Getting to School by Walking & Cycling

St Augustine's College

Summary of Findings

Prepared by: GTA Consultants (VIC) Pty Ltd for Campaspe Shire Council

on 18/09/19

Reference: V149840

Issue #: A-Dr (First Draft)

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Prepared with the support of a TAC Local Government Grant 2018/19.

Quotes throughout may have been edited for clarity, interpretation and spelling.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Campaspe Active Transport Strategy

In June 2019, Council adopted the Campaspe Active Transport Strategy, which supports and encourages people to travel more actively in the local area, including by walking, wheeling and cycling. The strategy is the culmination of research, local observations and discussions with Council and the community.

The strategy aims to improve health and wellbeing and build stronger, more vibrant local communities through three key pillars:

- Encouraging more active travel to schools
- Creating towns which are attractive and comfortable places to walk
- Connecting housing with where people want to travel

More details on the Active Transport Strategy can be found on Council's website.

1.1.2. TAC Local Government Grant - Analysis

This project helps bring the Active Transport Strategy to life by identifying opportunities to encourage active travel (in all forms) around two schools – Echuca East Primary School in Echuca and St. Augustine's College in Kyabram.

GTA were engaged to undertake investigations and analysis about how students and staff travel to and from the two schools and provide evidence which supports future investment in making active travel safer, more comfortable and more enjoyable for the students, teachers and parents accessing them.

The intention is that initiatives can be piloted and/or introduced at the subject schools, with lessons applied at other schools across the area as opportunities arise.

The project was made possible through funding provided by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) Local Government Grants program.

1.2. Approach

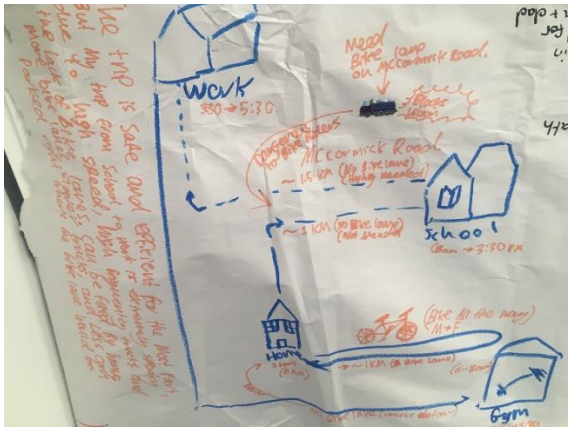
1.2.1. Opportunities Identification

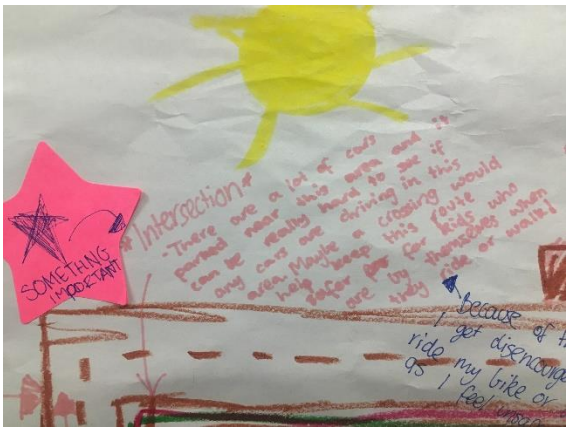
Students, teachers and parents know their school best. Our approach focussed on extracting the issues and opportunities with the people that attend the schools every day. At St Augustine's College, we:

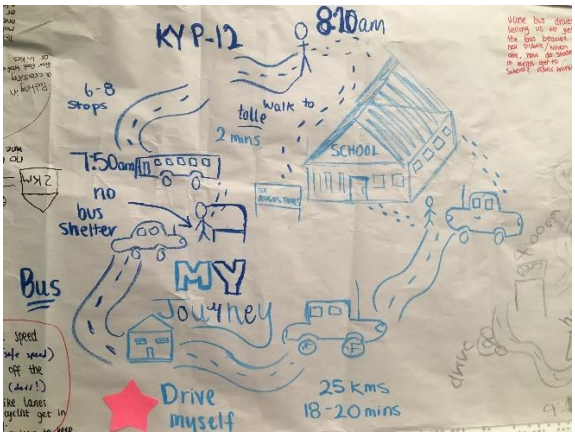
- Ran a 'journey mapping' exercise with student representatives from Years 1 to 6 to understand how they travel to school, what they enjoy (or don't enjoy) about their trip and ideas for how they could be safer and more enjoyable.
- Ran a similar 'journey mapping' exercise and a task to redesign the drive-through pick-up area with student representatives from Years 7 to 12.
- Discussed issues with staff.
- Undertook a tour of the school and surrounding areas.

- Observed the after-school pick-up activity.

Figure 1.1: St Augustine's College Engagement Activities







As part of the review, we also:

- Reviewed reported crash statistics in the vicinity of the school and on common routes.
- Reviewed 'like spots' and 'dislike spots' identified by the community as part of the Active Transport Strategy ('CrowdSpot').
- Reviewed provision of footpaths (as provided by Council), and discussed known issues raised with Council.

1.2.2. Initiative Development

In order to translate the opportunities to improve active travel (in all forms) around the two schools, they were passed through the below constructs:

Safe System Approach (as adopted in the Victorian Road Safety Strategy – Towards Zero)

The safe system approach is based around the four interactive pillars outlined below and shown in Figure 1.2:

- Safer roads
- Safer speeds
- Safer road users
- Safer vehicles

Figure 1.2: Safe System Approach

At its core, the safe system approach aims to create a transport environment where it is not possible for users to be seriously or fatally injured, including when users make mistakes.

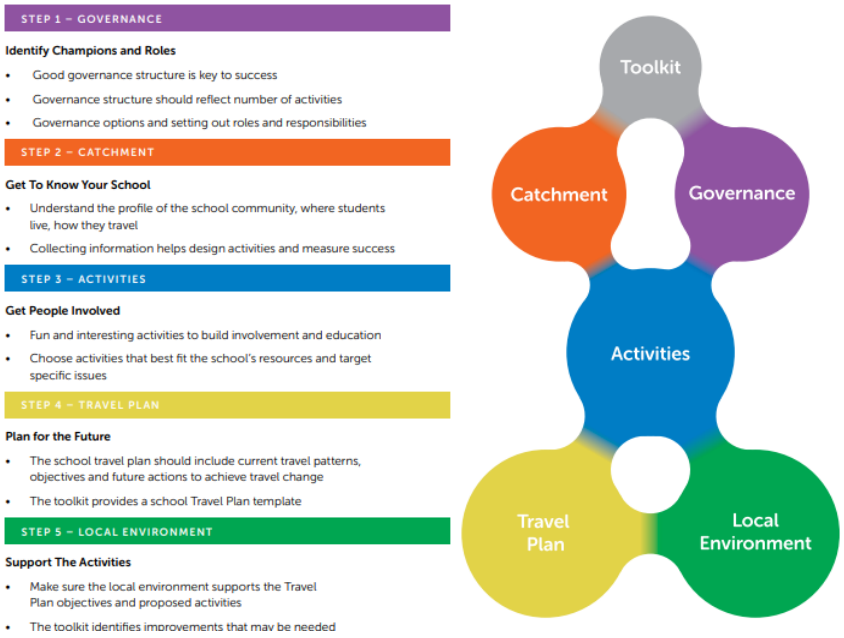
The Safe System approach is nationally-adopted and is beginning to be integrated into all planning and design activities.

Safe and Active Routes to School Toolkit, City of Darwin

With support from the Heart Foundation NT, the City of Darwin developed a toolkit to enable local schools within the Council area to achieve increased levels of active travel[1]. The toolkit is considered a useful resource relevant to other areas of Australia and provides guidance to all local schools on the activities, governance structures and identifying improvements to the local area that could be implemented to support their efforts to increase levels of walking and cycling to school. Background facts and figures, survey forms and travel plan templates are included as part of the toolkit.

The key steps are outlined in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: Safe Active Routes to School Toolkit Steps



[1] https://www.darwin.nt.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/safe_active_routes_to_school_toolkit_0.pdf

2. WHAT WE HEARD

2.1. Insights

Conversations with the students and review of the journey mapping exercise revealed a few key insights regarding how students travel to school. Of those that we spoke to:

- Broadly, just over half of students travel to school by car, with about 20% walking and 20% travelling by bus. Other students travel by bike or scooter.[2]
- Many students travel a relatively short distance to school (i.e. local trips) – on average about 15-20 minutes. As expected, students walking, cycling or being driven generally have shorter trips (i.e. less than 20 minutes) while students travelling by bus generally have longer trips (i.e. 30-60 minutes).
- Many students travel a short distance to school by car – on average less than 10 minutes. There is opportunity to encourage these students to shift to more active behaviour.
- Travel choice most often depended on weather, where the student is travelling from and/or if they are running late.
- On the day of observation, we noted that the school has taken the initiative to streamline operations of the pick-up and drop-off 'drive-through' loop. A teacher recognised parents/guardians' vehicles approaching and notified respective students, significantly reducing linger time and improving throughput of the loop. The system also improves safety by removing surplus vehicles, eradicating reversing or turn-in/out movements and keeping students well clear of the loop until they are called. The school is to be commended for its efforts in this regard.
- The school pick-up peak period was also observed to be short and intensive, at about 7-10 minutes in length, after which time most vehicles, students and buses had dissipated throughout the surrounding area.

2.2. Key Concerns

Aside from imaginative ways to make travel to school more enjoyable, the students suggested a number of ideas which would make active travel to school safer or more comfortable. These are summarised below.

Missing crossings in the vicinity of the school and on key after-school routes

Missing crossings were amongst the most commonly raised issues and are considered crucial for the safety role they provide where the major conflicts exist for vulnerable users, such as major roads.

Specific areas of concern were raised around the major roads, such as:

- Across Allan Street in accessing the residential areas to the south
- Across Fenaughty Street at Union Street
- Across McEwen Road in accessing the residential areas to the west

On further review, other major roads may also pose safety concerns:

[2] Travel times and modes are self-reported by the students. They represent one of several ways in which the student may travel to school. 'Bus' may also be in combination with other modes (i.e. driven to and walk from the bus stop). Very small sample size.

- Across McCormick Road accessing the residential areas to the north and east
- Across Albion Street in accessing the residential areas to the east

Some quotes included:

- *"Maybe a crossing would help keep this route safer for kids who are by themselves when they ride or walk…"*
- *"Ky-Echuca Road (McEwen Road) can be hard to cross due to traffic"*
- *"Too many roads to cross and too busy so I go in the car"*

Figure 2.1: Difficult to Cross – Allan Street (Google)

Figure 2.2: Difficult to Cross – McEwen Road (Google)

Bicycle facilities connecting to the College

Some students also noted discomfort in sharing road space with vehicles whilst cycling, particularly in high-speed, high-traffic environments. Currently, there are limited on- and off- road facilities in the area, with the shared path to along Church Street truncating just north of the school at McCormick Road. It is noted that younger students are able to cycle on footpaths, where they are present.

Some quotes included:

- *"The trip is safe and efficient for the most part but my trip from school to work is extremely spooky due to high speed, high frequency trucks and the lack of bike lanes, can be fixed by more bike lanes, slower trucks and less cars parked right where the bike lanes would be."*
- *"Need bike lane on McCormick Road. No bike lane, highly needed. Dangerous to bike riders."*
- *"More bike lanes into town"*

One comment also provided a perception of cyclists from a driver's perspective:

- *"More bike lanes because cyclists get in the way"*

Vehicle speeds, size and volumes

A consistent concern raised about accessing the school through active travel is the speed, type and volume of traffic on some roads in the area.

Some quotes include:

- *"In afternoon can be quite dangerous due to buses [on Tulloh Street]"*

- *"The trip is safe and efficient for the most part but my trip from school to work is extremely spooky due to high speed, high frequency trucks and the lack of bike lanes…"*
- *"Do the speed limit"*

Some key factors that are believed to be contributing to these sentiments include:

- Higher posted speed limits in built-up areas where school children are likely to be present (i.e. crossing Allan Street, which is 60km/h in parts).
- Wide road cross-sections (i.e. McCormick Road, Church Street) with limited constraints or friction, which are conducive to high-speed travel.
- The local roads around the school (i.e. Church Street, Tulloh Street) have a 40km/h posted speed limit, but no specific recognition as a 'school precinct' on some approaches. Drivers may take additional care in recognising the presence of the school.
- Presence of large trucks and buses travelling along the major roads in the area (i.e. McCormick Road, Tulloh Street).

Figure 2.3: Wide Road Conducive to High Speed Travel – Church Street (Google)

Figure 2.4: Wide Road Conducive to High Speed Travel - Tulloh Street (Google)

Other Suggestions

There were a range of other suggestions put forward to help encourage active travel to and from the school, including:

- Addressing gaps in footpaths or missing footpaths (i.e. Everard Road)
- Removing parked cars at crossings, near intersections and near the school drive-through loop (when congested)
- Improved drop-off / pick-up facilities or operation
- Walking with a friend or buddy
- Breakfast Club

2.3. Broader Analysis

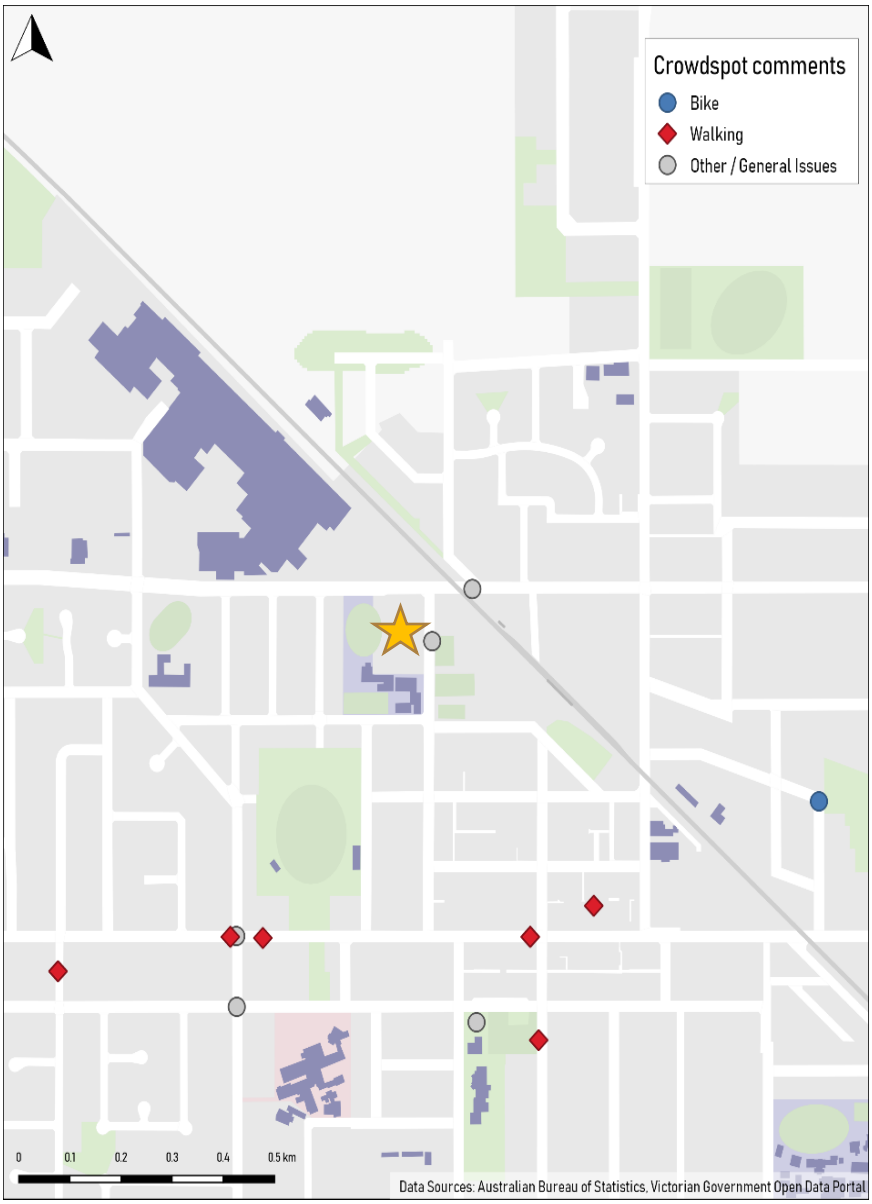
2.3.1. CrowdSpot

A review of the community feedback received during the development of the Campaspe Active Transport Strategy for locations proximate to St Augustine's College has been completed and listed in Table 2.1, with the associated locations shown in Figure 2.5.

Table 2.1: Community Feedback for Locations Proximate to St Augustine's College

Location	Feedback
Edis Street	• Shared path ends when it gets to the truck route
Church Street Shared path	• This shared path virtually goes from nowhere to nowhere. Great if you want to go bowling and live at the old saleyards.
Waratah Street	• Really ugly street which forms only north-south link west of Saunders. Really narrow verges, nature strips and fences creates an uncomfortable and unpleasant environment
Tree opposite Kyabram Club	• The large tree opposite the Kyabram club on Allan street makes a mess of the footpath. It is constantly dropping small gumnuts that are a falls risk. In autumn, the leaves form a thick mess that becomes very slippery when wet.
Allan Street, Dawes Road intersection	• The footpath crossing here on both sides of the road is VERY steep and I find it difficult to push a pram across the road. I have also seen older people in scooters struggling to cross.
Cnr of Allan and Saunders	• The change from pavement to road here is too steep and sharp for my grandfathers wheelchair. In order to cross he has to go down backwards which makes it even more difficult. This is on all the corners and in each direction.
Union/Fenaughty Street Intersection	• Given the proximity to the centre of town and council facilities such as the swimming pool, library, skatepark and Jaycee Park Playground maybe the additions of a pedestrian crossing would help for youth and others to cross the road safely.
Credit Union Walkway, Kyabram	• There is a tree/vine growing midway down the walkway which prevents people being able to fully see one end to the other. Low visibility means that there is an opportunity for pedestrians to be confronted either side of the tree. • Agreed, this feels unsafe to walk in near nightfall.

Figure 2.5: Location of Community Feedback Proximate to St Augustine's College



2.3.2. Crash Statistics

A review of the reported casualty accident history for the area in the vicinity of St Augustine's College has been sourced from the VicRoads CrashStats accident database. This database shows all recorded accidents causing injury that have occurred in Victoria and categorises these accidents as follows:

- Fatal injury: at least one person was killed in the accident or died within 30 days as a result of the accident.
- Serious injury: at least one person was sent to hospital as a result of the accident.
- Other injury: at least one person required medical treatment as a result of the accident.

The following charts show where (Figure 2.6) and types (Figure 2.7) of crashes, number of crashes involving a pedestrian, cyclist or motorcyclist (Figure 2.8) and the age of people involved in the crashes (Figure 2.9) over the past five years.

Figure 2.6: Location of crashes involving a pedestrian, cyclist or motorcyclist

Figure 2.6 indicates that a total of 13 crashes were recorded over the last 5 years in the proximate area to St Augustine's College, including 3 serious and 10 other injury crashes. Of these, the majority occurred at the following locations:

- Allan Street and Dawes Road with 3 crashes, including 1 serious and 2 other injury types
- Edis Street and Albion Street with 2 crashes, both resulting in other injuries
- Fenaughty Street and Lake Road with 2 crashes, including 1 serious and 1 other injury types

Finding: Recent crashes have occurred on Allan Street, Fenaughty Street and Albion Street, reaffirming areas of concern raised during workshops and in community consultation for the active transport strategy. Some of these crashes have resulted in serious injuries.

Figure 2.7: Common crash types involving a pedestrian, cyclist or motorcyclist

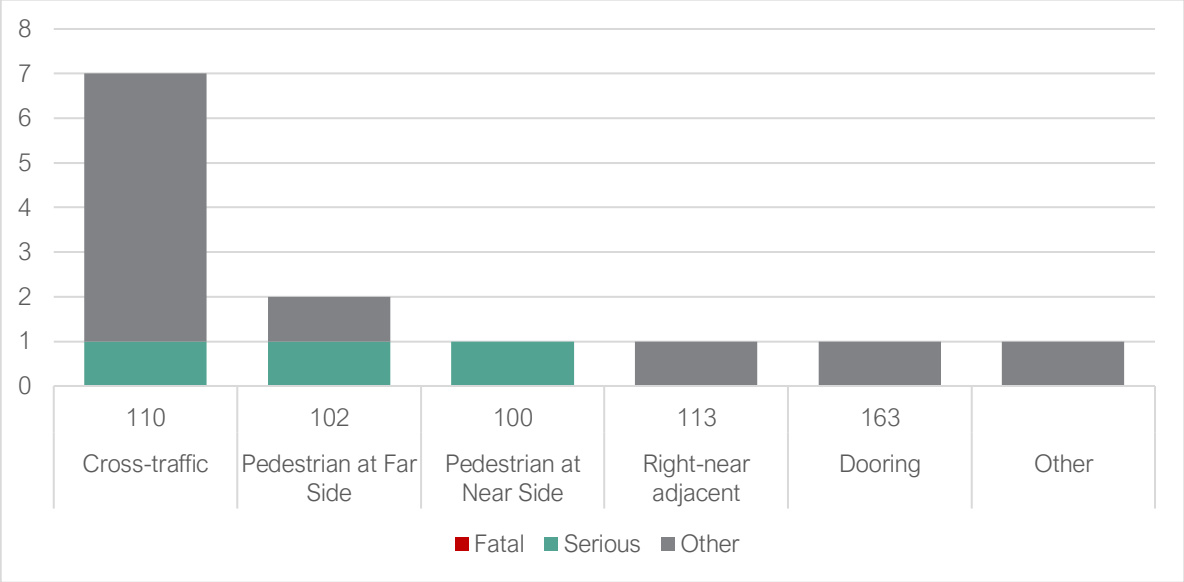


Figure 2.7 indicates that the most common crash types were between cross-traffic at intersections (7 crashes) and between vehicles and pedestrians (3 crashes).

Finding: Many crashes have occurred where a counterpart is travelling perpendicular to a walker or bike rider (i.e. across traffic).

Figure 2.8: Breakdown of crashes involving a pedestrian, cyclist or motorcyclist

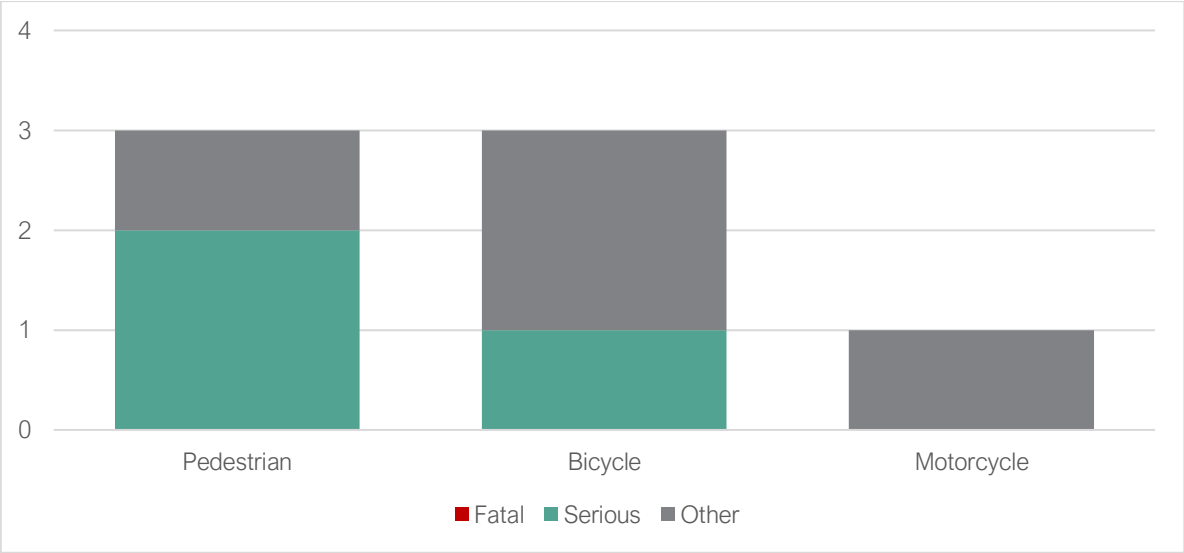


Figure 2.8 indicates that the majority of vulnerable road user crashes involved both pedestrians and cyclists with 3 crashes each, then motorcycles with 1 crash. Of these 7 vulnerable road user crashes, 3 crashes resulted in a serious injury (2 pedestrians and 1 cyclist); the others were all other injury crash types.

Figure 2.9: Age of people involved in vulnerable road user crashes

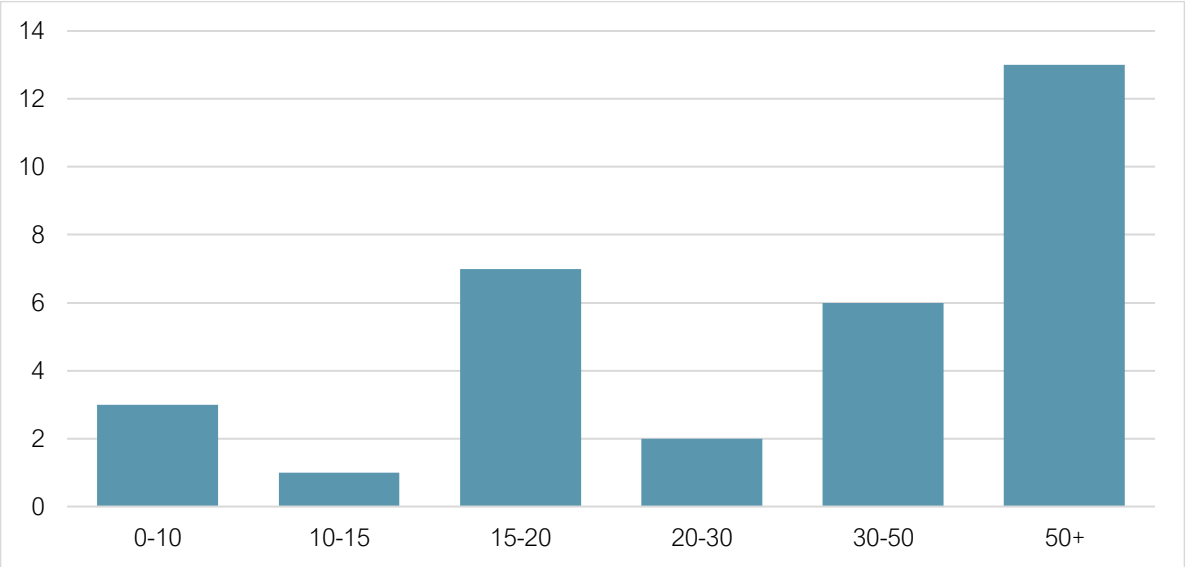


Figure 2.9 indicates the majority of the crashes involved people 50+ years of age, then 15-20 years of age and 30-50 years of age after that. The other age groups were only involved in a small number of crashes beyond those. From the above data it is also noted that 2 incidents resulting in serious injuries occurred to school-aged pedestrians:

- Allan Street and Dawes Road
- Allan Street and Goddard Street

In addition, 1 other accident resulting in an other injury to a school-aged pedestrians:

- Allan Street and Dawes Road

Finding: A number of school-aged students have been injured on Allan Street in recent years.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Overview

St Augustine's College is located within a residential area supported by a typical grid road network. As such, students, teachers and parents could accessing the school from all directions, but generally converge on Church Street and Tulloh Street (where school crossings are provided). Streets in the vicinity of the school are generally for local access to properties, the school or nearby facilities (such as the sports complex or shops). These streets generally have a default speed limit of 50km/h or posted limit of 40km/h, a footpath on at least one side of the road and are more appropriate for use by passenger vehicles than trucks or buses. That said, the large cross-sections and relatively unconstrained environment means that the streets are used by some buses (including school buses) and vehicles may travel at higher speeds.

The Kyabram central residential area is clearly bounded by four key barriers - McCormick Road (north), Allan Street (south), McEwen Road (west) and the railway line (east), which generally have limited crossing facilities, as well as higher speeds and generally heavier vehicles (McCormick Street and Albion Street are designated truck routes). It is in these locations that many of the challenges associated with walking and cycling to school become most evident, with respect to a Safe Systems approach, feedback received in workshops and community consultation and crash statistics.

As such, a focussed set of recommendations over the short, medium and long-term are set out below that aim to support students, teachers and parents accessing St Augustine's College through active travel modes. The aim is for recommendations to be consistent with the Active Transport Strategy and be realistic and achievable by Council, with support from others.

3.2. Recommendations

3.2.1. Short-Term

In the short-term (i.e. within the year and generally deliverable through Council's operational allowance/not require a specific Council budget allocation):

- Reduce speed limit on Allan Street to 40km/h along the full length between McEwen Road and Albion Street. Reducing speed will reduce risk of a crash, as well as consequences should a crash occur.
- Creation of a clear 'school zone' around the school through relevant signage and linemarking, including a gateway / threshold treatment 200m to 400m on each approaching road to the school, as per Table 4 of the VicRoads Speed Zoning Guidelines. Though regular drivers will be aware of the school's presence, a visual cue and prominent display as a school zone may encourage some drivers to exercise additional caution.
- Observe car parking and extend No Standing signs near intersections where parking is observed to be a problem or reduce crossing visibility on key routes (including Tulloh Street, Church Street, Turnbull Street, Allan Street and near intersections with busier roads). Ensuring clear sight lines was raised by several students as a hazard and is relatively straightforward to control.

3.2.1. Medium-Term

Over the medium-term (i.e. next year or two, requiring some alternate funding) the initiatives that can be implemented and are recommended include the following:

- Install improved crossings (i.e. zebra crossing or median refuges with appropriate kerb ramps, flashing lights and signage to meet relevant standards):
    - Across Allan Street at Dawes Road/Saunders Street
    - Across Allan Street at Church Street/Lake Road
    - Across Edis Street at the end of the shared path (east of the railway line)
    - Across Albion Street at Edis Street
- Provide median refuges on Tulloh Street at Church Street, both east and west sides (noting that as this is most direct, some students may opt to cross here instead of the designated crossing 30 metres west). Consideration should be given to bus access requirements.
- Improve maintenance or quality of shared path to north (i.e. remove gravel or design to prevent grit washing over from rail reserve). Improving the quality of facilities will reduce likelihood of punctures, slips or spraying stones and will make cycling more comfortable.
- Continue to engage with students – there is clear interest in further discussions, including through engaging tools and technology, such as Virtual Reality (which arose in several conversations).

3.2.2. Long-Term

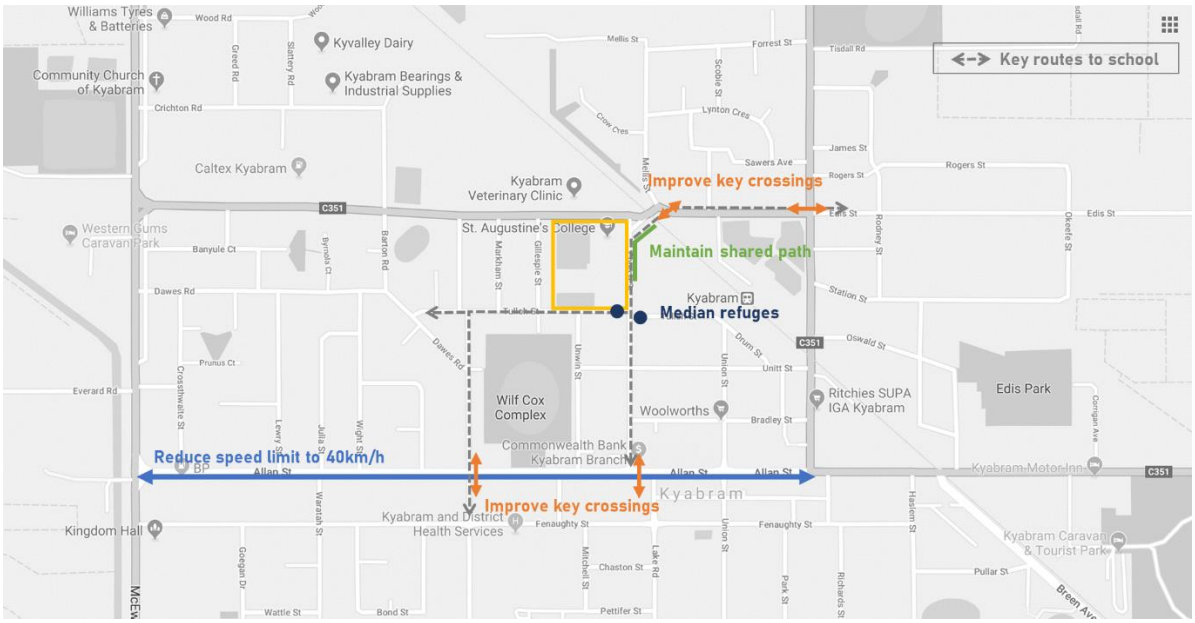
Over the long-term (i.e. five to ten years) the initiatives that are recommended include the following:

- Continue to identify opportunities to deliver median refuges across large streets and footpaths to complete the network, prioritising safety.
- Rationalise road space along local active travel access routes (i.e. McCormick Road / Edis Street, Church Street, Tulloh Street and Dawes Road).

3.3. Summary

The above recommendations are summarised diagrammatically in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Summary of Recommendations (Basemap: Google)



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