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Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
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**RE: Inquiry into Aspects of Road Safety in Australia**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into aspects of road safety in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

**a. The social and economic cost of road-related injury and death**

Since the middle of last century, Australian cities have been planned and designed predominantly for private motor vehicle travel. The result is that our transportation systems are heavily favoured towards facilitating the movement of motorised vehicles. This prioritisation covers all aspects of land use and transport - including network planning, road safety, funding and so on.

There are broad social and economic costs to this heavy reliance on private motor vehicles. For example, physical inactivity costs the economy over \$13.8 billion per annum, and causes an estimated 16,000 premature deaths a year. Productivity loss due to physical inactivity is estimated at 1.8 working days per worker per year.

These factors are usually not included in the costing of road-related assessments and projects (e.g. BITRE, 2014, *Impact of Road Trauma and Measures to Improve Outcomes*). However, there is a large body of literature to show that these factors are critical to cost-benefit analyses. A review is currently underway, with funding from TISOC/ COTI (a Ministerial Council of COAG) of the **National Guidelines for Transport System Management** (NGTSM) to address some of these issues. It is a framework for strategic-level transport planning and analytical approaches to transport assessment, which includes aspects of road safety; and we recommend that the Committee refer to it.

In July 2013, the Australian Government released a ministerial statement<sup>2</sup> which was the result of a discussion paper and public consultation process. In that report, it was recognised that each kilometre walked for transport purposes benefits the economy by \$2.12 per kilometre. For each kilometre cycled for transport purposes, there is an economic benefit of \$1.43. Approximately 50 to

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<sup>1</sup> [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural\\_and\\_Regional\\_Affairs\\_and\\_Transport/Road\\_safety/Terms\\_of\\_Reference](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/Road_safety/Terms_of_Reference) with responses due 27 Feb 2015

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government, 2013, *Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport*, [www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/active\\_transport/files/infra1874\\_mcu\\_active\\_travel\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/active_transport/files/infra1874_mcu_active_travel_report_final.pdf) p25

70 per cent of the net economic benefits are health benefits. The potential injury ‘disbenefits’ (ie directly attributable to road safety) reduced the overall economic benefits by \$0.24 to \$0.37 per kilometre walked or cycled respectively. The figures below are taken from this report:<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1.2 Benefits per kilometre walked, for an average project

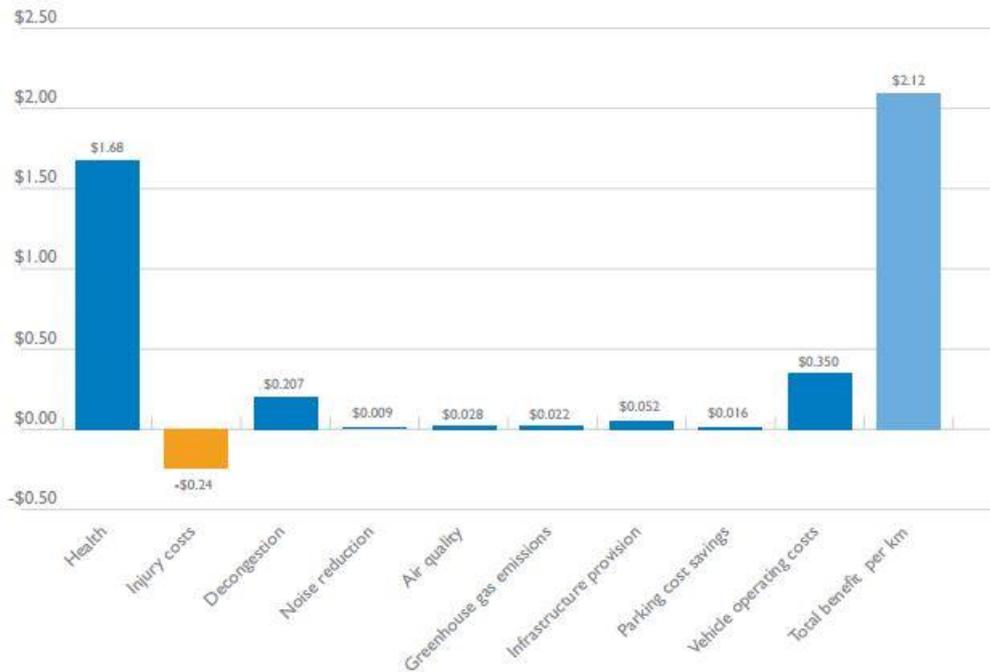
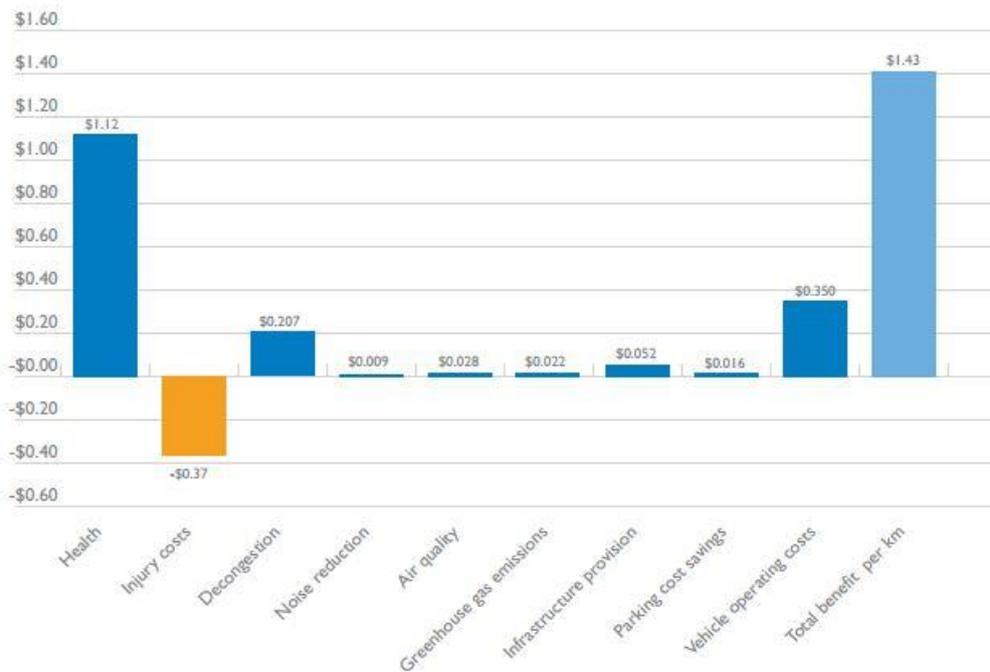


Figure 1.3 Benefits per kilometre cycled, for an average project



Source: Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads 2011, *Benefits of inclusion of active transport in infrastructure projects*, prepared by SKM and PWC, table EX.1: benefits summary.

[www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/active\\_transport/files/infra1874\\_mcu\\_active\\_travel\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/active_transport/files/infra1874_mcu_active_travel_report_final.pdf)

**b. The importance of design standards on imported vehicles, as Australian vehicle manufacturing winds down;**

Current vehicle design standards and ANCAP star ratings are focused on the safety of vehicle occupants. Vehicle design standards must fully incorporate pedestrian and bicycle rider safety.

**c. The impact of new technologies and advancements in understanding of vehicle design and road safety;**

Link Place anticipates the following trends over the coming decades:

- Electric vehicles (bicycles, cars, trucks) will replace current fleets of motorised vehicles. Electric vehicles are quieter, and therefore less likely to be heard by pedestrians and bicycle riders. Greater caution needs to be used by drivers to anticipate this.
- Vehicles are beginning to be fitted with detection systems for pedestrians, bicycle riders.
- Driverless vehicles are likely to become commonplace. This will include cars, goods delivery vans, freight trucks and trams. This will have profound impacts on the way our transportation systems operate: changing transport usage patterns, insurance requirements, and improving road safety in the long term.

**d. The different considerations affecting road safety in urban, regional and rural areas;**

All state and territory governments, and many local governments, have policies and programs in place to increase the share of public transport, walking and cycling. A number of national and international reports are worth referring to:

- a) It is currently the International Decade for Road Safety. Ahead of the G20 in December 2014, the International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) released **A Business Case for Safer Roads**<sup>4</sup> which asked for United Nations post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals to:<sup>5</sup>
  - Halve road traffic deaths (goal 3.6) and
  - Ensure safe and sustainable transport (goal 11.2).
- b) In the same month, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments reaffirmed their commitment to the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, by signing the **National Road Safety Action Plan 2015-17**<sup>6</sup> which included actions to:
  - Prioritise and treat high-risk roads, focusing on the main crash types and vulnerable road users.
  - Expand the application of lower speed limits in areas with high pedestrian and cyclist usage.
  - Strengthen national police enforcement operations to improve road safety compliance.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.irap.org/en/irap-news/516-g20-must-take-the-lead-in-saving-lives](http://www.irap.org/en/irap-news/516-g20-must-take-the-lead-in-saving-lives)

<sup>5</sup> <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

<sup>6</sup> [www.transportinfrastructurecouncil.gov.au/publications/files/National\\_Road\\_Safety\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2015-2017.pdf](http://www.transportinfrastructurecouncil.gov.au/publications/files/National_Road_Safety_Action_Plan_2015-2017.pdf)

- c) In 2011 the Australian Government and all state and territory governments signed the **National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020** target to reduce road fatalities by 30 per cent by 2020. Statistics show that fatalities have dropped for all road users since then except bicycle riders.

| Measure   | Baseline<br>(2008 – 2010) <sup>2</sup> |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Safe people – responsible road use</b>   |  |  |
| Number of young driver and motorcycle rider deaths (aged 17-25 years)                         | 222                                    |  |
| Number of deaths from crashes involving a young driver or motorcycle rider (aged 17-25 years) | 469                                    |  |
| Number of older driver and motorcycle rider deaths (aged 65+ years)                           | 114                                    |  |
| Number of deaths from crashes involving an older driver or motorcycle rider (aged 65+ years)  | 207                                    |  |
| Number of motorcyclist deaths   | 234                                    |  |
| Number of bicyclist deaths  | 32                                     |  |
| Number of pedestrian deaths   | 186                                    |  |
| Number of deaths from crashes involving a heavy vehicle                                       | 252                                    |  |

*National Road Safety Strategy Implementation Report 2013*, baseline figures (2008-2010) for 2020 targets

The 'baseline' set for bicycle rider fatalities was 32 fatalities a year<sup>7</sup> which, with a 30 per cent reduction, would reduce the toll to 22 fatalities a year by 2020.

Since then, there has been an alarming increase in cycling fatalities. In the 2013 calendar year there were 49 bicycle rider fatalities. In 2014 there were 45 bicycle rider fatalities. This is 50 per cent above the baseline, and twice the target rate for the year 2020. This is against a backdrop of no significant net increase in bicycle riding participation.

Much more needs to be done to protect vulnerable road users, particularly bicycle riders.

For example, BITRE (2014) reports that 'roundabouts may have negative safety impacts for cyclists'.<sup>8</sup>

#### e. Other associated matters.

Link Place anticipates the following trends in road user types over the coming decades:

- Since peaking in 2004, there has been a marked downturn in per person vehicle kilometres travelled in cities and across regional areas.<sup>9</sup> This trend is likely to continue.
- As Australia's population ages, so too will the average age of drivers. As the elderly eventually give up their driving licences and become less mobile, we need to ensure they have other transport options, and ensure their safety in simple acts such as crossing the road.
- Data shows that young adults are less inclined to get their drivers licences.

<sup>7</sup> based on 2008-2010 figures, see snapshot from the National Road Safety Strategy Implementation Report 2013

<sup>8</sup> BITRE, 2014, *Impact of Road Trauma and Measures to Improve Outcomes*, report 140, p45

<sup>9</sup> Mees and Groenhart, 2013, *Travel to Work in Australian Cities: 1976-2011*

This submission to the inquiry concludes with the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1** That the inquiry into Aspects of Road Safety places primary emphasis on the safety, amenity and convenience of pedestrians and bicycle riders, including the elderly and children.

Much more needs to be done to protect vulnerable road users. This is particularly the case for bicycle riders whose fatality rates are trending upwards and are now twice the national target set for 2020.

**Recommendation 2** That specific road safety measures are given highest priority by national, state and local government agencies to:

- Reduce road speeds to less than 40km/h on local roads. This includes signed speed limits but also amended road designs
- Reduce road speeds to less than 40km/h permanently around school zones and other pedestrian activity areas
- Separate bicycles from motorised vehicle traffic and pedestrians where there high volumes of traffic and along major cycling routes.

**Recommendation 3** That the model Australian Road Rules are reviewed to make them simpler and easier to understand.

The current version includes more than 300 clauses, and many updates. The model Road Rules need to establish, at the outset, that the primary objective is the safety of all road users. This is not currently the case.

Regards,

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Sara Stace is the Executive Director of Link Place. She is on the board of the Australian Cycling Alliance ([cycle.org.au](http://cycle.org.au)) and Bicycle NSW. She was formerly the Australian Government representative on the Australian Bicycle Council and a Director in the Australian Government Major Cities Unit.