

SUBMISSION in response to South Australia's Road Safety Strategy to 2031 Consultation Draft July 2021

Prepared and authorised by:

Jane Mussared, Chief Executive
Email address - cotasa@cotasa.org.au
(08) 8232 0422
Level 1, 85 Hutt Street
Adelaide SA 5000
www.cotasa.org.au
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Who is COTA SA?

COTA SA is an older people's movement run by, for and with older people. We represent the rights, interests and futures of more than 630,000 older South Australians. COTA SA reflects the diversity of modern ageing in terms of living arrangements, relationships, income, sexuality, culture, health, geography and aspirations. COTA SA connects with thousands of older people each year throughout SA. Our policy and advocacy are guided by the COTA SA Policy Council made up of older South Australians from a diverse range of backgrounds, along with a number of advisory groups. COTA SA's social enterprise, The Plug-in undertakes regular surveys with older South Australians in addition to its work facilitating access to older people for organisations, researchers and service providers. COTA SA is part of the COTA Federation with independent COTAs in each state and territory along with COTA Australia.

Acknowledgement of Country

COTA SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land of South Australia. We honour Aboriginal peoples' continuing connection to Country and recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.

INTRODUCTION

COTA SA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Consultation Draft for a new South Australian Road Safety Strategy to 2031.

Our submission is based on ongoing inquiries and feedback to COTA SA, input provided in response to a call out about the review, consideration by the COTA SA Policy Council and advice from COTA SA's advisory groups including –

- Goolwa Victor Harbor Advisory Group
- Rainbow Hub Advisory Group
- Yorke Peninsula Group
- Climate Change Advisory Group.

Importantly, it is also gleaned from COTA SA's regular engagement with older people through our listening posts held in shopping centres across the state including in country SA.

We commend the consultation draft as an impressive, fresh and complete road strategy, paying attention to the vital contributions of both a "culture" of road safety and various infrastructure and transport options toward the 2031 outcomes.

We particularly note the use of data to refresh thinking in developing both the focus areas and the strategies and the systems approach with each of the four pillars that lead to safe roads. We support the sharp focus on actions that will directly impact the numbers of deaths and serious injuries on South Australian roads. While the targets are ambitious, we applaud this ambition and support the breadth of key strategies that pay serious attention to the complexity of road safety.

ROAD USER BEHAVIOUR

There was considerable support for the social model approach described on page 36 as the framework for influencing road user behaviour.

VEHICLES ON OUR ROADS

We note the data on page 32 about the age of vehicles on our roads against age groups that suggests that the average age of vehicles registered to drivers aged 70+ is higher than the average age for all vehicles in SA. We support Key Strategy 25 and 34 as useful and constructive opportunities to influence the uptake of safer vehicles by vehicle owners.

OLDER ROAD USERS

The changing age profile of our community means that it is a fact that older people will continue to grow as a proportion and raw number of our road users, whether as drivers, passengers, cyclists or pedestrians.

While it is important not to unfairly inflate the risk for older people including older drivers as the media has often done, we support the inclusion of older road users (age 70+) for the first time as a "strategic focus area". While making up 13% of the population, they represent 23% of

fatalities in SA. The consultation draft acknowledges that a number of factors contribute to this and the data used, and the strategies proposed are better nuanced than we have previously seen. Importantly the consultation draft recognises that older drivers are involved in a relatively small number of crashes but that for both older drivers and other older road users, the outcomes are likely to be more serious.

The factors that create risk for older road users include –

- Underlying frailty or ill health which increases the risk of injury from any crash
- Higher likelihood of using an older vehicle
- Increased likelihood of serious injury as a pedestrian
- An increased likelihood of a medical condition or event.

We regularly talk to many thousands of older South Australians. This includes through our Listening Posts. Transport, mobility and the freedom of being able to drive oneself features heavily in almost all of those conversations. We hear variously that loss of a licence is “a dagger to the heart” “a damned nuisance” and “devastating”. We also hear from some older people that they know of drivers in their community who they believe should not be driving but continue to do so because they believe they have no other options. This is especially part of conversations with older people in our regional areas.

One of the very urgent priorities for older people – especially in rural areas - is exploring transport alternatives. While some limited medical, health and aged care related transport options are available in many places, these do not easily facilitate engagement with community and friends including on weekends and after hours. They tend to be very task oriented and lack opportunities for spontaneity and flexible timing. In regional areas where distances and design allow it, mobility scooters have become an increasing response to this.

We absolutely support what we think is implied in Key Strategy 35 - “a tailored program will be developed for older South Australians dealing with the key contributing factors to them losing their lives or being seriously injured on our roads.”

It is the direct experience of COTA SA including through our delivery of the Moving Right Along project that was funded by DPTI until 2019, that older road users get great benefit from road safety education that is targeted to them, delivered in non-threatening ways such as through volunteer peer educators, is available offline, and which enables conversations and planning ahead about future road use.

Rich proactive education and discussion with older road users on a statewide basis should include -

- Learning about alternatives to driving
- Transitioning to public or other transport from driving
- Consumer awareness about the value of safety features including those more likely to be standard in new vehicles

- Learning to use public transport including new digital timetable, information and ticketing systems
- How to access education about safe travel with a caravan
- Keeping updated about changes to road rules
- Being safe pedestrians including in mobility scooters
- Making decisions about whether to continue to drive
- Modifying own driving – not at night, limiting to short distances
- Modifying a vehicle to suit changing physical needs
- Having difficult conversations with a family member or friend about whether their driving is safe.

ROADS

As part of the consideration of safer roads and road infrastructure, we have received feedback about the importance of clear signage including that assists navigation and thus reduces distraction and improves driver confidence. Good signage is also a priority to alert drivers to an upcoming problem and when speed or conditions change whether on a temporary or permanent basis. The feedback we have had is that signage used must be consistent and part of ongoing education and awareness campaigns.

The rapid growth of areas such as Mt Barker has contributed to congestion and risk that must be better managed as part of urban development. This includes improving public transport options. We note that this sentiment about upgrading public transport in large and growing regional centres is reflected too in the submission from the City of Mount Gambier to the Regional Public Transport Review¹.

We received specific feedback about the need for better signage and support for road user on the South East freeway, including in the event of road crashes.

A further strategy could be added to complement strategy 36 that aims to make road crossings easier for older people to use. The additional strategy should enable the identification of additional road crossing locations to support access to, and movement within, regional and local business precincts including to support economic development as well as road safety.

WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport is an important mode of transport for older people and could become more so with better promotion and attention to age friendly design. We suggest that Strategy 50 be broadened to encourage a mode shift rather than just promoting the benefits of public transport for example *‘Continue to improve service levels and promote the benefits of public transport to encourage mode shift and increase patronage’*.

¹ Submission by the City of Mount Gambier March 2021

We support the assertion on Page 52 that public transport is the safest form of transport and that it is a direct contributor to reducing congestion, pollution and driver error. We would encourage trials for example that increase the availability of more frequent and free (or very low cost) buses for all users along a selection of major routes, to measure impact on both traffic accidents and public transport use.

Among the increasing number of cyclists on our roads are older people. While cyclists are referred to in the Strategy, there needs more emphasis in the recommendations. This might include Park N Ride facilities for cyclists at train and tram stations. In research undertaken including by COTA SA constituents, most such stops have inadequate or no provision. Equally additional wording to key strategy 41 could encourage better designed cycle lanes for example to allow for more dedicated spaces for cyclists rather than just a line painted on a road, e.g. it could be worded 'Safer and more connected walking and cycling infrastructure *with consideration given to the separation of cycle lanes by physical barriers*'.

REGIONAL AND REMOTE SA

It is particularly worth noting, as the consultation draft does on page 18, that regional South Australia "is aging (*sic*) at a faster rate than that of Adelaide". Indeed the age profile of regional SA is ahead of the curve and is, in many areas, already at the point that will be commonplace in 2040 or 2050 throughout urban Australia.

We suggest that added to the strategies on p45 for older road users should be exploration of transport options especially in country areas. This will include providing better and ongoing support for community transport providers. We note these are implied on p55 and in Key Strategy 58 but we would caution that options that require use of an App or digital connection are unlikely to be accessible to all older people. In our recent country listening posts fewer than half of those people we spoke to were active and proficient online.

We also note the great enthusiasm, especially during COVID's border restrictions, for travel throughout SA including with caravans, off road and on roads that may not be familiar. We note the availability of training programs to support safe towing, caravanning and four-wheel driving and encourage the promotion of these.

OTHER ISSUES

Principles

There is no doubt that fewer vehicles on the road will contribute to road safety while at the same time ameliorating the impact of climate change. A further principle could be added that refers to a need to reduce the number of vehicles on the road as a significant contributor to a safer road environment

Climate Change

It is important to acknowledge and plan for the impact of climate change on future transport patterns and options. By 2050 (Vision target of zero deaths at that point), climate change will certainly see a hotter SA and one with more storms (powerlines down etc). In this context, the removal of roadside vegetation (page 13) is disappointing. Equally the advent of electric and driverless vehicles will see a change in the profile of our vehicles.

Clarification

Along with the substantive feedback, we bring to your attention the percentages used in the infographic on p23 that are not immediately obvious – what are they percentages of?

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

COTA SA is ready to be a partner in supporting the development of “a culture of road safety” and in delivering road safety awareness and messaging. We enjoy a unique reputation, reach and profile among older South Australians across a diversity of backgrounds and places. While we would require support in the form of sponsorship or funding to play an effective role beyond general communications, we look forward to playing our part in developing a positive and collaborative culture of road safety in SA and in implementing an effective Strategy that meets and exceeds the ambitious targets set for 2031.