes in the Snowy Valleys Council. The state average is 22139 crashes out of 135651 (16.3%). Therefore speeding is a factor in the crashes within the councils at either two or three times the state average.

Crashes are more likely to occur on 100km/hr roads in the council compared to the state average.

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>All Roads</i>	<i>All 100+ km/hr roads</i>	<i>Unclassified 100+ km/hr</i>
All NSW	135651	18912 (13.9%)	4398 (3.2%)
CGRC	307	224 (73.0%)	40 (13.0%)
SVC	382	223 (58.4%)	88 (23.0%)

Crashes in the two Local Government Areas four to six times more likely to occur on roads zoned for 100 km/hr or faster than the state average. The Hume Highway carries the bulk of the traffic in the councils with an Average Daily Traffic count of 11021 vehicles compared to the population of the Cootamundra-Gundagai council that it crosses of 11141, therefore this route must be considered when determining initiatives that target speeding.

Road Safety Initiatives

- TfNSW uses both permanent and mobile VMS boards to display road safety messages on the Hume Highway.
- NSW Police use of radar and an enhanced presence on the roads especially the Hume Highway.
- Operation Chrome focusses on road trauma on local roads and is conducted by local general duties police with some input. Results are broadcast on local radio.

- The use of Mobile Speed Cameras at audited sites.
- The collaboration between the councils in collecting speed data from traffic counters provides NSW Police information on where and importantly when to place RADAR.
- Promotion banners sourced from Transport for NSW that target speeding with the display of “Stop It or Cop It” and “Speeding Nah” messaging. These sites of these banners are negotiated with residents and community groups, data from traffic counters and site availability.
- Council Road Safety Officer presentations to work sites on speeding, these presentations usually done through toolbox meetings and staff morning teas.
- School road safety presentations in partnership with NSW Police that include the ‘nudge’ strategy of encouraging children to spread the dangers of speeding to their families.
- Radio slots with NSW Police that encourage conservative driving habits.
- Consultations and surveys with Road user groups including motorcycle riders and heavy vehicle operators.
- Councils post appropriate messages sourced from Transport of NSW on Social Media.

Fatigue

Fatigue is the key factor in 54 out of 307 (17.5%) crashes in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and 38 out of 382 (9.9%) crashes in the Snowy Valleys Council. The state average is 10349 crashes out of 135651 (7.6%). Therefore fatigue is a factor in the crashes within the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council at rates double the state average.

Road Safety Initiatives

- NSW Police conduct operations promoting and themed Safe Arrivals to coincide with the beginning of holiday periods followed by operations promoting and themed Safe Return for the end of holidays. These operations are heavily promoted on local radio stations.
- Provision and upkeep of clean rest areas and parks with suitable signage.
- Provision of rest areas suitable for Heavy Transport operators.
- 65 + presentations with Valmar, NSW Health, Service Clubs, each presentation empathizes the need for these audiences to take breaks for fatigue and to be aware of impact that poor health can have on driver fatigue.
- Two new Driver Reviver sites have been negotiated, these sites offer free drinks, particularly coffee, to road users. There are often “home-style” snacks that can be purchased at the venues.
- Free Cuppa for the Driver participation is encouraged by venues to supply free coffee or tea for the drivers. Brochures and maps that provide information of the venues that supply free beverages for drivers and operators are in the process of being prepared.
- Promotion banners sourced from Transport for NSW that target fatigue with the display of “Stop Revive Survive” messaging. These sites of these banners is determined by site availability, the proximity of refreshment areas and travel times from major travel commencement sites

Alcohol

Alcohol is the key factor in 16 out of 307 (5.2%) crashes in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and 16 out of 382 (4.2%) crashes in the Snowy Valleys Council. The state average is 6415 crashes out of 135651 (4.7%). Therefore alcohol is a factor in the crashes within the councils at directly comparable rates to the state average.

Road Safety Initiative

- NSW Police conduct regular Random Breath Testing on local roads.
- RSO Snake Gulley Cup bus, this bus service links the Gundagai race course with the town and allows patrons to drink alcohol while they are at the Snake Gulley Cup races knowing that they can conveniently and safely return to their accommodation.
- Eighteen venues participated in the “What’s Your Plan B? Win A Swag” road safety promotion in December 2019.
- Licensed Venues and police stations displaying “What’s Your Plan B?” Banners
- Community events where alcohol consumption is likely to occur are encouraged to display “What’s your Plan B” messaging. There is a proposal to also include complimentary breath testing for event attendees.
- Road safety presentations regarding the “If you are drinking don’t drive” message have been planned in conjunction with NSW Police and NSW Health to high schools in time for ‘schoolies’ for 2020.

Distractions Mobile Phones

Distractions from driving are a significant cause of crash among road users worldwide and mobile phones are proving to be the principal source of distractions. In NSW there were 16500 people apprehended using mobile phones while driving during 2019.

Road Safety Initiative

- “Keep your hand off it” promotions, including key rings and stickers, that target mobile phone use have been implemented during presentations to community and school groups in conjunction with NSW Police.
- Sharing of resources detailing laws regarding mobile phones have been shared in council media.

Telecommunications

Isolation and the challenges of communication have contributed to probability of fatalities occurring in crashes. Significant areas of the road networks in both councils are in areas where mobile phone can not make connections. This includes virtually all of the southern third of Snowy Valleys Council including roads such as the Elliot Way, The Link Road and the Alpine Way.

Road Safety Initiative

- Painted signage on the roads indicates where mobile phone reception is possible. This occurs in two sites in the Snowy Valleys Council and one site in the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council.

- Mobile phone coverage has been mapped and the mobile phone network continues to be slowly extended. There has been discussion about publishing these maps as part of other brochures relating to road user safety.
- There has been discussion between TfNSW and the councils regarding formal signage indicating where roads do not have mobile phone coverage and sites where mobile phone coverage is possible.
- Laybys have been informally made where coverage is possible allowing road users to stop and make phone calls for emergencies.

Special Interest Groups Motorcyclists

Motorcyclists are involved in 22 crashes of 307 (7.1%) crashes in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and 85 crashes out of 382 (22.2%) crashes in the Snowy Valleys Council. The state average is 12182 crashes out of 135651 (9.0%). Motorcycles are involved in crashes at comparable rates to the state in the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council but more than twice the rate in Snowy Valleys Council. This reflects the high number of motorcyclists that visit the Snowy Valleys Council during the warmer months.

Road Safety Initiative

- Consultation between motorcycle groups and the council road safety officer are occurring.
- The resurrection of the Snowy Mountain Motorcycle Rider Safety Group is being promoted between stakeholders.
- Display signs with a specific message regarding rider safety have been constructed in three rest areas popular with motorcycle riders. These are at a Tumbarumba service station, the Southern Cloud Lookout and the Khancoban service station.
- Promotion of Motorcycle Awareness Month (October) across the councils.
- Sweeping of the roads prior to the peak motorcycle riding period (October) is a long time feature of the road maintenance calendar.
- Motorcycle rider surveys have been formulated for use in the second half of 2020. These surveys will seek to understand the characteristics of riders and their attitude towards motorcycle safety.

Special Interest Groups Heavy Vehicle Operators

- Heavy trucks are involved in 51 crashes of 307 (16.6%) crashes in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and 33 crashes out of 382 (8.6%) crashes in the Snowy Valleys Council. The state average is 8343 crashes out of 135651 (6.1%). Heavy trucks are involved in crashes at comparable rates to the state in the Snowy Valleys Council but more than twice the rate in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council. This reflects the high proportion of heavy trucks that travel through the council on the Hume and Olympic Highways and the Burley Griffin Way.

Road Safety Initiative

- Regular discussions between heavy vehicle operators and key stakeholders in the industry continue to occur.
- NSW Police targeted safe heavy vehicle haulage through Operation Orion. A large proportion of vehicles from some operators were determined to be not roadworthy.
- NSW Police attended industry breakfasts and have engaged with providers of road safety in heavy vehicle to present sessions in local areas. These include Volvo's "Stop, Look, Wave" that promotes road safety around trucks to children.

Thank you for accepting our submission. Should you have any further questions about the submission please contact two Council's Road Safety Officer, [REDACTED]

Yours Faithfully

Anthony Carroll
ROAD SAFETY OFFICER