

August 2023

## **Response: Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users – Questions on Notice**

### **Question 1**

**A breakdown of the primary mode of transport that older residents in Victoria primarily use, whether it is a breakdown of being a pedestrian or a cyclist or a mobility device user or a motorist. Is there a breakdown that you have that you may be able to provide the Committee?**

There is limited data available on a precise breakdown of the primary mode of transport for older Victorian residents across the state. However, there are components of research that can be used to highlight a narrative.

For instance, research from 2013, based on surveys of more than 1000 people conducted in strip shopping centres across five Melbourne councils, found that private motorised travel is the main transport mode for older people (60+) accessing strip shopping centres.<sup>1</sup> It also highlighted that walking rates are consistent across most aged groups, with approximately 30%, or 1 in 3, travellers walking at some stage.

This figure is supported by later research. Victoria Walks analysis from 2019 found that, for every age group between 20 and 90, around one in three people who leave home will do some walking.<sup>2</sup> Older people also tend to walk most for recreation and exercise.

The dominance of car travel for older Victorians is also underlined by subsequent research about drivers. As of December 2019, the age group with the highest proportion of vehicle drivers in Australia is 50-64, with 93%. This was followed by those aged 65-69 (91%), 35-49 (91%), 70-74 (89%), and 75-79 (86%).<sup>3</sup> Recent analysis on behalf of Infrastructure Victoria found that people aged 50+ are least likely to consider bus/public transport for shopping or appointments as a mode of transport, while those aged 65+ are:

- Less likely to use all modes of transport, suggesting lower overall mobility.
- Less likely to use all modes of transport except cars on a weekly basis. Just 7% use buses at least weekly, compared to 16% of the total population.

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<sup>1</sup> Vial, D. and Prior, M (2013). Shopping Precinct User Profiles: Informing Streetscape Planning and Management. Presentation to Thriving Neighbourhoods Conference 2013. IOSS.

<sup>2</sup> Eady, J. and Burt, B (2019). Walking and transport in Melbourne suburbs. Victoria Walks. November 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Assets/Files/Walking%20%20transport%20FINAL.pdf> (17 August 2023)

<sup>3</sup> Roy Morgan (2020). New data shows decreasing proportion of younger drivers on our roads, but more seniors staying behind the wheel. Roy Morgan. 2 March 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/new-data-shows-decreasing-proportion-of-younger-drivers-on-our-roads-but-more-seniors-staying-behind-the-wheel> (16 August 2023)

- More likely to have their own car (89%, vs. 85% of the total population), and to agree they couldn't survive without a car (74% vs. 70%)<sup>4</sup>

## Question 2

**Do you have any insight or data on older Victorians upgrading their cars to newer cars and changing into a more modern car with all those technologies that we all—some of us—enjoy? Have you explored that in any way?**

Like the last question, there is again limited data available on Victorian older drivers and their cars. There used to be a Motor Vehicle Census for Australia by the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS), which has now ceased, although the ABS continues to capture data on the age of drivers. We are unable to connect the data on vehicle age with the age of the driver.

The conventional view, as supported by the Transport Accident Commission, is that older drivers are often driving older vehicles, which aren't fitted with the latest safety features; this increases the risk of injury in a crash.<sup>5</sup> However, this is starting to change in relation to the new car buyer market. Market research from 2019 found that 48% of new vehicle intenders in Australia were aged 50 plus compared to only 38% a decade prior. This growth was being driven by those aged 65+ who now represent 18% of the market (up from 9%).<sup>6</sup>

This diversity in cars is supported by research on older drivers (65+) in Western Australia from 2019.<sup>7</sup> Over half of vehicles driven by participants in the study were purchased new (57.9%), yet the average vehicle age was 8.2 years and, when asked if and when they expect to replace the vehicle, the most common response was that they did not intend to replace the vehicle (48.1%).

This research also highlighted that evidence generally suggests that, while there is some awareness and acceptance of new technologies, older adults (particularly older women) are less aware and accepting of new technologies compared with younger adults.

## Further comment

COTA Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria believe that the issues in accessing the statewide data requested by the Committee exemplify the need for the collection and publication of greater data on older Victorians regarding transport, as highlighted by Recommendation 5 in our submission.

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<sup>4</sup> Quantum Markey Research (2023). Bus Reform Community Research – Final report. Infrastructure Victoria. March 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Infrastructure-Victoria-Bus-Reform-Community-Research-Quantum-Market-Research.pdf> (17 August 2023)

<sup>5</sup> Transport Accident Commission (2023). Older people. TAC. Retrieved from: <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/road-users/older-people> (16 August 2023)

<sup>6</sup> Roy Morgan (2020). New data shows decreasing proportion of younger drivers on our roads, but more seniors staying behind the wheel. Roy Morgan. 2 March 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/new-data-shows-decreasing-proportion-of-younger-drivers-on-our-roads-but-more-seniors-staying-behind-the-wheel> (16 August 2023)

<sup>7</sup> Oxley, J. Et al (2019). Safe vehicles and older adults: enhancing travel and mobility options. Monash University Accident Research Centre. October 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-08/Safe-vehicles-and-older-adults-Final-Report.pdf> (17 August 2023)