

Environmental Scan February 2022

Potential road safety implications are represented as follows:

Political

METRONET

The METRONET rail program is a key budget priority of the State Government.¹ METRONET aims to encourage people to make greater use of the Perth metropolitan public transport system. It is a vital part of the State Government's broader vision for the town planning and sustainability of Perth.

In delivering new rail and rail stations, the program will support urban infill development, and the creation of more connected and compact communities around new public transport hubs across Perth.²

[WA Recovery Plan](#)³





Sociological

Sea and tree change

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated an existing trend across Australia of migration from the cities to the regions.⁴⁶ It is difficult to predict whether this migration will continue above trend as the pandemic develops.⁴⁷

Migration to the regions in WA is linked to the strength of the mining industry.⁴⁸ A strong mining industry has provided more employment opportunities in the regions. This has driven demand for regional inland housing ('tree change') and increased inland property prices in WA, compared to greater demand for coastal regions ('sea change') in the Eastern States.⁴⁹

Net migration flow to the regions means more road users on regional roads.



Metropolitan Perth sprawls more than 150km from north to south. WA State Government town planning initiatives such as the Perth and Peel @ 3.5million frameworks aim to limit unsustainable urban sprawl in Perth and encourage significantly greater infill development. These frameworks promote higher-density residential development around urban activity centres and high-frequency public transport routes.⁵⁰ They are part of the State Government's vision for a connected and sustainable Perth, which also includes programs such as METRONET.



(Image: Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage)⁵¹

Rededicating urban land to new construction and high-density development will create more compact and connected local communities across Perth.⁵² This will concentrate more people in Perth's urbanised environments and may create more local employment opportunities. Urban infill will reduce the distance people need to commute for work and encourage road users to make greater use of public transport.⁵³

Public transport use

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on public transport use in Perth. At the end of 2021, public transport patronage remains significantly down on pre-pandemic levels.⁵⁴ However, there has been a small improvement in patronage between 2020 and 2021.⁵⁵



Masks are now mandatory on public transport in WA.⁵⁶ While difficult to predict, it is possible that mask mandates and an increased public health risk may further impact public transport use in the short to medium term.

In the longer term, WA Government initiatives such as the Perth and Peel @ 3.5million frameworks and METRONET are aimed at improving access to public transport networks across Perth. These initiatives may see longer term shifts in people's tendency to use public transport as an alternative to driving.

Advances in trauma care

Road trauma encompasses more than the physical injury suffered by a road user involved in a crash. It also includes the mental injury that the road user or someone connected to them, such as their family, may also incur.

The World Health Organization stresses the importance of mental health care as part of the response to a crash.⁵⁷ The mental health component of road trauma is becoming an increasing focus of the post-crash response.



Mental health

Mental health has become an increasingly prominent issue in recent years. Mental illness is estimated to cost the Australian economy up to \$70 billion per year.⁵⁸ There is evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased psychological distress at a population-level across Australia.⁵⁹

Perhaps surprisingly, early evidence suggests that the impact of COVID-19 on mental health has been similar between States and Territories, despite significant differences between the periods of lockdown experienced in each jurisdiction.⁶⁰



Research suggests that truck drivers are particularly vulnerable to mental health



Drug and alcohol use

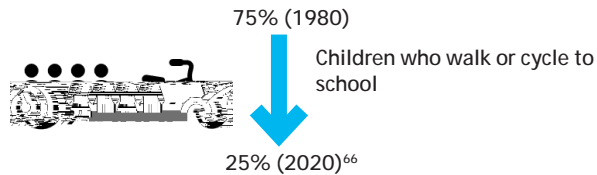




Sociological (cont...)

Active road users

The percentage of people who regularly travel by walking or cycling in Australia (or by 'active transport') is low by international standards.⁶⁵ Concerningly, the long term trend is one of decline.



Active transport programs aim to change the mix of road users and increase the number of people who regularly walk or cycle to travel. In WA, the State Government's 'Your Move' program encourages people to find active ways to travel to and from work and school, and around their communities.⁶⁷ This program provides online resources and activities to encourage people to change their behaviours.⁶⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven short term increases in cycling levels across Australia, including in WA.⁶⁹ In the longer term, shifts in the active transport rate will be driven by town planning priorities in urban infill and high-density residential development, and the development of active transport infrastructure such as pedestrian and cycle paths.⁷⁰ The greater access to public transport provided by these programs will also improve active transport rates, as people often walk or cycle for part of a public transport journey.⁷¹



507 cyclists were killed or seriously injured in WA between 2016 and 2020.⁷²



647 children (aged 0-16) were killed or seriously injured on WA roads between 2016 and 2020, 26% of whom were pedestrians.⁷³

Aboriginal road safety and closing the gap

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a separate and distinct area of focus within the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30. Actions to reduce the over representation of these populations in road trauma link with the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, particularly working together with Aboriginal communities and organisations to meet shared goals, and partnerships to address road safety.⁷⁴ Other relevant Closing the Gap priorities include the need to build community capacity, improve government institutions and program delivery to be more culturally appropriate and responsive to community needs, and improve data access and capability by Aboriginal people in order to assist with local decision-making.⁷⁵

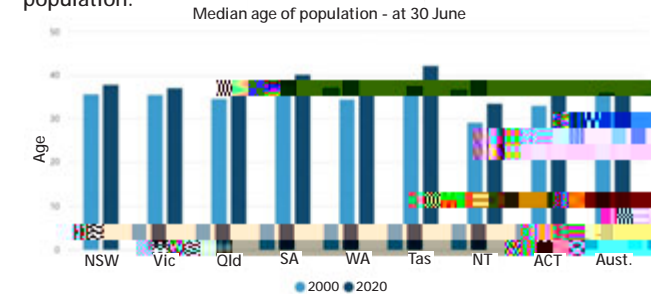
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are up to six times more likely to be involved in a traffic accident compared to the Australian non-Aboriginal population, and are (1.4 times) more likely to suffer serious injury or (2.7 BDC -0.238 -1.2 vm2T6



Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and road safety

Population demographics

The long term demographic trend in Australia is of an ageing population.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Twenty years of population change 17/12/2020⁸⁰



Technology and Data

Advances in safer technology and vehicles

Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) that help drivers to avoid or mitigate accidents are already available in vehicles on sale in Australia. Safety features include lane departure warnings, fatigue warnings and blind spot monitoring.⁸⁶ ADAS are increasingly becoming standard features in new vehicles – a trend that is expected to continue here and around the world.

From July
2022

Intelligent Speed Assistance technology
mandated in all new vehicles (EU)⁸⁷

From March
2023

All new model vehicles to have autonomous
emergency braking (Aus - mandated)⁸⁸

By 2024

All new model vehicles to have lane
keeping systems (Aus – proposed)⁸⁹

A safer vehicles initiative in Victoria targets young drivers in regional areas - a cohort that is over-represented in serious road crashes. The unsafe2safe scheme provides young people (aged 18-25) with a subsidy of \$5000 to replace their older vehicles with newer cars that feature more modern safety technology. A limited trial is underway to test the concept before the scheme is rolled out to as many as 1000 young regional drivers in 2022.⁹⁰

Increased uptake of electric vehicles

Developments in driving automation

Digital platforms for data linkage/sharing



Legal and Regulatory

New eRideable rules

New rules governing the use of electric rideable devices came into effect in WA on 4 December 2021.¹²⁴



Electric bikes and motorised scooters (<200w) are subject to their own regulations but may be ridden on roads as well as shared paths and bike lanes.¹²⁵ The maximum legal speed for eRideables and e-bikes is 25kph. Anecdotal evidence from other states suggests that illegal modifications to e-bikes are relatively easy and some bicycles can reach higher speeds than their construction allows, therefore making them unsafe for the rider and other path/road users.¹²⁶ As eRideable and e-bike use continues to increase in WA, any future evaluations of the regulations may need to check that speed restrictions, and other rules designed to keep riders and users of shared spaces safe, remain fit for purpose.

Future law reform with possible road safety implications

Medicinal cannabis

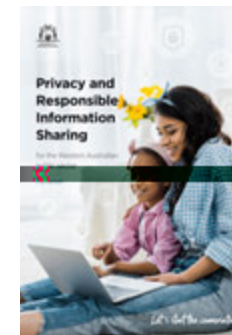
In WA, medicinal cannabis supply and prescription must comply with Medicines and Poisons legislation. Recreational cannabis remains illegal and drug driving offences apply regardless of whether cannabis has been prescribed.¹²⁷ Cannabis use increases the risk of traffic accidents although it is unclear if there is a "safe" level of cannabis use that does not impair driving. The relationship between levels of THC (the main psychoactive component of cannabis) in the body and degree of impairment is variable¹²⁸ so blood levels are not always a good measure of whether drivers are fit to drive or not. Specific research is also needed on the effects of medicinal cannabis use on driving.¹²⁹ The WA Parliament has established a Select Committee to Inquire into Cannabis and Hemp including the potential to amend the

Infringement management

Food delivery services

Autonomous vehicles

Improvements to data sharing/linkage



(Image: Department of Premier and Cabinet)



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