

Submission to 'A National Urban Policy for Australia'

Thursday, 18 July 2024

A submission from the Australian bicycle sector

The Australian bicycle organisations co-signing this submission are pleased to present responses and feedback in response to the consultation paper 'A National Urban Policy for Australia.'

We thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the consultation.

Kind regards,

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This submission is tendered on behalf of
the following Australian bicycle organisations



AusCycling



Bicycle Network



Bicycle NSW



Bicycle QLD



Bike SA



Pedal Power (ACT)



WeRide



WestCycle

Submission to ‘A National Urban Policy for Australia’

Introduction

Australian bicycle sector

The Australian bicycle organisations co-signing this submission are pleased to contribute to the National Urban Policy (‘the Policy’) addressing how government, industry, and community can collaborate to improve our cities and suburbs now and for future generations.

Our organisations represent a combined national membership of 141,500 as well as the 9.52 million Australians who rode a bike in 2023¹. Importantly, we also represent the large and growing cohort of Australians who would take up riding a bike for transport if provided with a safe, connected network of active transport infrastructure².

The opportunity

Good urban design means the built environment ensures everyone in a community has opportunities for autonomous travel to the things that matter, no matter their age, ability or gender.

Given most trips in Australia’s cities are less than 5km, and most Australians want to live in places where it’s easy to access active modes of transport³. There is therefore huge potential for walking and bike riding. Unfortunately, most of Australia’s urban areas prioritise travel by car, to the detriment of other modes of transport.

As the Draft National Urban Policy notes, the middle and outer suburbs of our cities are home to the biggest numbers of people experiencing severe disadvantage, yet are typically underserved by public transport, footpaths and cycleways. These areas often have less tree canopy cover and are further from the cooling effect of the coast, making riding a bike or walking through summer heat even more unwelcome. Conversely, inner city areas tend to be better serviced by public transport, have established leafy urban canopies, diverse local destinations, and more streets that are accessible by bike and walking.

A blueprint for the future

The National Urban Policy can build on the blueprint already set through established, inner-city areas to create a vision for Australia’s suburbs that gives everyone the same opportunities for mobility and increases the liveability of our cities while reducing emissions in the transport sector, improving population health and community amenity and addressing cost of living and equity concerns. Bike riding, particularly in combination with walking and public transport, can provide people living anywhere in Australia’s cities with safe, low-cost, low-emission, readily accessible transport for most of their daily trips. Our submission includes recommendations for how the National Urban Policy can guide federal, state and local governments to create thriving urban communities where it’s easy for everyone to get around by bike and on foot.

¹ https://www.cwanz.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NWCPS_2023_report_v1.3.pdf, accessed on 20 March 2024.

² https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The_Australian_Cycling_and_e-scooter_Economy_in_2022_WeRide_and_EY_2023_Report_Final_web.pdf, Part 4, Cycling motivating factors, accessed on 16 May 2024.

³ https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/What_Australia_Wants_Report_.pdf

Key themes

1. **Active Transport is directly relevant to all aspects of the Policy.** The way Australians move and are encouraged to move in our communities has a major impact on life opportunities, equity of access, productivity and personal health. Ensuring sustainable and healthy transport options are available to all has direct relevance to each of the five goals outlined in the consultation document. The proportion of Australians 15 years and over with a driving license is just 77%⁴ and a focus on electric vehicles (EVs) to the exclusion of other modes ignores the fact that more than one in five Australians do not drive, whether due to cost, disability or other reasons. This statistic also does not account for the nation's children who are predominantly driven to school. We will comment further under each objective.

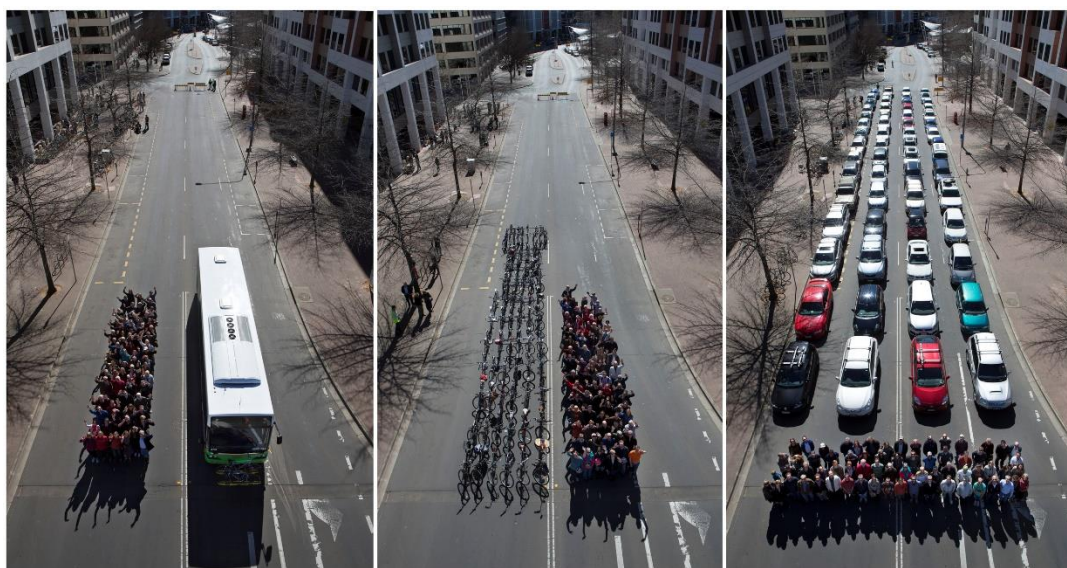
2. **The Policy should refer explicitly to guidance on how to boost active transport in collaboration with all jurisdictions.** Our transport choices have an impact on environmental outcomes and the sustainability of our urban areas, especially given the over-sized emissions profile of road transport at 87% of transport emissions⁵. The explicit inclusion of active transport in the discussion of the objectives and goals in this Policy is noted, but explicit actions, incentives and investment guidance are also required if active transport is to assume a larger proportion of trips in urban areas.
 - a. Consideration of active transport is important as one of the easiest and rapid strategies to encourage mode shift for the 50% of all trips for all purposes every day that are 5km or less within cities.
 - b. It is an affordable, equitable and sustainable mode of transport that is well understood in the population and requires no expensive technological developments to roll out immediately. It reduces transport emissions and enhances health outcomes.
 - c. It enhances resiliency in the transport system. This is because active transport increases the availability of alternative modes of transport for disrupted users in road and public transport corridors, referred to as higher redundancy⁶.
 - d. The Policy should state that every city must ensure local streets are safe for those who choose to use active transport and build a network of strategic cycling corridors that connect activity centres, residential, educational and employment districts across the metropolitan area, including all railway stations and public transport nodes, local activity centres, sports facilities and other major destinations.
 - e. Consideration and integration of all modes of transport should be a core attribute of the Policy to ensure biking and walking are always considered in transport planning and management. Equally, disbenefits of planning and investment for other modes should be taken into account when establishing the business case

⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/701041037>, accessed on 20 March 2024

⁵ Climate Change Authority 2024 Issues paper: Targets, Pathways and Progress; <https://storage.googleapis.com/files-au-climate/cca/p/prj2d33336e5a90d264a70605/page/Issues%20paper%20-%20Targets,%20Pathways%20and%20Progress.pdf>, accessed on 8 May 2024.

⁶ <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2024.2322434>, accessed on 9 July 2024.

for roads for example. The independent Welsh Review Panel was tasked with delivering a new framework for assessment of roads projects as part of the Welsh Government's climate and future generations policies. Their Report, 'The Future of Road Investment in Wales,' resulted in major changes to delivery of multi-modal transport in that nation⁷.



Above: the Canberra Transport Photo, with 69 people with 69 bikes, one bus and 60 cars, reveals space advantages of active transport in cities. ©We Ride Australia.

3. **Defining what constitutes an urban environment or city.** The State of the Cities snapshot in the Policy states that 'our twenty largest cities generate 77.8% of the nation's GDP.' The National Urban Policy should define what constitutes an urban environment and examples of the cities the Policy could or does apply to. This would provide additional clarity for the vision and scope for the Policy and any monitoring and reporting framework.
4. **Federal opportunities for action.** The Policy document states that the Australian Government will work with states and territories to develop initiatives that deliver on the shared vision to address the urgent challenges facing our cities. The Australian Government is in a unique position to drive action to achieve the objectives under this policy but must provide clear, unequivocal recommendations to facilitate the outcomes. It should:
 - a. Establish a clear implementation plan and agreed monitoring and reporting regime that refers to established performance frameworks, existing benchmarked data and best practice guidance. This helps ensure poor practice is strongly discouraged.
 - b. Adopt explicit positive provision measures for all infrastructure funding provided to state and local governments to enhance complete major city active transport networks – whether radial or inter-activity centres. It should specify consideration of active transport funding as part of the Black Spot Program, ensure ongoing maintenance is considered and introduce additional requirements for climate

⁷ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-02/the-future-road-investment-wales.pdf>, accessed on 15 July 2024.

outcomes and health to be considered as part of all road infrastructure project assessment and ensure funding for active transport increases substantially over time to reach a proportion equal to mode share targets considered necessary to meet urban policy and national carbon abatement objectives⁸.

- c. Remove import tax and duties on e-bikes and other key forms of mobility that enhance options for mobility in cities.
- d. Update tax legislation to incentivise use of e-bikes for trips to work by removing the work use clause under Fringe Benefit Tax legislation as it has done for electric vehicles (EVs) and consider additional programs to incentivise trips to work by active transport.
- e. Provide funding to support states to deliver wide-ranging e-bike rebate and subsidy schemes⁹ that offer equity of access to potential users of active modes of transport and create incentives to replace daily motor vehicle trips for personal use.
- f. Provide Medicare rebates for the prescription by General Practitioners of Active Health Plans.
- g. Provide funding for schools to deliver ride and walk to school programs and ensure complete, safe active transport networks connect schools to their local communities.
- h. Establish performance outcomes for all grants to state, territory and local governments to ensure climate change mitigation, health and equity outcomes are considered as part of funding decisions, and
- i. Endorse nationally and globally recognised best practice guidelines where appropriate. For example, Movement and Place principles are increasingly a core element of any contemporary urban policy initiative. Already used in Victoria and NSW¹⁰, these policies ensure that roads and streets are more than just for moving and parking vehicles¹¹, with a crucial role for liveability and social and economic activity. Other national and international guidelines include the NACTO guide for urban street design¹² and the Heart Foundation's Healthy Active by Design¹³.

5. Equitable access to infrastructure, education, jobs and cultural activities requires a focus on equitable mobility. Whether planning for social housing and services, or ensuring accessibility as our communities grow, mobility that is accessible, equitable, safe and affordable is central to this Policy. Consideration of active transport should be a key focus of this policy.

⁸ These targets are increasingly being set by many nations at 10% or more and by the UN at 20%, see quote in Conversation article 'Cycling and walking are short-changed when it comes to transport funding in Australia' at <https://theconversation.com/cycling-and-walking-are-short-changed-when-it-comes-to-transport-funding-in-australia-92574>, accessed on 15 July 2024.

⁹ <https://tasmania.com/blog/tasmanian-government-to-grant-money-to-buy-e-bikes-and-e-scooters/>

¹⁰ <https://www.movementandplace.nsw.gov.au/> and

https://www.mav.asn.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/34780/Movement-and-Place-in-Victoria-Feb-2019.PDF

¹¹

https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2023/Strategic_cycleway_corridors_Greater_Sydney_Summary.pdf

¹² <https://nacto.org/publications/design-guides/>, accessed on 5 July 2024.

¹³ <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-living/healthy-active-by-design>, accessed on 8 July.

- a. All new subdivisions should be planned so that schools and activity centres are well connected to a complete, safe cycling network, and steps taken to ensure all school catchment areas (within 800m - 2km) are retrofitted where possible to encourage walking and cycling to school and so those who do not drive are considered and provided for in this Policy.
- b. Equitable access to all precincts in urban areas. Designing urban environments that encourage population-level incidental physical activity is a critical imperative for this nation and, while sports precincts are a small subset of the solution, the Policy should explicitly focus on health, climate and equity concerns of our built urban environment.
- c. Accessibility broadens appeal. The Policy states that ‘making tourism facilities more accessible broadens their appeal to people with disability, older people and families with young children allowing more equitable access...’ etc. This Policy should explicitly adopt that mantra across the entire document to reinforce that our streets and precincts are first and foremost for all citizens. Only when we succeed in making all destinations more accessible for all people with a disability, older people and families with young children and prams will we succeed in enhancing liveability and accessibility for all nationwide. The Policy should only mention tourism and sporting facilities as examples that are part of the bigger picture.
- d. Technology that shapes cities of the future must be encouraged in ways that support and promote active transport and do not discriminate against those riding bikes and walking.

Vision

A vision for national urban planning must call on governments at all levels to work together to align, integrate and co-ordinate urban policies designed to improve cities and suburbs across the nation, and ensure that action plans, targets and timelines are shared, deliverable and cohesive.

It must also drive and support innovation that uses climate change science and data to develop well-planned, equitable urban environments capable of generating long-term, climate-resilient contributions to national productivity and liveability.

For example, the vision could be:

“The Australian Government works closely with local and state governments to create liveable, sustainable, resilient and productive urban areas in every part of Australia. Communities contribute to a Net Zero future with high-quality housing close to transport, jobs, schools and services. Places enable every Australian to move actively for everyday trips.”

Objectives

In the following section, we highlight relevant discussions and actions from the Policy paper and submit recommendations that the authors feel are relevant to developing a National Urban Policy to ensure mobility options are sustainable, accessible and relevant to the nation's urban environments and all who participate in community life in our cities.

The language of the draft Policy should be more concise and contain clear actions and commitments. In this submission, 'challenges' have been re-framed as 'opportunities'. 'Possible actions' have been re-framed and re-drafted as 'recommendations'.

Objective 1: No-one and no place left behind

Key opportunities
Plan and create communities with equitable access to infrastructure, education, jobs and cultural activities. Improve access to social services and transport for people living in middle and outer urban areas.
Objective 1 Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide funding for schools to deliver ride and walk to school programs and ensure complete, safe active transport networks that connect schools to their local communities are part of funding guidelines under federal, state and territory investment programs.2. The Policy should acknowledge the specific cohorts of Australians for the diverse needs that are relevant to the urban planning framework being developed. Not only tourists, disadvantaged and First Nations groups, but different age and cultural groups require consideration in our national urban policy both for the needs they have and their potential contribution to the life of cities. The Office of Youth outlines the contributions and diverse experiences of young people¹⁴.3. Ensure planning and investment in social and affordable housing includes facilities for, and links, to active transport networks to ensure accessible and equitable transport choices are available to residents in all urban areas.4. Provide state governments with a framework to leverage private investment developer contributions for safe, equitable active transport networks, such as shared bike and pedestrian paths, as part of all major urban development projects.

Objective 2: All people belong and are welcome

Key opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone is able and encouraged to participate in community life.
Objective 2 Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Provide national guidance to ensure the best possible outcomes in relation to delivery of infrastructure for active transport in all cities. This could be endorsement and inclusion of global best practice guidelines such as NACTO Urban Street Design Guides¹⁵ (or a national equivalent) and national best practice guidelines such as the Heart Foundation's

¹⁴ [Office for Youth](#), accessed on 15 July 2024.

¹⁵ <https://nacto.org/publications/design-guides/>, accessed on 5 July 2024.

Healthy Active by Design¹⁶ and the previously developed National Urban Design Protocol¹⁷.

6. National commitment should be negotiated with states and territories to ensure that the active transport infrastructure is in place for all new housing developments in the same way as the 'national approach to improving mobile coverage in housing growth areas' recently announced by Minister for Communications, the Hon. Michelle Rowland¹⁸.
7. Clearly articulate the multiple benefits and collect performance and use data to illustrate the health, environmental, liveability, equity, economic and congestion benefits of investment in active transport.

Objective 3: Our urban areas are safe

Key opportunities

- Everyone has access to safe mobility in Australia's cities, whether in a private vehicle, on public transport or walking and cycling.

Objective 3 Recommendations

8. Require all transport and community infrastructure projects to achieve nationally consistent and agreed design and planning guidelines consistent with Vision Zero principals (see #3) when federally funded.
9. Collaborate with state, territory and local governments, to provide guidance on inclusive urban design principles to enhance urban safety, accessibility, liveability and equity through existing frameworks such as COAG or the Planning Minister's Meeting.

Objective 4: Our urban areas are sustainable

Key opportunities

- The transition to zero carbon transport modes is an opportunity to rapidly reduce our carbon emissions while reaping immediate health and economic benefits as part of a resilient and equitable transport system.

Objective 4 Recommendations

10. The Policy should explicitly outline how the Australian Government will address the major contribution of transport to emissions through this Policy. Every federally funded transport project should be assessed on the relative carbon costs of its projected passenger movement capacity in addition to all traditional assessment parameters.
11. Provide a significant increase in funding of active transport infrastructure. This will be needed if cities are to 'lead the climate solution by promoting sustainable transport'¹⁹. The increase in funding active transport should match future agreed mode share targets that the Policy document states are 'needed to create cleaner and more sustainable cities'²⁰. As stated in the Policy, 'these strategies not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also enhance public health outcomes and the liveability of our cities.'
12. Introduce financial incentives for the purchase of e-bikes and adopt consistent legislation for the use of e-bikes and bicycles as exists for EVs by changing the work use requirements under FBT legislation.

¹⁶ <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-living/healthy-active-by-design>, accessed on 8 July 2024.

¹⁷ <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/publications/creating-places-people-urban-design-protocol-australian-cities>, accessed on 8 July 2024.

¹⁸ <https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/new-national-approach-improving-mobile-coverage-housing-growth-areas>, accessed on 8 July 2024.

¹⁹ Draft National Urban Policy, page 31.

²⁰ Ibid, page 31.

13. A target of 64% of non-freight trips to be made without a car by 2030 (Climate Council recommendation)

Objective 5: Our urban environments and communities promote health and wellbeing

Key opportunities

- Building safe and accessible walking and riding paths, community spaces and accessible local destinations will contribute to positive health outcomes and reduce social isolation.

Objective 5 Recommendations

14. Ensure investments in community and environmental initiatives, in collaboration with state, territory and local governments, are delivering safe, accessible active transport infrastructure by establishment of clear performance and design guidelines for all such investments. Refer to Rec. #3.
15. All new housing to be accessible by active transport means within 800m of a train or metro station or 400m of a medium-frequency bus stop. Prioritise and identify low socio-economic areas that have the worst outcomes for transport and active transport that affect people's ability to access health, education and employment services.

Objective 6: Our urban areas promote productivity

Key opportunities

- Active transport is prioritised as an important part of an integrated transport system.
- Everyone has more options for how they travel.
- Making streets more accessible for active transport provides more opportunities for innovative solutions for last mile delivery.

Objective 6 recommendations

16. Introduce financial incentives for the use of e-cargo bikes in logistics and freight deliveries for the 'last mile'.
17. Increase funding for active transport infrastructure to 10% of federal transport investment.
18. Increase the quality and availability of infrastructure for active transport, such as walking, cycling and e-mobility, and support funding and education programs for behavioural shifts that promote increased active transport within communities

Conclusion

In conclusion, Australian bicycle organisations look forward to the final National Urban Policy document. We would be happy to provide further input to the development of the Policy. We welcome a future National Urban Policy that has measurable targets and metrics under each objective and more succinctly sets out an implementation plan with roles for all levels of government, how it will be monitored and how progress will be reported annually or as agreed.

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