



Low-cost sealed shoulders on Toodyay Road.

Low-cost option saves money, lives and native flora

Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads

WE HAVE all heard about how Toodyay Road is supposedly one of the most dangerous roads in the Wheatbelt and the high Killed and Seriously Injured index (KSI) justifies the current road improvement program.

As Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads has often stated, this notoriety is based on figures dating back to 2010-2015. It is of interest that latest figures just released show that between 2015 and 2020 the KSI figure has fallen from 0.7 to 0.45, including only one fatality.

One might argue of course that this KSI is still nothing to write home about and one fatality is one too many but let's not ignore the evidence of improvement and the fact that it is presumably attributable to factors, other than expensive road engineering, namely campaigns and education devoted to encouraging better driver behaviour.

While we are talking about evidence let's also consider what might be the optimum engineering solution for Toodyay Road.

Some evidence from Queensland identified that rural undivided roads with little or no sealed shoulder (in the less than 0.5 m category) had a 1.7 times higher risk of casualty crashes of any type than roads with 2m sealed shoulders. The safety benefits of sealed shoulders were also evident on rural

roads with lower speed limits e.g. 80km/h.

Adding to this evidence is the Main Roads WA's (MRWA) own data, as applied to various roads across the state and not just Toodyay Road, which shows that the low-cost option of just sealing the shoulders leads to almost the same reduction in KSI (61 per cent) as does the much more expensive and more environmentally destructive solution of widening carriageways (62 per cent). Thus, not only is much of the environment saved but taxpayers end up paying far less money for a much safer road.

The MRWA response as to why such lower-cost options are not being used more is to say that they are not suitable for Toodyay Road because the community wanted passing lanes.

Such a response suggests that the engineering options for any one road is either low cost or high cost and not a combination.

Our group is not arguing for no passing lanes but we are questioning why we need as many as are planned especially when it is clear that the road safety agenda could be addressed by less-destructive and less-expensive solutions.

If you would like to know more about the above topic including how the KSI index is measured, a longer article is on our website at sastr.com.au/