

Pen and Ben Clark

██████████

████████████████████

27 August 2021

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC
Inquiry Chair – Road Safety Select Committee
Legislative Council

c/- rst@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Armitage and Select Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Legislative Council Road Safety Inquiry*.

We note the terms of reference are to inquire into and report upon ways in which to improve road safety in Tasmania. We are also concerned the Tasmanian fatality rate and rate of serious road crashes and fatalities has increased over the past decade.

We start from the belief that road safety should start with protecting the most vulnerable road users first (i.e. pedestrians and cyclists; children and aged). We advocate a significant switch in mindset from Tasmania's current transport planning approach which seems focused on speed and convenience to one focused on safety of all road users.

Like many Tasmanian families, we own a car, and appreciate the convenience it offers in terms of travelling around our home city and the state more broadly. We also regularly walk, use buses and ride. In 2019 we bought an e-cargo bike, as a means of doing as much of our daily transport task without adding to the congestion that had started to affect the Hobart streets. It has been revelatory, as we are often combining stops to school, childcare, shops and work on the one trip (also known as "trip-chaining"). Often the distances are between 5-10km, with the transit time the same or only slightly slower than a car, without the parking challenges. We have seen many other families in our community also embrace the e-cargo bike with numbers increasing at the school and childcare drop-offs and pick-ups.

Whilst we undertake these bike trips confidently on the e-cargo bike, we do not have the confidence to let our young sons ride their own bikes along the same routes. Having spent time in countries like Denmark, The Netherlands and Germany, we have seen how a transport network that builds confidence through careful design and provisioning of protected spaces can result in a shift in modal share, where people of all ages and abilities are regularly cycling.

These countries have been assiduously improving their cities over the past four decades through a long-term commitment to promoting safe and convenient cycling by:

1. creating extensive systems of separate cycling facilities
2. modifying intersections and providing traffic signal priority
3. traffic calming so a wide range of people felt safe riding with motorised traffic
4. investing in secure and extensive bike parking facilities
5. making it easier to use bicycles and public transport
6. investing in promoting cycling and educating motorists and training cyclists
7. modifying traffic laws to provide cyclists with greater protection

Many of the factors that influence transport modal choice are directly within the Tasmanian Government's control – such as transport funding and planning, land use planning, driver licensing, road speed limits, costs of vehicle registration, road charging and lane restrictions and ownership of the public transport fleet.

Achieving major change requires agencies, such as Department of State Growth, to understand and address in the strategy the needs of people who don't regularly cycle. New or inexperienced cyclists are likely to require infrastructure and road conditions that provide a high degree of separation and protection from traffic, education about cycling basics and encouragement to take up cycling.

CYCLIST SAFETY INCIDENT RATES

In the last ten years 11 people have lost their lives' in Tasmania and 104 have incurred a serious injury whilst riding a bike.¹ Motor vehicles are involved in 80% of crashes that result in the death of a person riding a bike².

To reduce the number of people who get killed while riding a bike we need to create more separate spaces to ride, lower speed limits in built up areas, create smarter vehicles and put in place more supportive legislation for bike riders.



Bike rider fatalities have only marginally reduced in 20 years, compared with vehicle fatalities (Australia wide figures).

Hobart City Council's "Bike Plan" had a target for the number of trips by bicycle to be 5% by the year 2002 and 10% by the year 2012³. In 2019, 1% of trips in Greater Hobart were by bicycle⁴. Whilst these targets were ambitious, the resultant lack of achievement points to the transport system not being meaningfully changed to the point where many citizens feel safe enough to cycle regularly. Indeed, many reports cite road safety as being major deterrent when people choose not to cycle – and based on the data in graph above it seems a legitimate concern.⁵

According to State Growth's Active Transport Strategy most people are prepared to cycle up to 30 minutes or around 10 km to access work or education.⁶ The 2019 Greater Hobart Travel Survey found the average trip to be 8.4km.

¹ <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/newsroom/2021/08/12/road-safety-that-helps-people-riding/>

² <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/our-campaigns/bike-rider-fatalities/>

³ www.hobartcity.com.au/Council/Strategies-and-plans/Bike-plan

⁴ www.transport.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/263466/Greater_Hobart_Household_Travel_Survey.pdf

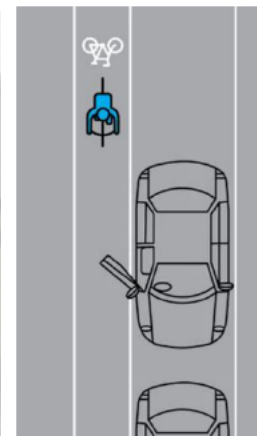
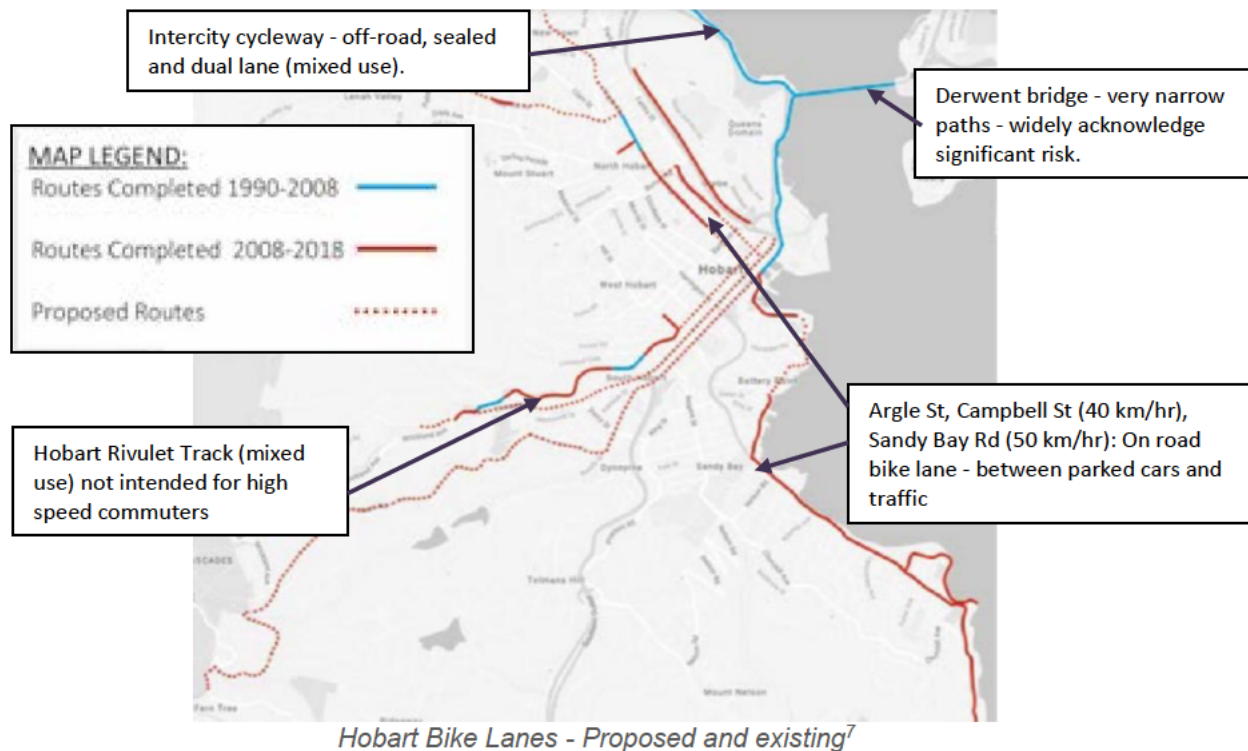
⁵ www.australasiantransportresearchforum.org.au/sites/default/files/2008_Bauman_Rissel_Garrard_Ker_Spiedel_Fishman.pdf

⁶ www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/88780/Tasmanian_walking_and_cycling_for_active_transport_strategy.PDF

PAINTED LANES vs PROTECTED (SEPARATED) LANES

Between 2008 - 2018 approximately 15km of bike tracks have been created in Hobart, the majority being painted lanes (where bikes often travel between parked cars and traffic moving at 50km/hr).

Parked cars present significant risks to cyclists due to the possibility of a car door opening; this is called 'dooring'. Protected bike lanes that put a physical barrier between people driving cars and people on bikes stops crashes from happening. Currently there is only one short 'protected bike lane' in Glenorchy.



Sandy Bay Road bike lane - constructed 2014-16. Showing risks typical of Hobart's painted bike lanes. The cyclist is exposed to both a 'dooring risk' and minimal space. Many cars do not provide a 1m overtaking gap when overtaking. The speed limit is 50 km/hr.

⁷ <https://www.hobartcity.com.au/files/content/public/council/strategies-and-plans/city-of-hobart-transport-strategy-2018-30/transport-strategy-themes-doc.pdf>

We are aware that our suburb, South Hobart has one of the highest commuter cycling rates in Tasmania with 7% of people commuting to work by bike, compared to 1% in Greater Hobart (2016 Census). This has increased from 2% in 2001, which we think is partly due to the improvements to the Hobart Rivulet Track over that 15 years, and partly due to the advent of electric bikes. This is without the benefit of any cycle lane along Collins St (where the Rivulet Track terminates), so we expect a network of protected lanes within the Hobart CBD would likely double the South Hobart rate of cycling to work to 14% by the end of this decade.

We also note South Hobart has a high walking rate - comprising 15% of journeys to work (2016 Census). This has remained fairly stable over time, with only a marginal increase from 14% in 2001. Obviously the proximity to major employment generators such as the CBD and UTAS campus is a significant factor, with the lower half of the suburb being within a 30 minute walk.

It is also notable that City of Hobart has invested in “raised threshold crossings” at five street intersections on the southern side of Macquarie Street between D’Arcy St and Southern Outlet. This road treatment not only improves accessibility for pedestrians, but people on mobility devices, wheelchairs and prams, and acts as a visual cue for motorists that pedestrians have a legitimacy in the road corridor. This should be the default construction in local shopping districts and on new estates, or reconstruction of urban and suburban roads, to encourage more walking/accessibility.



Elboden St and Macquarie St junction “raised threshold” treatment - constructed 2019.

South Hobart Primary School

Our eldest son attends South Hobart Primary School, which is located adjacent to the Rivulet Track. Whilst many children use the rivulet to travel to school, there are many more without direct access to the Rivulet Track, whose parents are not comfortable allowing their children to cycle along the road. As a result, school drop-offs by car still significantly contribute to congestion around the school (and that this effect is mirrored at many schools across Greater Hobart). We are confident that a protected lane on Cascade Road (where the road corridor is 11.5m – 15m wide) would be feasible without adversely affecting vehicle movements and parking, and make riding to school a default option for more children.

PRIORITIES TO IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY IN TASMANIA

We recommend the following six measures to protect Tasmania's most vulnerable road users.

1. Reducing speed limits on urban and suburban roads

Speeding is a great risk for vulnerable road users. A person hit by a vehicle travelling at 30 km/h has a 90% chance of survival, at 40 km/h it's 60% and at 50 km/h it's 10%. One of the simplest ways to improve the safety of vulnerable road users is to reduce speed limits. Making 40km/h a default in shopping districts, suburban streets and high foot traffic areas is a logical first action.

2. Separated bike lanes

One of the most effective interventions to protect people riding is to separate them as much as possible from larger vehicles. While there is Austroads advice to separate people on bicycles from vehicles once traffic volumes and speed reach a certain point, very few places in Tasmania do so. We are pleased that an important first step has commenced, with the recent tri-partite funding commitment (\$1.99m) to the long-awaited project to install separated cycleways on Campbell Street, with connections and short sections of separation on Argyle, Bathurst and Liverpool streets.

3. Ride 2School

Bicycles are a great way to provide children with independence, transport and exercise. Yet 16% of car trips in Hobart are for the school drop off / pick up⁸; many parents do not think our roads are safe for cycling.

This is a program that can achieve multiple aims – getting children their 60 minutes of exercise a day, and also reminds drivers to take care and drive responsibly around cyclists. By increasing youth participation in active travel like cycling, and promoting safe behaviour on and around the road, it also creates a new generation of responsible road users. Continued investment in the Ride2School program would demonstrate the state's commitment to this principle.

4. Improving truck safety device requirements

Nearly one-quarter of crashes where cyclists die in Australia involve heavy vehicles, and this statistic has not changed for the past 20 years. We'd like Tasmania's delegate to the national regulatory board to advocate for more safety devices on heavy vehicles that reduce these blind spots.

5. Enforcement of safe passing distance laws

We'd like to see Tasmania Police actively enforce minimum passing distance laws through activities like Operation Close Pass. This uses footage taken from police cars or motorbikes, or by police officers on bicycles with the technology and backup to catch drivers who are breaking the law.

6. Per capita dedicated funding for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure

The Tasmanian government does not have a dedicated funding stream for such infrastructure, with project funding and one-off cycling and pedestrian infrastructure funds often announced during election campaigns and varying in size each time. There needs to

⁸ www.transport.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/263466/Greater_Hobart_Household_Travel_Survey.pdf

be an ongoing fund to retrofit separated cycling infrastructure to state and council-owned roads. We endorse the State budget recommendation by peak body Bicycle Network Tasmania for a funding commitment of \$20 per person (\$10.8m for 2021-22) to enable a significant investment to be planned and built each year.^{9 10} The same commitment for pedestrian improvements could allow progressive retrofitting of 'raised threshold' treatments along high foot traffic streets.

CONCLUSION

We ask the Select Committee members, and the Legislative Council more broadly, to ensure there is greater leadership, direction and incentives to implement safe options for vulnerable road users. Improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure will mean more people will cycle and walk. This will help deliver on the primary aim of reducing road fatalities, whilst also having secondary benefits such as reducing greenhouse emissions and urban congestion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ben Clark', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pen and Ben Clark

⁹ <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/newsroom/2021/08/12/road-safety-that-helps-people-riding/>

¹⁰ <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/our-campaigns/submissions/tas-budget-1921-22/>