



GREATER
DANDENONG
City of Opportunity

**Submission to the
Parliamentary inquiry into the
impact of road safety
behaviours on vulnerable
road users
May 2023**



Introduction & Context

In late March 2023, the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee invited public submissions for its investigation into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users.

The inquiry will specifically look at **how road users' behaviour changed** during and after the COVID19 pandemic and how this affected the safety of people most at risk on the road.

The Committee Chair Alison Marchant said, *“Last year, 241 Victorians lost their lives on the road, and thousands more were injured”* and *“We also know many more pedestrians and motorcyclists died on the road last year compared with the previous year.”*

Vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcycle riders, are less protected in the event of a road crash. The inquiry will consider the impact of road users' behaviour on these groups as well as on the safety of children, older people and people using mobility devices.

The Committee will therefore investigate how road safety behaviours have changed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and consider the impact these changes have had on vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcycle riders, children 7 and under, older people and mobility device users.

Ms Marchant said further, *“We want to hear from road users about their experiences on the road during and after COVID, and their views on how to improve road safety behaviours.”*

“We're also keen to hear from road safety experts and peak bodies representing road users on what they think is shaping people's behaviour on the road, and how this information can be used to improve safety.”

The City of Greater Dandenong (CGD) has embraced this opportunity to submit some of its road safety practicing professional officers' views.

This short document captures those views and includes several links to relevant information sources.



CGD's Submission Focus

This submission expresses the views and insights of the Dandenong City Council's road safety engineers.

It is a summary of opinions and experiences, with references via a variety of links to general as well as some local information.

Council officers are aware:

- the Victorian Government holds data on accidents, including contributing factors etc. *Some of our officers have privileged access to restricted levels of detail within these State systems.*
- The enquiry already has access to this data.
- Data held by Victoria Police. *Council's officers have restricted access to some of this data through our correspondence with Victoria Police, but much is confidential and cannot be shared.*
- The enquiry already has access to this data through other channels.

COVID-19 pandemic Impacts

People have changed....

Distracted road users: With more people working from home and relying on technology for communication, there has been an increase in distraction, affecting drivers, walkers and riders.

References:

- <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/staying-safe/distracted-driving>
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>



Complacent driving: some drivers became used to roads with lower traffic volumes and reduced police enforcement.

References:

- <https://arsf.com.au/covid-19-complacency-driving-rise-in-dangerous-road-behaviour/>
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>



Increased alcohol consumption at home: With the closure of bars and clubs during the pandemic, there has been an increase in alcohol consumption at home, leading to an increase in drink driving and pedestrian accidents.

References:

- <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/impact-of-covid-19-on-alcohol-and-other-drug-use>
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings



Angry driving: Stress and anxiety levels have risen, which in some cases has led to drivers behaving differently. Driving as a “release” of stress in hoon style events also increased.

References:

- <https://arsf.com.au/covid-19-complacency-driving-rise-in-dangerous-road-behaviour/>
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>



Anxious and inexperienced driving:

Many less confident drivers are on the roads. Some did not drive for several years during lockdowns. Others prefer public transport, but now drive due to health concerns regarding public transport use.

References:

- <https://fittodrive.org.au/returning-to-the-road-a-test-for-young-drivers/>
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>



Lack of respect for authority and rules: has become a greater part of individual identity in response to the introduction of laws which some view as infringing on their rights. More members of the community now show pride in disregard of the law – including road rules.

References:

- <https://dtp.vic.gov.au/getting-around/roads/safer-roads-in-our-hands>
- Identifying approaches to address the hoon behaviours of drivers in local communities and any newly identified motivations behind the behaviour Report
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings



COVID-19 pandemic Impacts

The Environment has changed....

Reduced traffic volumes: The reduction in peak traffic volumes during the pandemic led to an increase in speeds at these times.



References:

- discover.data.vic.gov.au/dataset/monthly-public-transport-patronage-by-mode
- <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>
- CGD Traffic Data
- <https://explore.veitchlister.com.au/covid-19-dashboard/>

Reduced enforcement: Police normally involved in road safety activities were pulled to other areas for lockdown enforcement.



References:

- <https://arsf.com.au/covid-19-complacency-driving-rise-in-dangerous-road-behaviour/>
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>

Increase in the number of people walking and cycling: There has been an increase in the number of pedestrians and cyclists on the roads, leading to an increased risk of pedestrian and cyclist accidents and a less familiar environment for drivers.



References:

- <https://bicyclenetwork.com.au/newsroom/2021/09/08/bike-riding-trends-up-in-victoria/>
- CGD Bicycle Counts

Vehicles have changed: There has been an increase in larger vehicles, and in electric vehicles. Both present safety issues for pedestrians and riders.

References:

- Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries
New Car Sales Data - www.fcai.com.au

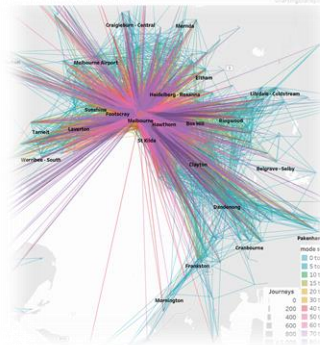


Travel patterns are less predictable:

There have been changes to when and where people travel, meaning a consistent driving experience is less likely, with infrequently used turns experiencing more traffic, and off-peak traffic volumes increasing in some areas.

References:

- discover.data.vic.gov.au/dataset/monthly-public-transport-patronage-by-mode
- <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>
- CGD Traffic Data
- <https://explore.veitchlister.com.au/covid-19-dashboard/>



Changes in road infrastructure:

There has been changes in road infrastructure to accommodate increased active transport modes such as cycling. Additionally, some on-road space has been converted to provide outdoor dining areas.

References:

- <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/making-outdoor-dining-parklets-permanent-a-positive-step-for-melbourne-20230324>
- <https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Covid-commuting-Gigante.pdf>



Road works and construction:

construction blitzes across Victoria have led to frequently changing traffic conditions.

References:

- bigbuild.vic.gov.au/news



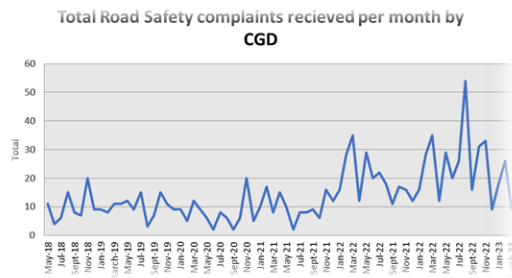
COVID-19 pandemic Impacts

What have we seen in Greater Dandenong?

An increase in the number of concerns and complaints: from residents relating to road safety (perceived and justified).

References:

- City of Greater Dandenong Customer Record Management System



An increase (temporary) in intentional high-risk driving, including organised hooning events: construction blitzes across Victoria have led to frequently changing traffic conditions.

References:

- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Road Safety Victoria's Hooning Community Reference Group
- Identifying approaches to address the hoon behaviours of drivers in local communities and any newly identified motivations behind the behaviour Report (RSV <https://dtp.vic.gov.au/getting-around/roads/safer-roads-in-our-hands>)



Accidents involving road rage / anger: community observations and concerns exacerbated by recent incident in Noble Park injuring cyclist.

References:

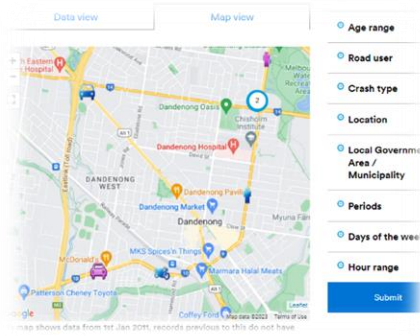
- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Identifying approaches to address the hoon behaviours of drivers in local communities and any newly identified motivations behind the behaviour Report (RSV <https://dtp.vic.gov.au/getting-around/roads/safer-roads-in-our-hands>)



Ongoing serious and fatal accidents: particularly on State managed arterial roads.

References:

- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>
- Victorian Government Road Crash Information System <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/safety-statistics/crash-statistic>



Accidents (including at least one fatality): involving drivers returning to the roads after a long break.

References:

- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings



Reduced uptake of Road Safety education programs: lower uptake in programs through Road Safety Victoria, Schools, Community Groups, Councils etc.

References:

- <https://fittodrive.org.au/fit-to-drive-foundation-launches-online-program-to-help-learners-navigate-coronavirus-restrictions/>
- RoadSafe South-East
- Council booking data
- Road Safety Victoria Road Safety Grants



Travel patterns have not settled since Covid: We are still experiencing:

- Reduced public transport use
- Increased walking and cycling locally
- Reduced peak traffic volumes
- Reduced use of Activity Centres for work



References:

- discover.data.vic.gov.au/dataset/monthly-public-transport-patronage-by-mode
- <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>
- CGD Traffic Data
- <https://explore.veitchlister.com.au/covid-19-dashboard/>

Moderate / high illegal use of e-scooters, with a few minor accidents:
regular illegal e-scooter use observed

References:

- Victoria Police Accident Records and findings
- <https://www.racv.com.au/royalauto/transport/electric-scooter-riding-safety-and-victoria-laws-faqs.html>



What do we think is needed?

- Strong political buy in at a high level, including recognition of the very high levels of funding and potential systemic change required to address this extremely complex issue
- Retrofitting infrastructure measures that prioritise vulnerable road users, such as cycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, and speed limits
- Designing new spaces with a focus on pedestrians and cyclists, without being motor vehicle dominated
- Encouraging safe use of, and interaction with active transport modes through education and awareness campaigns
- Adequate resources for law enforcement agencies to enforce road safety laws and regulations
- Reconsidering the role of public transport and significantly improving access to public transport for the elderly and isolated

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in road safety behaviours, which have had both positive and negative impacts on vulnerable road users. It is essential to implement evidence-based policies and practices to improve road safety for vulnerable road users, including infrastructure, education and awareness campaigns, and law enforcement.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit our views and insights on this important issue.

Further reading and evidence....

The opinions within this submission have been formed based on reviews of data from a range of sources, most of which are also available to the Committee. The following sources are recommended:

Victoria Police Accident Records and findings

Southern Metropolitan Region Road Safety Forum Outcomes Report 2021 (VicPol & MUARC) - <https://www.monash.edu/muarc/our-publications>

Victorian Government Road Crash Information System
<https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/safety-statistics/crash-statistic>

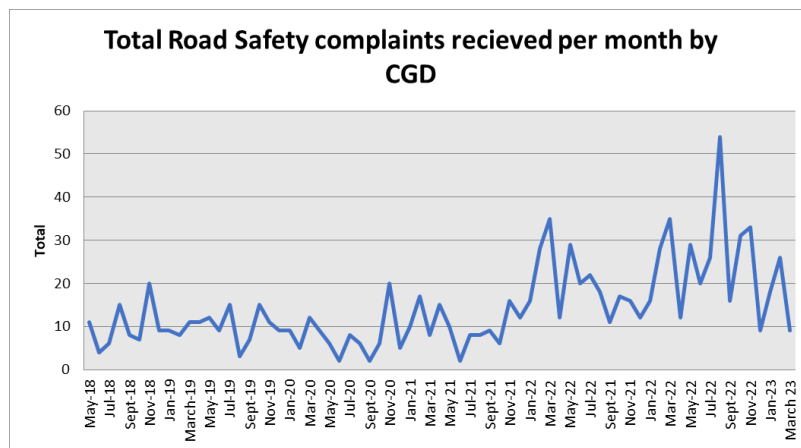
Impacts of Covid-19 on mobility – various models including Veitch Lister Consulting Covid-19 impact reporting / Google Mobility Data / Department of Transport and Planning Public Transport Use Data <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>

Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries New Car Sales Data - www.fcmai.com.au

Victoria's Big Build - <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/>

If detailed Council data is required, then this can be requested by contacting RoadSafety@cgd.vic.gov.au

e.g. Councils Customer Record Management System identifying an all-time high number of road safety concerns received in 2022, or details around changes to outdoor dining policies affecting the roadside environment
<https://www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/outdoor-dining>



If you have any queries, please feel free to contact Lucas Sikiotis, Manager Transport & Civil Development > lucas.sikiotis@cgd.vic.gov.au

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