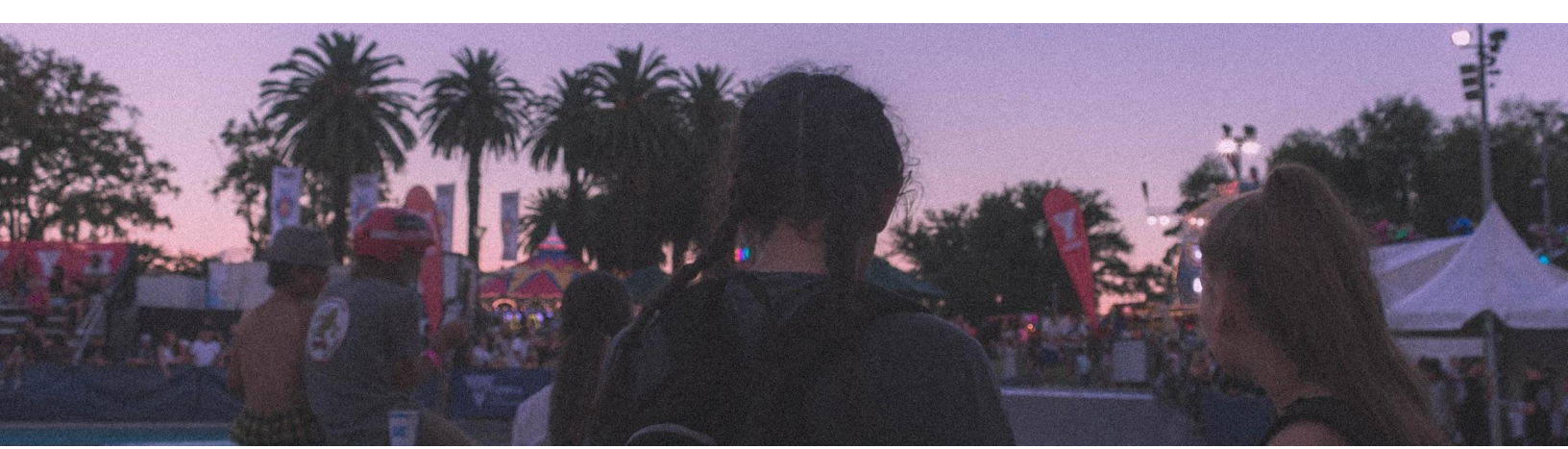


**Submission
No 5**

TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

Organisation: She's A Crowd

Date Received: 28 May 2021



She's A Crowd's submission to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into the Transport Technology Sector

To the Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee,

She's A Crowd welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Transport and Infrastructure Inquiry into the Transport Technology Sector.

She's A Crowd is a data-driven tech-startup which uses crowdsourced data to make cities safer for women and gender diverse people. Our vision is for a world where anyone with access to the internet can log timestamped, geotagged stories of gender-based violence and that data can be used locally, regionally and globally by decision-makers to understand and address the issue. We recognise the power of technology in bridging the gap between people's experiences of gender-based violence and leaders who need this data to make transport safer for all.

The transport technology sector needs to hear from and understand the lived experiences of those affected by gender-based violence. She's A Crowd believes that in order for the sector to gain a better understanding of the nuances in people's experiences while travelling, they need direct access to the data. Having this data inform policy and planning, allows for a gender lens and ultimately gender mainstreaming across departments - ensuring that women and non-binary people's experiences are represented in decision making.

With a focus on women's safety after dark, our submission responds to the terms of references b and d. To ensure that current and future transport technology are informed by high quality public research, we ask that the Committee considers She's A Crowd's following recommendations:

Term of Reference b

Real time public transport journey management

- 1. Invest in a journey planner that displays real time data of incidents and factors that promote an individual's feelings of safety - allowing users to make informed decisions on their journeys.**

Historically women have not been involved in the decision making processes of urban planning. This has led to men consistently feeling safer in the cities that they share with women¹ as well as women and non-binary people feeling that they need to change their route and behaviour when travelling in order to remain safe².

Women are restricting their own movement in order to stay safe, with 69% of women in Sydney aged 18-25 reporting that their concerns over their own safety result in them choosing not to go out at night and 12% do not go out at night at all³. This limits a woman's perceived right to be in public spaces after dark and in turn limits a woman's ability to participate fully in their city and everything it has to offer, including work and social opportunities. A journey planner can empower women to take control of their own routes, feel comfortable taking them and as a result become more involved in their cities.

There are a number of environmental factors that influence people's sense of safety including the level of adequate lighting, cleanliness and the presence of good infrastructure⁴. In addition to this, routes that had high foot traffic, the presence or absence of authority figures and high surveillance were considered preferable for safety⁵. Giving women and non-binary people access to data on these factors that they feel influence their safety will allow them to make empowered decisions about their route. She's A Crowd research has found that 61.4% of women and non-binary people surveyed wanted an app that can aid them with their safety with information such as when major public events are, where previous incidents have occurred, the level of activity in an area, and the level of lighting in the area⁶.

Not only are cities made with men primarily in mind, but the technology industry is dominated by men leading to tech products that do not actively consider women's safety. The current travel navigation maps do not have features that offer 'safer' travelling options despite having features that offer options that are rain safe, step-free and cold safe.

¹ Crabtree, S., & Nsubuga, F. (2012). *Women Feel Less Safe Than Men in Many Developed Countries: New Zealand, Italy and the U.S. among nations with safety gender gap*. Gallup. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/155402/women-feel-less-safe-men-developed-countries.aspx>

² She's A Crowd Concept Validation Report

³ Plan International Australia. (2018). *Sexism in the City - Young Women speak up about street harassment in Sydney*. Retrieved from <https://www.plan.o>

⁴ Plan International, Monash University. (2018), *Unsafe in the City: The everyday experiences of girls and young women*. Retrieved from https://www.monash.edu/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1572747/unsafeinthecity-en.pdf

⁵ She's A Crowd Concept Validation Report

⁶ Ibid

Currently, mainstream travel apps can take people down paths that are dark and isolated, and can leave people stranded if they miss a train or bus.

Through the Safety After Dark challenge, She's A Crowd has worked with Transport for New South Wales to address the safety of women and girls while travelling. In the first phase of our project, we went through an in-depth research and data collection period, looking into the ethical and technical considerations for developing a journey planner, as well as campaigning to build our database of New South Wales stories. This phase culminated in an algorithm that took into consideration all of our findings and learnings through our research. Key recommendations have been summarised below.

In developing a journey planner that promotes women's safety, it should not guarantee their safety as this cannot be ensured and could be misleading. It should allow users to select the important characteristics that apply to their own safety preferences rather than assume what makes women feel safe. Finally, historical incident data must be included in a sensitive manner that does not incite higher levels of anxiety during transit for users.

Due to these considerations it is recommended that the product offers users a set of research-driven route preferences, allows people to select for factors that best reflect their preferences regarding safety, includes a strong diversification of data to ensure that the lived-experience of all users can be accounted for, and only aggregates of this data are included.

We commend the government for taking an interest in improving the safety of those moving in their city. We encourage further inquiry and progress into the safety of women in particular and recognise there is opportunity to develop technology that considers women's safety including a journey planner.

Term of Reference d

How data might be used to improve access and safety for travellers, including for women

2. Using the data collected by She's A Crowd to directly inform training of staff and infrastructural changes to the network

It is also important to remember and understand that all data has bias; it isn't simply numbers and statistics. These statistics are a product of questions written by humans who have emotions, opinions and bias. Data Feminism (2019) states that "data are always the product of unequal social relations – relations affected by centuries of history"⁷. We know that a gender gap exists in terms of representation including concerning women's safety and incidents of gender violence that confirm these experiences and stories. Data on the lived experiences of women while travelling is minimal and is not collated or widespread. What is

⁷ Ibid.

required is 'counter data'⁸ which is the missing data on women's experiences to push against what is widely accepted as accurate by decision makers. Collecting this counter data proves the alarmingly high rates of gender-based violence, leading us one step closer to gender equality and safety for all.

Through research that She's A Crowd has conducted with the Department of Transport Victoria, we found that there is a lack of consideration and understanding of gender when developing and managing transport practices and processes. Interviewees identified that other customer experiences (such as disability) are being considered when training staff; however, little has been done in the gender space. Thus, it was clear that in Victoria, more training needed to be conducted for staff in terms of promoting a gendered perspective to safety.

Similarly with the transport sector in New South Wales, employing a gender lens to policy and planning through She's A Crowd's data would optimise access and safety for women. By using the data collected from She's A Crowd's platform, this could inform training for Transport for New South Wales as well as the New South Wales Police or other authoritative figures in ensuring that they are considering the safety of women and gender diverse people. For example, by collecting data on what types of incidents make women feel unsafe can help to build awareness of the types of interactions that constitute gender-based violence. This would allow for authoritative figures to be more vigilant of people who display behaviours that indicate harassment or abuse.

In addition to training, the data that She's A Crowd collects will allow for specific issues to be identified and addressed through designing tailored programs or policies for the New South Wales transport department. Without this data, decision makers are lacking a nuanced understanding of the problem, and therefore solutions will also lack the depth that is needed to appropriately address these issues.

As demonstrated through our vision, we believe that the lived experience data that She's A Crowd collects from victim-survivors of gender-based violence has the potential to bring us closer to a world that is safe and conducive of women and girls thriving.

⁸ D'Ignazio, C., Klein, Lauren F., & ProQuest. (2019). Data feminism.