

# Living Streets Canberra



## National Urban Policy

### SUBMISSION FROM LIVING STREETS CANBERRA

via email to [urbanpolicyinput@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:urbanpolicyinput@infrastructure.gov.au)

**18 July 2024**

PO Box 7025  
WATSON ACT 2602

Web:  
[livingstreets.org.au](http://livingstreets.org.au)

Facebook:  
[@livingstreetscanberra](https://www.facebook.com/livingstreetscanberra)

Instagram:  
[@livingstreetscanberra](https://www.instagram.com/livingstreetscanberra)

Twitter:  
[@StreetsCanberra](https://twitter.com/StreetsCanberra)

# Living Streets Canberra

Living Streets Canberra is a grassroots organisation that works for everyone to be able to enjoy public spaces and walk\* easily, safely and conveniently. We work for everyone – whether young or old, fast or slow; walking, sitting, commuting, shopping, between appointments, or out on the streets for exercise, leisure or pleasure.

Our work includes advocating for:

- **all** environs where people may use active transport (that is, human-powered transport such as walking, rolling or riding) to **be – and feel – safe, accessible, comfortable and convenient** – for **everyone** to use regardless of age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, socioeconomic status or mode of transport. (The environs include the infrastructure, vehicles (particularly motor vehicles), and other people's behaviour.)
- mobility options – including all streets, paths, crossings, and public transport stops – to comply with or exceed anti-discrimination legislation and accessibility standards.

We want to see:

1. walking as the natural choice for everyday local journeys and accessing public transport
2. Australia as an inviting, safe and comfortable place for people to be out and about, walking\* and being in public spaces full of walking-friendly communities
3. people being supported and encouraged to choose to walk\*, particularly for transport.

Living Streets Canberra works with various allies locally, nationally and internationally. These include those focused on active transport, safety and inclusion; urban design and planning; and mitigating and adapting to climate change. Nationally, they include Better Streets and Climate Action Network Australia and their members. International colleagues include the International Federation of Pedestrians and Global Walking Correspondents Network.

- **Every journey involves some walking,\* so this submissions represents the interests of everyone who lives in or visits Australia: in April 2024 this is over 26.7 million residents and 7.8 million visitors per year**
- Walking\* is an essential part of sustainable mobility.
- Walking\* improves the health and liveability of communities.
- Walking is natural...so walking should be a natural right and recognised as a legitimate use of public space.

\* We focus on people who get about without a vehicle. When we use the term 'walking', we include any form of human-powered mobility that is not a bicycle: walking; using a wheelchair or other personal mobility device, including those with motors that can travel up to 10 km/h; pushing a pram; wheeling luggage; riding a scooter, skateboard, tricycle or rollerblades. This is the definition used in the Australian Road Rules.

# Introduction

Living Streets Canberra welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the final development of the National Urban Policy and to its implementation.

Because every journey involves some walking,\* this submission represents the interests of everyone who lives in or visits Australia. As at April 2024, this is over 26.7 million residents and 7.8 million visitors per year, a total of over 34.5 million people.

This submission focuses on ensuring public spaces and transport infrastructure (including all streets) in our urban areas are safe, accessible, comfortable, convenient and attractive for everyone to be in, use, and to move about freely without being in a private motor vehicle. We focus on urban infrastructure (streets, paths, crossings, & lighting), harnessing community knowledge and people power for faster & cheaper change, and cultural change at the State/Territory/Local Government level.

Doing this will help our urban areas to be liveable, equitable, productive, sustainable and resilient - and attractive places to be in. This in turn will increase the quality of life for people who live in and visit our urban areas, now and into the increasingly unpredictable future.

The evidence about the need for and benefits of this is clear. The solutions already exist and are quick and simple to put in place and have effect, compared with other changes to our urban areas and transport systems. There is urgency, for a variety of reasons including health and climate. What is needed now is action to implement the solutions. Local communities can help - if governments let them.

The submission also compliments and should be read in conjunction with submissions by us and our allies to this and other related processes:

- Australian Government:
  - National Urban Policy - submission from the Australian bicycle sector, which we endorse
  - Automated Vehicles Safety Reform - our original [submission](#)
  - Pathways to net zero emissions - our [submission](#)
  - National Health and Climate Strategy - our [submission](#)
- State, Territory and Local Governments:
  - [Age-Friendly City Plan 2025-35](#)
  - [Moving Canberra](#)
  - Victoria's [30 year Infrastructure Strategy](#)
  - Victoria's [Transport, Built and Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans 2022-2026](#)
  - [Brisbane Walking Strategy: Walkable Brisbane](#) - submissions by Queensland Walking Alliance and Queensland Walks

and with a Heart Foundation report<sup>1</sup> of a survey that provides tremendous insights that will be valuable to the National Urban Policy. Except for the bicycle sector's submission, these documents are included in the email containing this submission.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission further.

## Context

As well as the contexts identified in the draft National Urban Policy, our views take account of, amongst other things, the broader context in which these pathways will work. These include:

- International, business and Australian (Commonwealth, State, Territory), New Zealand and Local Government commitments, policies and needs for:
  - reducing and stopping air and water pollution and damage to the climate
  - increasing road safety for all road users (particularly vulnerable road users), not just those in increasingly large vehicles
  - increasing health and wellbeing of people
  - increasing efficiency of land-use and resources

(all of which will require significant shifts from private car use to active and public transport);

- all of the Commonwealth, State, Territory, national and international anti-discrimination legislation, standards and commitments - not just some for disability;
- International moves to safe, efficient and climate-neutral transport solutions;
- State, Territory and local government commitments to active transport, noting that reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport is a key component of achieving that and that Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne have all stated they want to be Australia's most walkable city;
- Australia's:
  - reputation and ambitions for being healthy, active and inclusive;
  - need for a world-class, integrated transport system where people can move between transport modes seamlessly and access transport easily, regardless of where they live or visit and their ability or background, and
  - a rapidly growing and ageing population; and
- Commercial and environmental pressures for increased efficiency of land use.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Heart Foundation of Australia. 2020. *What Australia Wants: Living locally in walkable neighbourhoods*, 2020-21, [https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What\\_Australia\\_Wants\\_Report\\_.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What_Australia_Wants_Report_.pdf), accessed 17 July 2024

# Key themes

We welcome the development of a National Urban Policy. Much of what is in the draft Policy is welcome. We make recommendations for finalising the Policy in a way that will help to realise the potential opportunities it presents.

## Huge opportunities for quick benefits

There are some interlinked issues/themes that apply across all elements of the Policy. These include:

- Climate change
- Safety
- Health
- Inclusion
- Active mobility (walking, wheeling, rolling, riding)
- Choice
- Compliance with laws, standards, policies and best practice

Urban areas that are designed, built and function well have built, social and natural environments that support everyone to be healthy; live well; participate in society, education and the economy; and have choice in how they live and move.

In particular, *everyone* - regardless of their age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, or socioeconomic status - should have the choice of opportunities to travel independently.

Currently, most urban areas in Australia prioritise car travel and make travelling by other modes of transport difficult or impossible. This has enormous direct and indirect costs to governments, broader society and individuals. It also denies many people the choice of using modes that are healthier, cheaper and better for our climate, environment, community cohesion, and economy.

In contrast, a survey by the Heart Foundation<sup>2</sup> found that most Australians want to live in places that are convenient and safe for anyone to get to local destinations easily by active modes of transport, particularly walking. Furthermore, some 25% of Australians do not have a driving licence<sup>3</sup> (with estimates that up to 40% of Australians do not drive), so urban areas where active and public transport are easy and obvious choices would enable them to travel autonomously and/or independently.

---

<sup>2</sup> National Heart Foundation of Australia. 2020. *What Australia Wants: Living locally in walkable neighbourhoods*, 2020-21, [https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What\\_Australia\\_Wants\\_Report\\_.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What_Australia_Wants_Report_.pdf), accessed 17 July 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics. 2017, 'Drivers Licences in Australia', BITRE Factsheet 84, BITRE, Canberra, [https://www.bitre.gov.au/sites/default/files/is\\_084.pdf](https://www.bitre.gov.au/sites/default/files/is_084.pdf), accessed on 17 July 2024.

Most trips in Australia's cities are already less than 5km, so there is huge potential for walking, wheeling and riding bikes. These are inexpensive and basic transport modes that can help achieve objectives for social equity, health, climate and environment, and economic opportunity.

Walkable environments are a major part of the public realm of urban areas and are an essential component of the 'Avoid, Shift, Improve' framework for transport. Making urban areas easy for more people to use active transport more often 'provides enjoyment and health benefits to users, and it can support related industries, including retail, recreation and tourism'.<sup>4</sup>

Middle and outer urban areas are most affected by lack of transport options - and they have the biggest potential to benefit from people being able to use active and public transport easily, safely and conveniently. Shelter from extreme weather (particularly heat) is vital for safely enabling people to be outside and move about actively.

The solutions already exist and are quick and simple to put in place and have effect, compared with other changes to our urban areas and transport systems.

What is needed now is action to implement the solutions. Local communities can help - if governments let them. There are plenty of examples around the world of what and how this can be done. This includes examples in inner-city areas of Australia and work undertaken by local communities (not just government).<sup>5</sup>

The National Urban Policy can build on such work to show a way forward for Australia's urban areas to give everyone the same opportunities for mobility in order to increase liveability and community amenity, reduce transport pollutants and climate damage, improve population and environmental health, and reduce cost of living and equity problems. Active transport (particularly combined with convenient, frequent and reliable public transport) offers people healthy, low-cost, low-emission, readily available transport for most of their daily trips.

When it comes to travel and transport in urban areas, this means that Governments must focus on facilitating shifts away from modes that contribute most to damaging our climate, health and environments to those that contribute less - not just on accommodation of electrification of motor vehicles. In particular, they need to enable and facilitate people in Australia to use active, shared and public transport more: for more trips and more often.

Statements of desires, possibilities, objectives, goals, and budget allocations are insufficient for creating change unless they are accompanied by clear plans and political will for implementation. Creating healthy and thriving urban areas where it is safe and easy for

---

<sup>4</sup> Litman, T. 2023. 'Economic Value of Walkability', 1 November 2023, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, p. 1, available at <https://www.vtpi.org/walkability.pdf>, accessed 12 July 2024.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Living Streets Canberra. 2022. 'ACT Active Travel Plan, Submission by Living Streets Canberra, August 2022, section 6, available at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x9s\\_pDES7zD9rA0N0XvthGzweMpFJ2\\_3/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x9s_pDES7zD9rA0N0XvthGzweMpFJ2_3/view?usp=drive_link)

everyone to be active and get around without a car will need both policy changes and attention to the range of issues affecting implementation and outcomes.

## **Overarching comments**

The final National Urban Policy should refine and extend what is in the draft. The National Urban Policy should clearly present a bold, coherent, aspirational and transformative vision for our urban areas and a clear pathway to achieve its goals, with clear and measurable actions, timeframes and targets. Combined with improved comprehension and less repetition, it should be readable and thus likely to be used.

### **Recommendation 1**

**To be effective, the National Urban Policy needs:**

- 1. a vision that is clear, ambitious, specific, actionable and compelling; and**
- 2. to be easily readable, so a broad range of people will read it and can easily find the information they need to use it to guide their thinking and work).**

There are some issues/themes that apply across all elements of the Policy. These include:

- Climate change
- Safety
- Inclusion
- Active mobility (walking, wheeling, rolling, riding)
- Choice
- Compliance and monitoring

Having cross-cutting themes, perhaps presented in a matrix with the other hierarchical elements of the Policy, would reduce the gaps and repetition that are evident in the draft Policy. It would also help communicate the interrelatedness of the issues and how they need to be considered in all areas of work affecting urban areas.

### **Recommendation 2**

**The National Urban Policy should be a transformative policy, particularly for increasing the inclusiveness, sustainability and decarbonisation of our urban areas and doing so quickly.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**The National Urban Policy needs to include:**

- **as a Principle: highly inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable urban areas require transport choices that are safe, accessible, affordable, comfortable and convenient for everyone; and**
- **as cross-cutting themes:**
  - **Climate change**
  - **Safety**
  - **Inclusion**
  - **Mobility that is sustainable, healthy and active (walking, wheeling, rolling, riding)**
  - **Choice**
  - **Compliance**

#### **Recommendation 4**

**The National Urban Policy should explicitly:**

- 1. mention the need to comply with all anti-discrimination laws and standards, not just those relating to disability**
- 2. state that active transport and broader transport environs and public spaces:**
  - a. includes all streets, paths and crossings;**
  - b. need to be safe, accessible, comfortable and convenient for everyone; and**
  - c. must be consistent with other nationally and internationally agreed policies and actions**
- 3. state that traffic includes people (not just motor vehicles).**

#### **Overcoming barriers to active transport**

Australia's Transport Equity website<sup>6</sup> provides a useful summary of mobility needs in urban areas:

*Easy and attractive infrastructure and services for active transport (walking, wheeling and riding) and public and other shared transport are essential in urban environments, and crucial for sustainability and reducing damage to our climate; mental, physical and social health; and enhancing social and economic equity. Our current transport systems favour cars over all these, and exacerbate social, economic and environmental inequity.*

---

<sup>6</sup> Transport Equity. 2023. <https://transportequity.org.au/>, accessed 10 July 2024.



*Everyone should be able to move safely around our communities, no matter who they are, or where they live.*

*For workers, these efforts need to be moving toward a just transition, by emphasising the need for mode shift out of cars and toward [active and] public transport. The rights of those who work in the transport sector, including manufacturers, mechanics, operators and drivers need to be protected.*

*Those who are the most impacted by transport disadvantage should have the most say in how we redesign things.*

Getting more people to travel actively, more often, requires overcoming numerous barriers and consistently and quickly addressing several key issues in broader legal, policy and real-world contexts, including:

- Safety
- Equity, inclusion and accessibility
- A clear hierarchy of transport modes and users
- Convenience, comfort and physical attractiveness

Applying the following principles as overarching themes in the National Urban Policy will help to overcome numerous barriers and consistently address several key issues in broader legal, policy and real-world contexts:

1. **Safety:** All environs where people may be present or use active transport should **be safe** – and **feel safe** – for everyone to use active transport, regardless of age, ability, gender, culture, socioeconomic status or mode of transport. The environs includes the infrastructure, vehicles (particularly motor vehicles), and behaviour of other people. Active transport includes walking, wheeling and riding bikes.
2. **Equity, inclusion and accessibility:** Public places and transport systems (including active transport) must comply with or exceed anti-discrimination legislation and accessibility standards. The active transport environs should allow everyone to use active transport, regardless of ability, age, gender, culture, socioeconomic status or mode of transport.
3. **Clear hierarchy of transport modes and users:** A clear transport hierarchy, reflected in primary national legislation, is key to safe active transport and good practice for urban planning and transport. Everyone needs to have a very clear idea of the priority of transport modes and users. We all need to know what and who has priority at any particular place and time. We need to know this whether we are citizens or visitors; or travelling, governing, planning, designing, building or maintaining, educating or enforcing. The basic and most vulnerable mode of transport, walking, must be the top priority - like the UK has with its updated Highway Code:

Department for Transport

The Official Highway Code

## New Hierarchy of road users

The hierarchy places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top of the hierarchy.

More likely to be injured

People walking  
(including children, older adults and disabled people)

People riding horses  
People cycling  
People driving horse-drawn vehicles and motorcycles

People driving cars and taxis  
People driving vans and minibuses  
People driving large goods and passenger vehicles

Greater responsibility

Learn more: [gov.uk/dft/highwaycodechanges](https://gov.uk/dft/highwaycodechanges)

4. **Convenience, comfort and physical attractiveness:** Routes, infrastructure and allocation and treatment of spaces affect convenience, comfort and physical attractiveness for people to be in spaces and use active transport as well as their equity, inclusion, accessibility and safety.
5. **Urgency and universality:** The unfolding climate emergency combined with the need for all our public spaces, paths, streets and roads to be safe, accessible and welcoming for everyone and for active transport underscores the need to focus on urgent and universal transformations across whole urban areas, not just slow and expensive changes in a few places (where they are possible).
6. **Behaviour and attitudes:** In a culture and environment that is currently car- and individual-oriented, considerable change will be needed to change behaviour and attitudes to become focussed on community and care for others (particularly the most vulnerable).
7. **Implementation and accountability:** Implementation and accountability (including measurement of needs and success) must be fit for purpose of both the Policy and the end users.

## **Recommendation 5**

**The National Urban Policy should include and apply the following guiding principles as themes throughout, to help it achieve its goals and objectives as well as other nationally and internationally agreed policies and actions. To ensure that they (and any other principles) are applied throughout the Policy, it may be useful to create a matrix that applies them and the cross-cutting themes (Recommendation 3) across the hierarchy of Goals, Objectives and Actions:**

- 1. Safety**
- 2. Equity, inclusion and accessibility**
- 3. Convenience, comfort and physical attractiveness**
- 4. Urgency and universality**
- 5. Behaviour and attitudes**
- 6. Implementation and accountability**

### Safety

To achieve streets that are safe for everyone, a **‘whole system’ approach** with multiple layers of protection is needed. This means taking account of the whole operating environment, including all streets, all users and all systems - not just some of them.

The *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30* indicates Australia’s alignment with the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety and commitment to Vision Zero and the Safe Systems approach. They need to be implemented throughout all of Australia’s urban areas.

Reducing the **speed** of impact is key to avoiding serious injury and death as a result of a crash. Streets with speed limits above 30km/h but without footpaths on both sides and (prioritised) crossings are not considered safe under the Safe System Approach used in Australia. This means many (if not most) streets in Australia’s urban areas are not safe.

Streets with travel speeds kept below 30 km/h are safer for everyone, provide quieter and safer-feeling environments, and yet make little difference to travel times. Crashes at speeds lower than 30km/h cause much less damage to people (especially when coupled with aerodynamic (i.e. not square-fronted) vehicle design), vehicles and infrastructure than those at higher speeds.

There is a global movement, now led by the World Health Organisation<sup>7,8,9</sup> for 30 km/h to be the default speed limit in urban areas. A recent study<sup>10</sup> of 40 European cities found that the implementation of 30 km/h speed limits resulted in an average of:

1. 23%, 37%, and 38% reduction in road crashes, fatalities, and injuries, respectively.
2. environmental benefits, with emissions decreasing on average by 18%
3. noise pollution levels by 2.5 dB
4. fuel consumption by 7%

Australia could adapt processes from other countries to decide which streets or roads \*need\* to have faster motorised traffic and to ensure that those streets and roads are sign-posted accordingly and have convenient and fully accessible pedestrian-priority crossings joining footpaths on both sides of streets.

On higher-speed streets and roads, and in high-use areas, it is important to give particular attention to separating different travel speeds and to ensuring the safety of the most vulnerable people - those not surrounded by a metal cage, and especially children and people who are frail and/or have a disability.

## **Recommendation 6**

**The National Urban Policy include evidence-based standardised speed limits and designs for urban areas for the safety of all road users:**

- 1. 30 km/h as the evidence-based maximum default safe speed for streets**
- 2. Streets and roads be permitted to have higher design and designated speeds only where the need is clear and specifically designated and only if accompanied by fully separated paths on both sides with convenient priority crossings or people walking, wheeling and riding.**

---

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organisation. 2021. 'Campaign launched to make 30 km/h streets the norm for cities worldwide', 22 March 2021, <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-03-2021-campaign-launched-to-make-30-km-h-streets-the-norm-for-cities-worldwide>

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organisation. n.d. 'Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-30', <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-03-2021-campaign-launched-to-make-30-km-h-streets-the-norm-for-cities-worldwide>

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organisation, 'Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030', 20 October 2021, <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-plan-for-the-decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030>

<sup>10</sup> MDPI. 2024. Review of City-Wide 30 km/h Speed Limit Benefits in Europe, *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*(11), 4382, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/11/4382>, accessed 10 July 2024.

**Infrastructure** (the physical design, construction, appearance and maintenance of streets and roads) is a vital component of giving people cues about priority of users and whether or not to drive slowly, stop, and give way appropriately.

Most of our infrastructure for transport is already built, so it needs to be adapted and/or retrofitted in order to make every street safe (and feel safe) for all users and particularly for the most vulnerable: people using active transport.

Best practice design rules will help make our streets safe (and feel safe) for all users, including those using active transport – but they must be implemented consistently on new and re-built streets and roads and adapted for quickly upgrading all existing streets and roads.

**Little things matter.** Details like good lighting, even surfaces, line of sight, and continuity of pathways during construction or maintenance activities are also vital for people being and feeling safe as well as for accessibility, comfort, convenience and attractiveness of streets, paths and other public places. Suitable guidance is available nationally (such as in Australian Standards and Australian Guide to Road Design) and internationally.

#### Equity, inclusion and accessibility

When people have their particular needs for and barriers to active transport addressed, they feel safer and valued, so they are more likely to choose active transport.

Furthermore, Australia has a moral and legal duty to ensure that no one is discriminated against in ways that limit how they move around our urban areas. The moral duty extends to providing equitable access, particularly to active transport. Not everyone can drive, afford to own, hire or drive cars, or use taxis or ride-shares.

When our transport systems are suitable for young children, people in wheelchairs or who are blind or deaf, and for COVID-safe distancing while walking side-by-side or passing, then they are suitable for everyone.

#### Convenience, comfort and attractiveness

People are more likely to choose active transport if using it is easy and pleasant.

Routes, infrastructure and allocation and treatment of spaces affect convenience, comfort and physical attractiveness of active transport as well as equity, inclusion, accessibility and safety.

People like their day-to-day travel to be easy: quick, convenient and comfortable. They want their active transport trips to be short (generally a maximum of 15-20 minutes), with no hassles or delays, and as comfortable as possible. The changing climate makes this more challenging.

Direct routes are important for this, and delays along routes should be minimised. Active transport routes that have deviations or delays (even small ones) and extra hills that motor vehicle routes do not add inconvenience and require more effort for people that lack motor vehicles' extra power to overcome them. This means crossings that prioritise and do not penalise active transport users, with particular priority for people walking.

## **Recommendation 7**

**The National Urban Policy should:**

- 1. explicitly both articulate the need and include plans for increasing convenience, comfort and physical attractiveness of active transport; and**
- 2. include the following actions:**
  - a. Ensure that all mobility options and associated infrastructure and systems (including all streets, paths, crossings, and public transport stops) at least comply with anti-discrimination legislation and accessibility standards - with independent compliance verification.**
  - b. Upgrade Australia's design, construction and maintenance standards and rules for roads, streets, paths, and crossings so that the transport environment in urban areas reflects a clear hierarchy of road users and modes, with walking\* top (like that in the UK - see earlier in this submission) and similar to that used in some other countries (such as coloured surfaces, and 'sharks teeth' showing priority).**
  - c. Mandate compliance with:**
    - i. Austroads guides to inform the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the road network in Australia.**
    - ii. Australian Standards relevant to urban areas, including those for lighting of public spaces, roads, streets, paths, crossings.**

### Urgency and universality

Several imperatives (such as those highlighted in this submission) underscore the need for the National Urban Policy to focus on urgent and universal transformations, not just slow and expensive changes in a few places.

Piecemeal approaches offer limited potential improvements for helping shift more people to travelling actively more often.

Australia can learn from what other jurisdictions around the world are doing to make both quick and universal changes.

Instead of pursuing expensive, time-consuming, permanent, piecemeal remedies that do not create safety (and can make things worse), we suggest that more effective ways to making it be safe and feel safe for everyone to use active transport - regardless of age, ability, gender, culture or mode of travel - would be to:

- have consistent city-wide approaches to making our streets safe, with users focussed on community and care for others (especially for the most vulnerable);
- focus early efforts and resources on experimenting to quickly and cheaply put in place remedies to create safety for all users - and quickly and cheaply find out what works well, what does not and what needs adjusting;<sup>11</sup> and
- value and harness tacit (local) knowledge, people power and community enthusiasm to undertake some experimentation to quickly and cheaply find remedies for creating safety for all users.

Local residents and community groups have tacit knowledge (particularly through lived experience and observations over time) that cannot be obtained through isolated engineering or traffic studies. It is important to value and use this knowledge, to understand both the extent and detail of the issues as well as what might be suitable remedies.

Local tacit knowledge can inform experiments to create quick remedies and determine what interventions work to achieve safety for all users - to quickly and cheaply find remedies for creating safety for all users. Fostering and harnessing the tacit local knowledge, enthusiasm and people power for experimenting with quick, cheap, temporary remedies is proven as an excellent

---

<sup>11</sup> See, for example:

Daniel, L. 2014. '3 Steps to better bike lanes right now', *Rethink Urban*, 30 December 2014, <http://rethinkurban.com/2014/creative-change/3-steps-to-better-bike-lanes-right-now/>; Hawkes, A. 'Pop-Up Planning: New Methods for Transforming the Public Process', *This Big City*, 5 November, 2013, <http://thisbigcity.net/pop-up-planning-new-methods-for-transforming-the-public-process/>; The Street Plans Collaborative. 2016. 'Iterative Project Delivery', *Tactical Urbanists' Guide to Getting It Done*, p. 14, December 2016, <http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/>; National Association of City Transport Officials. 2013. *Urban Street Design Guide, Phases of Transformation*, <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/streets/street-design-principles/phases-of-transformation/> and *Interim Design Guide*, <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/interim-design-strategies/>; Project for Public Spaces. 2016. *Placemaking: What if we built our cities around places?*, 24pp, [https://issuu.com/projectforpublicspaces/docs/oct\\_2016\\_placemaking\\_booklet](https://issuu.com/projectforpublicspaces/docs/oct_2016_placemaking_booklet), accessed 5 July 2024.

way to create a safe environment for everyone to use the streets.<sup>12</sup> This is what other jurisdictions around the world are doing.

## **Recommendation 8**

**The National Urban Policy should include harnessing tacit (local) knowledge and people power and community enthusiasm to undertake experimentation to quickly and cheaply find remedies for creating and retrofitting streets and other public places to benefit all users, particularly those not in motor vehicles.**

### Implementation and Accountability

If you don't know where you're going, any path will take you there. If you don't know where you've been, you don't know how far you've come and how far you have to go.

Implementation and accountability must be fit-for-purpose for both:

- determining effectiveness, assessing users' needs and measuring progress in ways that are timely and frequent enough to show progress (or lack of it) to help build momentum for change; and
- changing policies, plans and practices quickly enough to make a difference commensurate with the urgency of our climate, safety, inclusion, health and other needs.

Measurements need not only to be useful for comparisons across time and jurisdictions but to be tailored to the mode of transport<sup>13</sup> and include subjective needs (for example, where and how people feel unsafe or safe, and conflicts and crashes not captured by current routine methods of collection). Using modern and innovative technology can increase the frequency and ease of measuring needs and success while also reducing the burden on users and costs and effort to governments. These issues are particularly important for diverse mobility options.

---

<sup>12</sup> For example see: Daily Mail Reporter. 2010. 'Stop speeding... the DIY way: Plant pots, welcome mats and drawings slow cars', *Daily Mail*, 4 November 2010, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1326361/Stop-cars-speeding-DIY-way-using-plant-pots-drawings-road.html>; Anonymous. 2013. 'Portland's painted streets', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/gallery/2013/may/28/portland-usa-street-art>; Texas A&M College of Architecture. 2013. 'Tactical urbanism talk outlines urban intervention strategies', *ArchOne*, 4 February 2013, <https://newsarchive.arch.tamu.edu/news/2013/2/4/tactical-urbanism-lecture/>; Brown, M. 2017. 'These resources will help you host a pop-up traffic calming demonstration in your town', *Strong Towns*, 11 April 2017, <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/4/10/use-these-resources-to-host-a-pop-up-traffic-calming-demonstration>

<sup>13</sup> See, for example:

Measuring Walking. n.d. 'International Walking Data Standard', <https://www.measuring-walking.org/international-walking-data-standard>, accessed 17 July 2024; Walk21. n.d. 'Defining and measuring walking in a standard way', <https://www.measuring-walking.org/>, accessed 17 July 2024.



# Responses to consultation questions

## SHORT QUESTIONS

### 14. How do you think the Australian Government could be more involved in urban policy?

The Australian Government can provide national leadership, coordination and incentives to implement the National Urban Policy. This includes setting, working toward and monitoring achievement of objectives, goals, targets and actions in the National Urban Policy and especially those outlined in this submission.

### **Recommendation 8**

#### **The National Urban Policy :**

- 1. include actions and targets for active transport and associated infrastructure and rules to achieve the vision, goals and objectives of the Policy; and**
- 2. specifically re-prioritise Budgets at all levels of government so that they allocate - and spend - at least 20% for active and public transport, in line with international best practice<sup>14</sup> and reflecting targets for mode share and extra work needed to shift away from the dominance of and preference for cars and trucks.**

Another important way that the Australian Government can be more involved in urban policy is to facilitate implementation (including mandation and harmonisation) of existing laws, standards, guidance and best practices in a range of areas affecting urban areas. This is covered in Recommendations 6 and 7 earlier in this submission. Facilitating the ability for local government to make changes is vital.<sup>15</sup>

### 16. What goal in the draft National Urban Policy is the highest priority for you?

Liveability as the top goal ensures Australian urban areas (be they neighbourhoods, towns or cities) support the quality of life, health and wellbeing for the people who live, work or visit. Investment and targets that support urban liveability such as open and green space; educational, social, cultural amenity and recreational facilities are known to enhance citizen wellbeing and vibrant societies. While all equity, productivity, sustainability and resilience-are important, liveability is an all-encompassing broader goal that can ensure the other goals are also addressed. Furthermore, sustainability is vital for liveability. Attractiveness (including delight) is also important.

---

<sup>14</sup> Climate Council. 2023. *Shifting Gear: The path to cleaner transport*. op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Walks. 2021. 'Draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy', submission, 25 February 2021, <https://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Assets/Files/Submission%20-%20Infrastructure%20Victoria%2030%20year%20plan%202021%20-%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed 8 July 2024.

## **17. What other key goals should be included in the National Urban Policy? Include a brief description of why.**

In addition to the themes proposed in our Recommendations 3 and 5, we propose the following as additional elements of the National Urban Policy:

- target based reductions in air, noise and water pollution
- increasing road safety for all road users (particularly vulnerable road users), not just those in large vehicles
- increasing health of people
- reductions in and efficiency of use of natural resources
- increasing efficiency of land-use
- improving safety
- the addition of Net Zero Urban Centres by 2035

In the unfolding climate emergency and with the high potential for both large and relatively easy and quick emission reductions in urban areas, 'Net Zero Urban Centers by 2035' is a critical goal. It will help focus all urban areas on developing and adopting clear pathways for achieving zero greenhouse gas emissions. This will align with global climate commitments and requirements and foster a sustainable urban development model. Urban areas' climate action can provide the space for climate action in more difficult sectors and places.

## **18. What do you think would most improve the liveability of Australian cities?**

Provide and promote safe, accessible, comfortable and convenient active and public transport options and increase green spaces, for a range of co-benefits as well as urban liveability.<sup>16</sup> Support urban and street designs that minimise the need for unhealthy and carbon-intensive travel and transport. Encourage local living with access to economic and social infrastructure and amenities, to reduce everyday travel needs.

## **19. What do you think would most improve equity in Australian cities?**

Ensure equitable access to affordable, safe, comfortable and convenient active and public transport and to affordable housing close to employment and services.

## **20. What do you think would most improve productivity in Australian cities?**

Redefine productivity to include economic & social participation and other factors that contribute to sustainable, liveable, equitable and thriving urban areas.

Apply the 'Avoid, Shift, Improve' framework for transport:

- Ensure that every street is safe, accessible, comfortable and convenient and attractive for active transport. This can reduce motor vehicle congestion, the space and infrastructure needed for motor vehicles, environmental damage, and health costs.
- Use technology to gather data about active transport use, infrastructure and incidents. Use the data, to facilitate greater safety, accessibility and use of active transport.

---

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, America Walks. 2008-2024. 'Benefits of Walkability', <https://americawalks.org/resources/benefits-of-walkability/>, accessed 3 July 2024.

Integrate technology and smart city solutions to improve efficiency and connectivity within urban areas.

**21. What do you think would most improve sustainability in Australian cities?**

See answer to 20.

**22. What do you think would most improve the resilience of Australian cities?**

Increase living and built infrastructure that can withstand the increasingly extreme weather and that can provide more shelter for people outside and reduce urban heat in summer (including streets and other hard surfaces shaded in summer).<sup>17</sup>

**23 Which...do you see as the most important objective?**

All the following objectives are important, because they are interrelated:

- No-one and no place left behind
- All people belong and are welcome
- Our urban areas are safe
- Our urban areas are sustainable
- Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing
- Our urban areas promote productivity

Urban areas that are sustainable and promote health and wellbeing also support the overarching goals of achieving net-zero emissions and enhancing urban quality of life.

**LONGER QUESTIONS**

**24. Do you agree with the Australian Government's goals for cities and suburbs? (Liveable, Equitable, Productive, Sustainable, Resilient).**

We agree with the proposed goals of creating liveable, equitable, productive, sustainable, and resilient urban environments. However, they must be supported by clear metrics in the National Urban Policy and dedicated funding for the goals to be implemented and make a difference.

**27. Do you think the Australian Government focusing on the objectives will lead to the achievement of the goals?**

The goals can be achieved if the Australian Government focuses on the objectives in ways outlined earlier in this submission.

**30. Are there other key urban challenges that you think are important on a national scale that are not included in the draft National Urban Policy?**

---

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Victoria Walks. 2021. 'Submission to Transport, Built and Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans 2022-2026', 6 August 2021, <https://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Assets/Files/Climate%20adaptation%20submission%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed 8 July 2024.

The earlier, main part of this submission outlines key urban challenges that are important on national and local scales and should be included in the National Urban Policy.

The final Policy also needs to address budgeting and planning practices. In particular, they tend to favour driving, focus on the costs of active and public transport, and undervalue active transport (including its co-benefits)<sup>18</sup> and walking in particular. Even-handedness in the budgeting, planning and monitoring of success (indicators) of transport modes is needed. Both quick comparison tools<sup>19</sup> and more comprehensive analysis techniques<sup>20</sup> have been developed and 'are likely to increase public support for walking and other nonmotorized modes of travel'.<sup>21</sup>

### **32. Each objective in the draft National Urban Policy includes potential actions. What other actions would you like to see included?**

Local Governments play a crucial role in addressing climate change adaptation and risk at the community level due to their responsibilities for land use planning, infrastructure development, emergency management, and public health and safety. They are responsible for the bulk of streets and paths, yet have limited funds, capacity and authority to make many of the changes envisaged in the National Urban Policy for which they have responsibility. Local Governments are also closest to the people who are most affected by the changes and who have the tacit knowledge, enthusiasm and people-power to help make effective changes quickly - particularly in regard to improving environments for active transport.

Creation of specific funds (such as a National Active Transport Infrastructure Fund and National Urban Climate Resilience Fund) could support Local Governments to use urban and landscape design and local communities to increase sustainability and climate resilience of urban areas and to improve environments and infrastructure to facilitate more active transport.

### **33. Do you agree with the principles in Appendix A?**

The principles in Appendix A are broadly acceptable. They would be improved by:

- the final National Urban Policy document showing clearly how they - and the themes we propose earlier in this submission (Recommendations 3 and 5) - apply throughout the policy; we suggest a matrix in the summary graphics.
- including 'community' in collaborative and adaptive planning and governance - and implementation
- explicitly recognising that ensuring that every street is safe, accessible, comfortable and convenient for active transport is a critical element of high-quality, healthy, sustainable and liveable urban areas.

---

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, America Walks. 2008-2024. 'Benefits of Walkability', <https://americawalks.org/resources/benefits-of-walkability/>, accessed 3 July 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Such as Road Damage Calculator, <https://roaddamagecalculator.com/>, accessed 17 July 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Litman, T. 2023. *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*