

Eurobodalla Shire Council

Submission to the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021

3 November 2017

1. Executive Summary

We commend the NSW Government for reviewing and updating the NSW Road Safety Plan with a view to addressing the unacceptably high road toll in New South Wales.

The draft NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 should be amended to better reflect the role of local government as the road authority responsible for almost 90% of the road network in New South Wales.

Eurobodalla Shire Council supports the appropriate use of the 'safe system' approach to addressing the road safety dilemma, recognising implementation does need to address the nuances and specific context of the local and specific context.

Eurobodalla Shire Council is one of a number of councils in New South Wales with an adopted Road Safety Plan for our Council area. Our plan is currently under review and will be aligned to the agreed objectives of the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 (once adopted).

The following specific comments are made on the draft NSW Road Safety Plan 2021.

2. The NSW Local government context

The draft document needs to provide a context to the New South Wales road network to better inform and educate the community and government at all levels. With almost 90% of the road transport network maintained by councils across NSW it is essential to highlight local government as a major stakeholder in the Executive Summary and elsewhere in the document.

It would also be useful to identify the extent of the road safety issue on the local road network to allow more precise targets to be set for local government.

We therefore recommend the draft NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 be amended to reflect basic information on responsibility for the overall road network (by road length, sealed and unsealed) and by inclusion of the associated road safety statistics applicable to those areas of responsibility.

Eurobodalla Shire Council supports the work being undertaken by the NSW Roads and Transport Directorate and the outcomes from the NSW Local Roads Congress 2017. Council has resolved to support the outcomes of the NSW Local Roads Congress as outlined in the Congress Communique attached at the following link:

<https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/IPWEA/c7e19de0-08d5-47b7-ac3f-c198b11cd969/UploadedImages/Congress/2017%20CongressNewFolder/Local%20Roads%20Congress%202017%20Final%20Communique.pdf>

This communique provides a specific blueprint for financial and non-financial solutions to deliver a safe, efficient and reliable transport network, and to support positive changes in social equity, community safety and economic outcomes.

We commend the specific positive actions taken by Transport for NSW in supporting:

- i) the NSW Local Government Road Safety Officer program. This program provides fundamental resources and skills to partner with local government to target road safety at a local level, with programs aligned to broader NSW objectives. The NSW Government should reconfirm its commitment to this partnership.
- ii) the training of road safety auditors in all councils via IPWEA NSW during 2017-18. This program is providing councils with highly valued new skills which will allow improved assessment of infrastructure under the care of local government from a road safety perspective.

We recommend the draft NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 be amended to reflect the need for a specific partnership between the NSW Government and local government via the NSW Roads and Transport Directorate to develop and prepare:

- i) evidence based aggregated information relating to the local and regional road network***
- ii) additional guidelines specific for local and regional roads for the use of local government***
- iii) appropriate capacity building programs for local government with a strong focus on delivering outcomes aligned to the NSW Road Safety Plan***
- iv) improved funding mechanisms for local and regional roads (as outlined in the NSW Local Roads Congress Communique).***

The next steps should be to work with the NSW Roads and Transport Directorate to produce revised guidelines for the development of Road Safety Plans for each council, and to provide support for appropriate training to build capacity to develop these plans. This approach would permit an accelerated program to develop targeted Road Safety Action Plans for all councils, aligned with the NSW Road Safety Plan objectives. This would significantly lift the profile of road safety across the whole of local government, and provide targeted action plans to improve road safety outcomes by leveraging the resources within councils against NSW and Australian Governments, and other funding resources.

Given the significant role local government plays in managing the majority of the NSW road network, it is recommended that these positive and fundamental actions be specifically outlined within the NSW Road Safety Plan 2021. Appropriate targets should be set with the following recommended:

- i) work with NSW Roads and Transport Directorate to produce revised guidelines for Council Road Safety Plans by 30 June 2018
- ii) work with IPWEA NSW to provide training to practitioners in all councils by 30 June 2019
- iii) work with LGNSW to pursue Road Safety Plans for all councils by 30 December 2019.

3. Network Planning – Local and Regional Roads

We agree that a network approach is required to better address road safety. This requires an integrated approach that considers all modes of transport and appropriate management strategies for the whole of the transport network. Importantly this must then be related back to the funding and people skills needed to support and advance the transport network into the future.

For our local and regional transport infrastructure it is important that consideration be given to:

- i) maintenance required to sustain the network and manage risk to the community
- ii) condition of the infrastructure
- iii) functionality of the infrastructure, with a specific focus on deficiencies in the network (eg lack of protective fencing, roadside hazards, lack of formal pathways)
- iv) capacity of the infrastructure to meet current and future demands, including changes in load carrying capacity.

Only by assessing these elements within the context of the local and regional road hierarchies under the control of local government, can long term and sustainable improvements to the safety of transport infrastructure be achieved.

This work combined with a ***focussed road safety plan for each council*** has the potential to allow low cost, effective solutions to be implemented to provide vastly enhanced road safety outcomes (eg re-use of materials to provide shoulder widening) on a network basis.

A NSW wide approach to achieve this outcome can be delivered through appropriate amendments to the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework under which local government works. This framework is currently under review by the Office of Local Government. We recommend that Transport for NSW engage with the NSW Roads and Transport Directorate and the Office of Local Government to incorporate the required changes to the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines in the next iteration.

We also recommend that Transport for NSW increase the local government representation on the NSW Road Safety Council. With local government responsible for almost 90% of the road transport network, and most bus facilities and pathway networks, it is essential that the level of engagement with local government is increased through this peak body. Eurobodalla Shire Council would support the appointment of the Executive Officer of the NSW Roads and Transport Directorate or a member of their Executive Management Committee.

Eurobodalla Shire Council would welcome the opportunity to be a pilot council to work closely with Transport for NSW, NSW Roads and Transport Directorate, Centre for Road Safety, Roads and Maritime Services and our community on a specific local and regional road network and safety plan. This plan would cover all modes of transport, make provision for growth and be integrated to the future planning of the Eurobodalla area.

Eurobodalla Shire Council would be prepared to deliver appropriate papers at industry forums including IPWEA NSW State Conference, NSW Local Roads Congress and others to offer lessons learnt to the whole of the local government sector.

4. Pathways – Pedestrian and Cyclists

The NSW Road Safety Plan rightly identifies pedestrians and cyclists as more vulnerable road users. Current NSW funding programs are targeted substantially at shared pathways and road crossings, and these programs should be continued.

However, these programs miss a fundamental point. That is, there are many existing urban roads without formal pathways, and in ‘brownfield’ situations, providing a 2.5m wide shared pathways is often not a viable option.

We recommend that Transport for NSW support a new footpath grant program (as outlined in the NSW Local Roads Congress Communique) with a view to addressing this fundamental network deficiency to improve road safety outcomes for pedestrians in urban areas.

Eurobodalla Shire Council has already worked to improve this situation and has recently updated the Eurobodalla Pathways Strategy 2017 (replacing our 2010 strategy). This strategic approach sets out a proposed linked pathway network across Eurobodalla and identifies the following issues:

- i) only 23% of our existing urban streets have a pathway on at least one side of the road (up from about 16% in 2010)
- ii) a targeted program of high priority pathway works is required, for both 2.5m shared pathways and 1.5m footpaths, to provide a strategically linked pathway network aligned to our road hierarchy to improve road safety outcomes
- iii) an estimated \$11.7 million worth of pathways is required, with Council able to provide \$3.5 million over the next 10 years.

Our pathways strategy can be found at the following link:

<http://www.esc.nsw.gov.au/council-services/works/traffic-studies>

We encourage the NSW Government to:

- i) fully fund all pathways and road crossing infrastructure on the Princes and Kings Highways (100% funding) as a priority action
- ii) implement a new footpath grant funding program to match Council’s on a 50:50 basis for the provision of pathways of all types (shared pathways and footpaths) on the local and regional road network.

Photo 4.1 below shows a typical busy urban regional road requiring a 1.5m wide footpath to separate pedestrians and young cyclists from vehicular traffic, and provide linkages to the bus stop network. The constraints of this brownfield site do not permit a shared pathway construction.



Photo 4.1 – Beach Road Batemans Bay

5. Improved Data Collection

Access to available crash and accident data has improved through the use of technology. Technology should however also be used to improve the level of relevant data capture and timeliness of information provision to delegated officers of councils.

Better use of technology should provide much faster access to more accurate data on accidents and crash information, including accurate spatial location using GPS technology and improved detail on severity and type using in-field tablets. Access to instantaneous information by councils (even if restricted in nature and/or under a confidentiality agreement), would allow councils to better respond to issues arising.

Additionally, a significant number of accidents appear not to be attended by Police. Transport for NSW needs to ensure mechanisms are in place to capture the location, nature and severity of accidents, potentially through insurance and other providers, if necessary under appropriate regulation.

6. Conclusion

We applaud the efforts of the NSW Government to develop a new NSW Road Safety Plan 2021.

We encourage the NSW Government to better recognise the significant role local government plays in managing the local and regional road network. We further encourage the NSW Government to better engage with local government on this specific community safety issue.

7. Contact

For further information in regard to this submission please contact our Director Infrastructure Services Warren Sharpe OAM at council@esc.nsw.gov.au.