INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF ROAD SAFETY BEHAVIOURS ON VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

Organisation: Coburg High School Walking & Riding sub-committee, on behalf of School Council

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Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users

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Executive Summary

Victoria’s road conditions pose increased risks for young people, including Coburg High School students, who walk, cycle, or use public transport.

Victoria’s parliamentarians and policy-makers have the power to make systemic changes to significantly improve safety for vulnerable road users on their journeys to and from school and other destinations.

The Coburg High School Walking and Riding sub-committee recommends the following measures:

1. **Increase spending on walking and cycling-specific road safety projects and infrastructure** as part of transport budgets (to United Nations’ recommended level of 20%).
2. **Safer Speeds: Update the Speed Zoning Guidelines** to remove red tape and provide the framework to reduce current default speed limits, particularly on local roads and in high pedestrian and cycling areas to 30km/h.
3. **School Speed Zone Review**: Evaluate the current approach to school speed zones in Victoria.
4. **Review Speed Limits on Arterial (State) Roads**, specifically those which are tram and bus routes, used by secondary school students, to address the high number of crashes involving vulnerable road users.
5. **Increase Separated Bike Infrastructure**, particularly on school routes, promoting cycling as a safer option and reducing the risks associated with riding in or alongside traffic.
6. **Improve Intersection Design Standards in Victoria** to enhance visibility of and priority for vulnerable road users, especially at intersections on high-speed roads. Implement measures like raised threshold treatments and fully controlled signals to improve safety and reduce risks posed by poor driving.
7. **Replace Slip Lanes on high-speed roads** with signalised or raised pedestrian crossings.
9. **Upgrade Design Standards for Pedestrian Crossings** to improve safety for vulnerable road users and to remove risks associated with poor driving.
10. **Enhanced Crash Data Accessibility**: Improve the availability of crash data to the public. Timely access to detailed data on crashes that injure and kill walkers and cyclists will better facilitate safety improvements and empower local communities to advocate for specific changes.
11. **Increase spending on public transport**, including spending to improve the safety of tram and bus stops.
Specific recommendations for the local area and important for the Coburg High School community:

- **Bell Street**: Improve safety near bus stops by introducing safer speeds, extending pedestrian crossing times, and enhancing safety signage. Redesign of the Bell Street bridge and nearby intersections is required.
- **Murray Road**: Address the many risks to vulnerable road users through safer speeds, separated bike lanes, reduced traffic lanes and improved pedestrian crossings.
- **Elizabeth Street**: Install a pedestrian crossing for students living east of the school and implement a reduced speed limit.
- **Sydney Road**: Extend the 40km/h zone north and prioritise pedestrian safety at intersections and tram stops due to a high crash history.
- **Nicholson Street**: Implement further traffic calming measures on this tram route.
- **Pentridge Boulevard**: Allow implementation of safer speeds and projects to improve safety of vulnerable road users at intersections and crossings on this distributor road.
- **O’Hea Street**: Improve design standards for intersections to encourage redesign of the intersection with Main Street and the Upfield Shared User Path to provide a continuous and safe route for students.
- **Upfield Shared User Path**: Improve safety at road crossings for vulnerable road users north of Bell Street.

By implementing these recommendations, road safety can be significantly improved for young people, particularly Coburg High School students. It will shift the current driver-priority culture characterised by unsafe vehicle speeds, and it will improve infrastructure to facilitate walking and cycling trips and prioritise safety for vulnerable road users. Ultimately, adopting both the broad and specific recommendations will create a safer environment for walking, cycling, and using public transport, prioritising the well-being of our young people and reducing the likelihood and consequences of errors made by all road users.
Introduction

Coburg High School is making a positive contribution by encouraging its students to use healthy and sustainable modes of transport to get to school. This means we are playing our part in reducing the number of private vehicles on local roads and helping to make the streets immediately around our school safer for students walking and riding.

Since reopening in 2015 our enrolment has increased from 263 to 1255 and increasingly our students are drawn from within the school zone. Each year Coburg High School has more vulnerable road users, because more of our teenagers are travelling to school by walking and by riding bikes.

While recent crash location data for vulnerable road users is not easily accessible to us, we know more crashes are occurring since 2021 in the Coburg High School zone and on streets surrounding our school.

Since Covid lockdowns ended, at least five of our students have been struck by drivers, the most recent in February this year. Thankfully none has received serious or fatal injuries. Parents and students report many distracted or impatient drivers failing to give way at intersections and at pedestrian crossings. They also report a level of aggression displayed by drivers toward other road users.

But the risk to our students is a long-term one; the speed at which vehicles travel in this area, and the many multi-lane arterial roads with speed limits of 50km/h and 60km/h in our school zone. Many intersections on these roads are unsafe, prioritising vehicle movement over the safety of vulnerable road users. There are not enough pedestrian crossings and very little separated bike infrastructure.

Local (council) roads close to the school such as Stockade Avenue, Pentridge Boulevard (and many others) can also be unsafe. More drivers are on the roads and using these to avoid arterial roads and busy intersections. They are travelling at inappropriate speeds where school students are walking and cycling.

This community knows that Coburg and Coburg North roads have long been among Melbourne’s most dangerous for vulnerable road users. Unless something changes on Victoria’s roads, the risk of tragedy impacting our school community grows higher each year.

Walking, cycling and using public transport should not put anyone, in particular our children and young people, at a higher risk of road trauma than people driving in cars to get places.

Thank you for considering our submission.
### Pentridge Boulevard

**Feb 2023 crash**
Year 9 student hit by driver

**Tyre marks**

2023 Pentridge & Urquhart pedestrian crossing

### Elizabeth St & Murray

### Bell Street

**Death trap bus stops slammed**
An assistant principal says his greatest fear is a child getting mown down at a bus stop so dangerous that staff were forced to intervene.

*Herald Sun, Nov 27, 2021*
Dangerous bus stops located on high-speed roads

### Pedestrian Safety for Nicholson Street Coburg

Community: 533 likes - 4 posts in the last 2 weeks
After the third death in 2 years near the same intersection, our local community has come together to campaign for traffic safety...

### Murray Road

**Walk On Merr: berk** Top contributor
From the MITS: The yellow dots are all crashes. This shows Sydney Rd. The bottom intersection, with more yellow dots is Gaffney St. The top circle is Bakers Rd. The middle one is this bend in Sydney Road. This is the worst spot for crashes that is not an intersection. It's even worse than Nicholson St Coburg.

### Sydney Road, Coburg North (60km/h)

*April 2023*
COBURG MOST DEADLY SUBURB!!

Via The Age

"Coburg was also the location of the most pedestrian deaths of any Melbourne suburb over the past decade: four on Bell Street and two on Nicholson Street. Three more died on Sydney Road in Coburg North."

Coburg High School is surrounded by dangerous roads:

- Bell St
- Sydney Rd
- Murray Rd
- Pentridge Boulevard
- Elizabeth St
- Nicholson St

It is time for Merri-bek City Council, VicRoads and State Government reps to have holistic look at solutions for our community and the 75% of students using sustainable transport to get to school. 🚴

Sue Bolton - Socialist Alliance Councillor for Merri-bek
Mayor Angelica Panopoulos
Anthony Cianfone MP - Labor for Pascoe Vale
Nathan Lambert
Adam Pulford
Melissa Horne MP
Victoria Walks Walk On Merri-bek
Merri-bek BUG Bicycle Network

#activetravel #walking #riding #saferoutes, #SaferStreets

The Age, March 13 2023, The deadliest roads for pedestrians in Melbourne
Coburg High School's high number of vulnerable road users

Across metropolitan Melbourne, just 20.5% of secondary school students walk or ride to school, and 15% use tram, train or bus.¹ Active travel rates to school in Victoria have been on a steady decline since the 1970s.

But the Coburg High School community is bucking this long-term trend. This year 53.4% of our 1255 students are walking and riding the whole way to school, and a further 23.3% walk to school from a bus or tram stop, or a train station.

With our student population increasingly drawn from within the school zone this positive active travel trend will likely continue.

But this also means that in 2023 we have at least 960 young, vulnerable road users travelling to and from Coburg High School each day.

While this school community supports its young people to travel independently using healthy, sustainable modes of transport, we’re acutely aware that every day our young people are walking and riding on some of Melbourne’s most dangerous roads.

¹ Data analysis of VISTA school travel, ‘Walking and Transport in Melbourne 2023’ p.5
A dangerous area: Coburg/Coburg North among Melbourne’s most dangerous

The Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee notes that in Victoria in 2022 pedestrian fatalities spiked to 44 (up 52% from the previous year).

Three of these 44 deaths occurred in the Merri-bek council area where Coburg High is located, and one cyclist was also killed. Only outer suburban councils Casey and Brimbank had more pedestrian deaths in 2022.

Last year’s tragic ‘lives lost’ data however confirms a longer-term trend, whereby Merri-bek (formerly Moreland) is a particularly dangerous part of metropolitan Melbourne for vulnerable road users.

Between 2006-2017 there were about 5000 crashes in Moreland. Of these, nearly 20% involved a cyclist, and 15% involved a pedestrian. In the five-year period 2014-2018, nine pedestrians and one cyclist lost their lives in Moreland (Merri-bek). A further 624 walkers and cyclists were injured, including 135 seriously injured. These are injuries from on-road crashes where police attend and may not include all crashes and injuries.

While a higher number of crashes involving vulnerable road users occurred in Brunswick prior to 2017 (Moreland Integrated Transport Strategy graphic next page), a higher number of fatal crashes occur in Coburg and Coburg North.

This is due to the presence of higher-speed roads such as Bell Street, Sydney Road (Coburg North), Gaffney Street, Murray Road, Elizabeth Street and Nicholson Street.

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2 TAC lives lost by year and LGA
4 VicRoads Crash Stats ‘Location of crashes and road user type’, see 2014-2018, LGA Moreland
Since the beginning of 2019 (encompassing the Covid-19 lockdown periods) a further seven people have died after being struck by a driver while walking or cycling on roads in Moreland/Merri-bek. Four of these people were killed in Coburg/Coburg North.

From January 2019 to October 2022 a further 78 cyclists and 85 pedestrians were admitted to hospital after being stuck on roads in Merri-bek. This does not include people who were treated by paramedics or only treated in Emergency Departments. It is not easy to find out where these recent crashes that resulted in hospitalisations occurred, using public databases.

**Where are our students at risk while walking and riding to Coburg High School?**

In 2023 around 80% of Coburg High School students live within the school zone.

Heat map: Where Coburg High School students lived in 2022

As the number of people who walk and ride in Coburg, Coburg North and Preston increases, so too does the risk of crashes involving them, and this includes our students.
Above graphic does not capture crashes after 2017 (Coburg High School re-opened in 2015). It also does not capture crashes that occur on footpaths where many school students ride bikes.
**Walking risks**
Coburg was highlighted by *The Age* earlier this year as the single suburb with the most pedestrian deaths (six) since 2013.

Coburg High School’s students are particularly at risk of serious road trauma and fatalities because we have a high (and growing) number of vulnerable road users, and a high number of 50km/h and 60km/h roads, where most crashes involving walkers in Victoria occur.\(^5\)

![SPEED LIMITS WHERE PEDESTRIAN CRASHES OCCUR](chart.png)

**Cycling risks**
A lack of separated bicycle infrastructure to the school from the south, south-west, east and north-east means many students who ride are mixing on roads with 50-60km/h traffic, or riding on footpaths, which has a distinct set of safety risks, particularly at driveways and intersections.

Coburg High School zone, and speed limits on routes to the school
Driver behaviour in Victoria (long-term trends)

More private vehicles
Each year there are more vehicles on Victoria’s roads.6

Larger vehicles
Of particular concern for vulnerable road users is a long-term trend toward larger vehicles in Australia.7 There are many more large utes, sports utility vehicles (SUVs) and commercial vehicles such as panel vans and trucks on Victoria’s roads. The size and design of a vehicle influences both the likelihood and consequences of a crash involving a vulnerable road user. This is putting younger (shorter) walkers in particular, and also cyclists, at even higher risk of serious injury and death when road users make mistakes.8

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8 ‘Understanding Pedestrian Crashes’, Victoria Walks, 2020, pp. 21-22 on ‘Vehicle design’
Drivers of these larger vehicles may not be taking these higher risk factors into account by slowing down and being more careful when driving through areas of high pedestrian and cycling activity, such as school neighbourhoods, and on public transport and school routes.

**Driver error**

Drivers in the Coburg High School zone regularly exhibit a lack of awareness of — and care for — other road users (see next section ‘Major locations of concern for Coburg High School students’.)

This is consistent with state-wide data, which shows that in crashes involving people who are walking in Victoria, police report drivers are more often offending.⁹

Transport Accident Commission data revealed that in 2020, 71% of all Victorian road deaths involved a “basic error”. Meanwhile researchers at Monash University found that Australian drivers are distracted 45% of the time while behind the wheel (or every 96 seconds).

Only about one half of 1089 young Victorians (aged 15-20) surveyed in 2017 felt that they could depend on drivers to obey the road rules, give way to pedestrians when required, and keep a careful eye out for pedestrians.¹⁰

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⁹ *Understanding Pedestrian Crashes in Victoria*, Victoria Walks, 2020, p. 31

¹⁰ *Young People and Walking*, Victoria Walks, 2017
Since Covid-19

Further shift to driving on Melbourne’s roads
Since the pandemic lockdowns ended, Melbourne’s travel patterns have shifted away from public transport to other modes. In middle suburbs such as Coburg, Coburg North and Preston and in outer suburbs there are more people driving (up 2-3%) to get to work and a similar number of people walking and riding as pre-pandemic.11

A busier school zone
Other factors are resulting in more private vehicles on streets surrounding Coburg High School. The school’s life has coincided with continued development of the Pentridge housing estate, next to the school. In recent years several large apartment buildings have opened on roads surrounding the school, and many more are in development. This increases the number of vehicles driving and parking on streets around the school.

The Herald Sun reported on April 27 this year that drivers on Urquhart St and Alva Grove (near the entries to Coburg High) were travelling at 6km/h at school drop-off time.12 While more traffic congestion can frustrate drivers, it can reduce vehicle speeds. But it can also reduce the visibility of vulnerable road users at crossings and intersections.

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11 See Figure 3 Spatial Impacts of COVID-19 on Long Term Commuting in Melbourne, Currie et al. 2022
12 ‘School run becomes a crawl’, Herald Sun, 27 April 2023, p3
Local advocacy: Major locations of concerns for Coburg High School students

The Coburg High School Walking and Riding sub-committee is advocating to Merri-bek Council and to the Victorian Government to improve safety for vulnerable road users on all routes used by our students, more than half of whom walk and ride the whole way to school. Many more of our students (23.3%) walk to Coburg High from a bus, tram or train stop located on one of these dangerous roads (Sydney Road, Bell Street, Murray Road, Nicholson Street). All of these roads feature heavily in crash statistics, including for vulnerable road users.

Note: Available TAC searchable road trauma statistics on injuries (crashes that involve hospitalisation claims) only go to October 2022 and locations of these crashes are not not mapped at its site. The location of crashes that injure walkers and cyclists at the VicRoads crash site only goes to mid-2019. The below is based upon what is publicly available, and anecdotal reports from the school community since then. These are undoubtedly just some of the many locations of concern and unsafe routes for the Coburg High School community.

Location: Pentridge Boulevard, Coburg North (50km/h)
This road is a high risk due to the volume and speed of traffic and the high number of vulnerable road users. It is used by drivers to get from Sydney and Murray Roads to Bell Street. It is used by many Coburg High students coming to the school from the north and west, who walk, or who use the off-road cycleway (which connects to the north-south Upfield Shared User Path / Strategic Cycling Corridor). Pentridge Blvd has four intersections of concern at Champ Street, Stockade Avenue, Urquhart St (complex intersection) and Bell St.

Pentridge Boulevard crash involving Y9 Coburg High student (bike) February 2023
The student was using the off-road bike lane on the west side of Pentridge Blvd to get to school when he was struck at the Stockade Ave intersection by a driver who was going the wrong way. The student received cuts and grazes to his head and legs and was treated by paramedics and later checked at the Royal Children’s Hospital, where he was diagnosed with concussion.
The Y9 student's crushed bike helmet, shared by his father in a Coburg HighParents and Carers Facebook group the day of the crash (February 28 2023).

Students and parents report concern about the speed of traffic on Pentridge Blvd, driver aggression and failure by all road users to obey traffic signals.

"I was riding behind a boy down Pentridge Boulevard and when we got to Stockade Avenue he tried to ride straight across instead of wait for the lights, (there is very few cars going up and down Stockade Avenue as there is construction there) a car came down the road and almost hit him. The car held down the horn and then yelled at me and the bikers behind me "Bloody Idiots" even though we had stopped for him and the kid who had almost gotten run over had kept riding down Pentridge Boulevard." (_______- Yr 8)

**Actions:** Traffic calming infrastructure and signage and speed limit reduction on Penridge Blvd to 40 km/h or less. Separated cycleway painted green and raised to footpath level where it crosses roads (similar to O’Hea Street section). More signage to warn drivers of the presence of school students.
Location: Bell Street, Coburg (60kmh, six lanes)

Bus stops closest to Coburg High School (near Pentridge Blvd / Richards St)
For risks see this report on Access to Bus Stops in Victoria.

**Actions:**
- Reduce speed limit to 40kmh on Bell Street from Coburg Primary School to Alva Grove (to make it consistent with the section of Bell Street to the east of Coburg High School).
- Also increase pedestrian crossing time, pedestrian safety signage and priority over Bell Street (at intersections of Pentridge Boulevard and Alva Grove) where there are bus stops.
Bell Street bridge risk zone
The risk area encompasses the Bell Street bridge over the Merri Creek, the intersections of Bell and Elizabeth Streets and Bell and Nicholson Streets.

A survey by Merri-Bek council and Coburg High School in August 2022 found that of 448 CHS students who did the survey, 353 had used the bridge (79%) for reasons including travel to/from school, to visit the shops (7-11), to access public transport (Bell St buses and Nicholson St tram). Of the students that have used the bridge, 32% had witnessed at least one accident or near miss on the Bell Street Bridge in the past year.

Crash involving Coburg High School student (bike) on Bell St (near Elizabeth) August 2021
A Year 12 student was knocked from his bike in August 2021 as he rode past the 7-11 where there is a slip lane for cars to enter Elizabeth Street. He sustained significant injuries requiring treatment by paramedics.

More information: Safe Access over Bell Street for Everyone (SABBE) Video featuring testimony of CHS students

Action: The community is calling for a redesign of the whole risk zone, including making the footpaths wider and slowing of vehicles, crossing safety upgrades including where there are slip lanes. See petition to Victoria’s Roads Minister: 1801 signatures
**Location:** Murray Road Coburg North, between Sydney Rd and Elizabeth St, two lanes each way, 60km/h

This section of Murray Road is used by Coburg High students walking, riding and catching buses. The road has several bends which, combined with the speed, limits visibility and reaction time approaching existing crossings. There is a narrow (non-standard) shared path between Champ Street and the Olympic Pool and no footpath on the Pentridge side between Champ and Stockade.

This April 2023 High School for Coburg social media post about Murray Road attracted many comments from the school community about unsafe driver behaviour.

The intersections of Stockade Ave, Newlands Road, Outlook Road, Connolly Ave and Elizabeth Street are all reported as concerns with respect to driver behaviour (in particular turning drivers not giving way to vulnerable road users) with at least two crashes reported involving Coburg High students riding bikes. The pedestrian and bike crossing near Coburg Olympic Pool is heavily used by CHS students, including those using buses. It is reportedly common for drivers to go through the red light and there have been many near misses.
Crash involving Coburg High student (bike) - Murray Road (near Elizabeth)
As reported recently by parent, Andrew Perkins

In a paragraph, please tell us about your family's experience getting to and from Coburg High School as a pedestrian, cyclist, scooter or public transport user (including the roads and intersections which are most dangerous for your family and the year level/s of your child).

Riding to school from the east of the school zone is a major issues. My child was struck by a car on the footpath on Murray Rd west of Elizabeth St riding to school one morning. There are no bike lanes on Murray Rd in either direction and crossing Elizabeth st to avoid major roads is impossible. As we all know, the Elizabeth St intersection at both Murray and Bell st is very dangerous.

Crash involving Coburg High student (bike) - Murray Road and Connolly Ave
*Parent did not wish name to be included

The corner of Murray Road and Elizabeth street, especially cars turning from Elizabeth onto Murray rd, is extremely dangerous for kids on bikes or walking to cross Murray Rd. Cars often turn without taking pedestrians and kids on bikes into account. My kids have told me of a few near misses. My son was also knocked off his bike by a car when he was crossing Connolly Ave near the senior citizens club. He was fortunately not injured.

**Actions:** Reduce speed to 50km/h, reduce traffic lanes to one each way, create a separated bike lane and wider footpaths, install a crossing and signals at Outlook Road, improve the safety of the Newlands Rd intersection (slip lanes). Improve safety of the Olympic Pool pedestrian crossing by adding mast arms and wombat crossing.
Location: Elizabeth St, Coburg North, between Bell St and Murray Rd, 60km/h
Coburg High School students living east of the school have no crossing over this stretch of Elizabeth St, which is the missing east link in the west-east O’Hea St/Pentridge Blvd Strategic Cycling Corridor. Neither Merri-bek council nor the state government have committed funds to building this walking and cycling link. A petition for a crossing has collected more than 750 signatures. There are also bus stops along Elizabeth Street.

Action: Reduce speed limit on Elizabeth Street and install a safe pedestrian crossing between Hope and Booth Streets for people who are walking and cycling east and west.

Location: O’Hea Street, Coburg at intersection of Main St and Upfield train line
40km/h, single lane both directions
Similar to Pentridge Blvd, this route is used by significant numbers of Coburg High School students who walk and ride from the west and north-west of the school, as it forms part of this strategic cycling corridor. However the separated O’Hea Street bike path comes to an abrupt end at Main Street, where many drivers on O’Hea St attempt to turn right with no traffic signals.

Actions: Redesign the intersection of O’Hea Street, Main Street and the Upfield Train Line and shared user path to provide a safe and continuous west-east route for students walking and cycling to local schools. Evidence suggests 30km/h is a safer speed on this popular walking and cycling school route.
**Location: Sydney Road Coburg and Coburg North,**
*(south of O'Hea Street 40km/h, north of O'Hea Street it is 60km/h)*
Sydney Road has been ranked third highest on this year’s RACV My Melbourne Road interim results. Crash data demonstrates the high number of crashes along this road across time, and we know Sydney Road Coburg North has been the site of pedestrian fatalities in recent years.

As one of the most dangerous roads in Melbourne for pedestrians and cyclists, we support additional measures to reduce traffic speeds on Sydney Road, which is a public transport and walking route for our students. Treatments to reduce vehicle speeds and to make intersections safer would increase safety for the significant numbers of Coburg High School students who live in this part of our zone (shown in earlier heat map), as well as students attending Mercy College and Australian International Academy College in Coburg North.

**Actions:** Extend the 40km/h zone which currently exists to the south on Sydney Road Coburg North to encompass the Route 19 tram terminus at Bakers Road. Provide greater pedestrian priority at all intersections in this section of Sydney Road including O’Hea Street, Gaffney Street and Bakers Road (as has been recently funded by the state government south of Bell Street).

**Upfield Shared User Path, north of the Moreland-Bell LXR (skyrail)**
This is the most heavily used off-road cycling route in Coburg and Coburg North and is used by many of our students to cycle to and from school from areas to the north of Coburg High School.

**Action:** All road crossings north of Bell Street require safety improvements for vulnerable road users using the Upfield shared user path Strategic Cycling Corridor (O’Hea St, Gaffney St, Bakers Road, Boundary Road).
Snapshot of student and parent concerns

Responses to August 2022 survey (448 school community members)

Between the Coburg Aquarium and the McDonalds on Bell St there are no light crossings, (around a 1km distance) so I have to cross the road without the lights to get to the bus stop on the other side.

Ross St off O’Hea St. It’s a two lane one way street that goes into O’Hea. First of all, there is no pedestrian crossing to go towards the Thirsty Camel, which makes it hard to cross especially since nobody stops to let anyone go past. The two lanes turn into opposite directions, one going toward the school and the other going away. There are constantly cars going through this street which is very inefficient for the people going through O’Hea towards CHS, making them wait for a long time just so they can go straight. And lastly, the risk of crashing there is very high because of cars racing to get where they want before they get stuck in place. So a solution could be to put traffic lights there and definitely a pedestrian crossing as well. These would make Ross St and O’Hea St so much safer for everyone using them and going past.

I would love to see maybe some more speed control of the cars on bell street especially at the intersection right next to our school as cars regularly zoom past red lights coming close to hitting students.

Urquhart Street—the pedestrian crossing from school to the bus stop always have to be careful since cars still drive past on a red light.

the intersection between bell st and Sydney rd is kind of dangerous, lots of primary school kids use it, and adding a bike path could possibly help to improve

Elizabeth Street (not a single pedestrian crossing between murray road and bell street)

Sydney road isn't very safe for students and others alike, but there isn't much you can do about it since it is such a busy road

Murray roads footpath is quite narrow in some areas and cars go pretty fast past them

Not particularly close to the school but the gaffney street coles x sussex street is unsafe and while they changed it they removed the actually functional crossing and moved it west which causes people to cross at the eastern side aka with no crossing

Pedestrian lights at Elizabeth Street would be helpful

Murray road lights next to the pool and traffic lights take to long leading to students running red lights and nearly getting hit
I suggest a fully signalised intersection on Urquhart street with priority to pedestrians and bike riders.

Elizabeth St, a zebra crossing or traffic light in the middle of Bell St and Murray Rd

The intersection between bell st and Sydney rd is kind of dangerous, lots of primary school kids use it, and adding a bike path could possibly help to improve

Some more recent comments collected from students and parents in 2023

"I take my young kids, on foot and bike to primary school along Murray Rd. It’s the most direct route and one we should be able to safely use. We use the crossing near the pool and I’m astounded by the speeding and blatant running of red lights that goes on around drop off and pick up times. It’s reasonable to ask that the road and surrounds be safe for all users, not just convenient for those motorists who choose to defy the road rules."

I used to walk on Bell St to get to school but recently I’ve been walking along the Merri Creek instead which takes longer but it’s much safer. When I walk along the creek, I can put my headphones on and listen to music during my walk to school, which is a luxury I can’t afford if I walk along Bell St. I used to cross at the intersection of Bell and Elizabeth then walk along the Bell St bridge but I always felt unsafe. The cars go really fast and sometimes there's less than a metre between the vehicles and people walking on the footpath, which puts pedestrians in danger. Pedestrians like me, my brothers, my friends, and other Coburg kids. There's also no barrier of any kind separating the pedestrians from the vehicles, and often when I wait for the lights, I stand right next to poles or fences that have been knocked down by cars running into them. When I walk to and from school with my little brother, I walk on the outside of the footpath, closer to the cars, and I make sure he walks on the inside, but I shouldn't have to. On pretty much any other street, being that close to cars and trucks going that fast would be unthinkable. Honestly, just walking along the bridge feels like a close call every single time I do it.

From 2023 school captain Josh Riordan

Elizabeth St:

During my commute to and from school over the past 6 years of high school at Coburg, I have noticed a persistently dangerous road, that has put myself and other students at risk. This is the section of Elizabeth St that runs from Bell St to Murray Rd. It is a 60km/h zone through the section, and there are no crossing options for pedestrians, forcing them to either walk to Murray Rd or Bell St or try to find a break in traffic (which rarely occurs around pickup and drop-off times). The speed definitely makes it hard to cross and the buses can make it quite sketchy to ride in the bike lane because they come in and out of bus stops cutting the bike lane.

This is a major route for students travelling on foot and by bike from Preston to CHS. I ride over this road every day and am forced to wait on the side of the road for traffic to ease, eventually making a dash across. I have noticed that over the years with the increased student numbers at Coburg High,
that there has been a strong correlation to increased traffic along Elizabeth St, consequently increasing the danger for more and more students.

There has been a plethora of advocacy to have a pedestrian crossing installed (this petition being one: Petition), or at least the speed reduced, however, there has been no action taken on the matter. I would hope that this section of Elizabeth St is taken into consideration so that we can better encourage active transport to and from school, and stop putting young people’s lives at risk.

Crossing At School Entrance:
I have noticed that since the end of covid restrictions, there has been a drastic increase in cars entering through the main school gates on Urquhart St. This combined with the lack of infrastructure (no zebra crossing, minimal signage) provided by the council, results in a crossing that is a disaster waiting to happen. I have been to the Merri-Bek council and advocated that developments be made on the site since this is an area of extremely high foot traffic not only during school times but outside these times as well. The Council unanimously committed to urgently investigating bringing forward these works as part of the Strategic Cycling Corridor (as they would benefit cyclists and pedestrians).*

*At the time of this submission the council has advised it will undertake a design for a wombat crossing at the Urquhart Street entrance but further works are not budgeted for this or the broader works for the SCC between Pentridge Blvd and the Merri Creek, which have been pushed out of the draft 5-year budget.
Conclusion

In metropolitan Melbourne one-quarter (24.9%) of vehicle trips beginning between 8 and 9am are to a primary or secondary school.\textsuperscript{13}

Young people who walk or cycle to school are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines than those who are driven.\textsuperscript{14} Across Victoria only one-fifth of 5-17 year-olds get the recommended one hour of physical activity each day.\textsuperscript{15}

Walking, cycling and using public transport should not put young people (or anyone else) at higher risk of road trauma. But in Victoria, being outside of a private vehicle makes you more vulnerable.

Victoria has an ever-growing driver culture, high urban speed limits, a lack of safe and convenient road crossings for walkers, and a lack of separated bike infrastructure. These factors are putting our young people at growing risk in the Coburg High School zone.

This does not have to be the case. Many cities and countries around the world are making real gains on road safety.\textsuperscript{16} Roads that are safer for people walking and cycling are safer for all road users and will encourage more people to walk and cycle instead of drive for local trips, such as the school run.

\textsuperscript{13} Walking in Melbourne 2023 update, Victoria Walks, p 5
\textsuperscript{14} Children's active commuting to school: current knowledge and future directions, Davison et al 2008.
\textsuperscript{15} Youth Physical Activity Insights, VicHealth, 2017, p1
\textsuperscript{16} See Figure 1.1, Australia ranked 20 out of 36 OECD countries for Road Safety up to 2020
Coburg High School Walking and Riding sub-committee recommendations:

The Coburg High School community calls upon the committee to make legislative and policy recommendations aimed at supporting walking and cycling safety and mode shift, particularly for school trips.

**Increase transport budget funding for active transport (walking and cycling)**

Increase spending on walking and cycling-specific road safety projects and infrastructure to the United Nations’ recommended level of 20% of transport budgets. See the UN’s ‘Global Outlook on Walking and Cycling: Policies & Realities from around the World’ (2016, and 2022 update). The Government of Ireland has recently adopted this budget guidance.\(^\text{17}\)

**Safer speeds supported by traffic calming infrastructure on local streets**

Update speed zoning guidelines. Evidently, vulnerable road users cannot trust drivers to ‘drive to the conditions’ or at an appropriate speed in areas where there are lots of people walking and cycling. We support the World Health Organisation’s call for speed limit reductions in cities around the world, and Merri-bek council’s speed limit advocacy to the Victorian Government. Remove red tape for councils to make local streets safer.

Reduce the current 40km/h and 50km/h limits for residential, school, shopping and collector streets to 30km/h, supported where necessary by traffic-calming infrastructure such as speed bumps.

This will greatly reduce the risk of serious injury or death to vulnerable road users when drivers, walkers or cyclists make errors. It will also act as a disincentive to rat-running through neighbourhood streets, where many people walk and cycle.

**Review Victoria’s school speed zone approach**

Coburg High students travel to and from school on foot and bike from much further than the immediate school neighbourhood. Available evidence suggests the current school zone 40km/h and 60km/h guidance is putting our students at risk of injury and death. It should be replaced with broad 30km/h speeds on local streets, as above.

**Review and reduce speed limits on arterial roads, especially on tram and/or bus routes**

Current 50km/h and 60km/h limits on Coburg High’s school routes are not appropriate. Nearly 20% of Coburg High students use bus stops on Bell Street and Murray Road, while many others get on and off trams on Sydney Road (Coburg North is 60km/h) and Nicholson Street (50km/h). These roads have a very high incidence of crashes.

Such changes are likely to be accepted by the public. A survey of Victorians conducted in 2021 found 54% of respondents agreed with the principle of ‘safer speeds on main roads’ while only 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed.\(^\text{18}\)

**Install more separated bike infrastructure on school routes, reducing car lanes if necessary**

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\(^\text{17}\) Road CC, See article from June 15 2020

\(^\text{18}\) Victorian Walking Survey 2021, by Bartley Consulting for Victoria Walks
Separated bike infrastructure encourages cycling, with 83% of residents in Merri-bek indicating they would use a bike for some trips if they didn't have to ride with traffic. Separated lanes for bikes and e-scooters are safer for riders than riding on footpaths. Footpath riding also endangers people who are walking.

**Improve safety of intersections by reviewing design standards and application in Victoria**

Many walkers and cyclists are struck by drivers at intersections, where drivers should give way. Governments should invest in upgrading priority for and visibility of vulnerable road users at intersections, especially on 50-60km/h roads. This could take the form of raised threshold treatments at non-signalised T-intersections, or through controlled signals where drivers are not given the option to turn right or left over a pedestrian crossing.

**Replace slip lanes with signalised and / or raised crossings**

Many slip lanes (often unmarked) exist on arterial roads in the Coburg High School zone, such as those located at Bell Street / Nicholson St (a tram stop), Bell Street / Elizabeth Street and at Murray Road and Newlands Road. Slip lanes are designed to allow drivers to enter an intersection quickly, rather than to slow down and look for people who are walking or riding. It is not a Safe System Solution.

**Install more Safe System pedestrian crossings on high-speed school routes**

Most pedestrians who are hit by drivers are hit trying to cross 50km/h and 60km/h roads. The Coburg High community is calling for at least two new pedestrian crossings, on Elizabeth Street between Bell Street and Murray Road (to complete a missing link in a Strategic Cycling Corridor), and over Murray Road near Outlook Road.

**Improve safety of existing pedestrian crossings**

The community is also calling for safety improvements to existing pedestrian crossings such as the crossing over Pentridge Blvd at Urquhart Street, and over Murray Road at the Olympic Pool.

**Improve crash data available to the public**

The Coburg High School Walking and Riding sub-committee is making a submission to an inquiry about road safety behaviour impacts on vulnerable road users since Covid-19 without access to important and relevant information, such as the location of crashes where walkers and cyclists have been injured since mid-2019.

To improve safety for vulnerable road users in future, it is important that all available crash data is made publically accessible in a timely fashion, so it can be used by all members of the public and by stakeholders to advocate for safety improvements where they are most needed.

**Improve safety at and around public transport stops**, particularly tram and bus stops located on high-speed, state roads. High school students who use public transport become vulnerable road users when they leave a bus, tram or train and walk to school. In addition to safer speeds on bus and tram routes guidelines or design standards for tram and bus stops should be improved to enhance safety of vulnerable road users, and thought given to placement of pedestrian crossings on these routes.
With thanks,

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Principal & Member, Walking & Riding sub-committee

Cate Hall
Immediate-past School Council President & Chair, Walking & Riding sub-committee

Josh Riordan
Current Year 12 student, School Captain & Member, Walking & Riding sub-committee

Jane Holroyd
Current parent & Member, Walking & Riding sub-committee

Nat Abboud
School Council President

CC: Minister for Roads and Road Safety, The Hon. Melissa Horne MP
Anthony Cianflone, Member for Pascoe Vale
Kat Theophanous, Member for Northcote
Nathan Lambert, Member for Preston
Peter Khalil, Federal Member for Wills

19th May 2023