

ENVIRONMENT

# Lies, damned lies and road statistics

## Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads Beatrice Laufer

TOODYAY Road has often been cited as one of WA's most dangerous roads due to its allegedly unacceptable safety record.

It is certainly true that Toodyay Road has had a history of serious accidents, including fatalities.

SASTR has always agreed that Toodyay Road needs to be upgraded as it has suffered for too long from poor maintenance, increasing disrepair, with crumbling hard shoulders and sub-standard road surfaces.

Is Toodyay Road's safety record, however, as bad as is made out by Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA)?

Equally important, does it warrant turning this beautiful albeit imperfect country road into the soulless highway envisaged by Main Roads?

In October 2022, the department stated that the 'Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road has an unacceptable safety record' and cited 30 crashes resulting in death or serious injury between 2011 and 2021 as reason for that assessment.

Interestingly, Main Roads acknowledged accident numbers have declined in recent times but maintained the extensive, environmentally destructive development planned for the road remains necessary.

SASTR has long sought more detailed historical crash data for Toodyay Road to understand the extent and nature of accidents occurring on Toodyay Road as well as the road's safety record over time.

Main Road's Open Data Portal provides useful WA road crash data for the last five year-period and makes it possible for SASTR to prepare a more detailed picture on the crash history of the Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road over the past ten or so years.

The results are interesting as they seem to reflect an improvement in road safety for Toodyay Road in recent years.

Year	Killed	Hospitalisation	Year	Killed	Hospitalisation
2011 - 2015*	4	12	2019	0	4
			2020	0	0
2016**	0	0	2021	0	1
2017	0	2	2022	0	1
2018***	0	4	2023	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

Sources:

\* MRWA State and Commonwealth Offset Proposal – Toodyay Road Widening SLK 12.75 to 40.3, March 2018, p.4, <https://ftp.dwer.wa.gov.au/permit/7431/CPS%207431-1%20-%20Offset%20proposal.pdf>

\*\* [Statistics 2016-2017] 'Police Beat', Toodyay Herald editions 2016 & 2017; MRWA Open Data Portal 'Historic Incidents 2016-2019' [accessed 26/03/2024]

\*\*\* [Statistics 2018-2023] MRWA Open Data Portal on Road Safety 'Crash Information (Last 5 Years)' [first accessed 12/02/2024]

*Comparison of KSI (Killed and Seriously Injured) for 2014-2018 to 2019-2023 – Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road between Dryandra Road and Toodyay.*

Crash information for the Wheatbelt side of Toodyay Road shows that since the beginning of 2018, nobody has been killed in a road accident within the Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road.

Furthermore, yearly accident numbers have been in the single to low double digits.

Between 2018 and 2023, 85 per cent of all accidents recorded for Toodyay Road occurred in the metropolitan section of Toodyay Road and only 15 percent in the Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road.

In real numbers, this means that of the 217 crashes recorded for Toodyay Road for the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2023, only 32 occurred in the Wheatbelt section of the Toodyay Road while 185 crashes happened on the metropolitan side of Toodyay Road.

In the face of this apparent improved safety record of the Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road in recent years, the proposed level of environmental destruction and Main Road's plan to turn this scenic country road into a bleak highway do not make sense.

It is unjustifiable to spend \$80 million on an over-engineered project with a substantial environmental footprint when there are

less destructive and more cost-effective alternatives that could be explored.

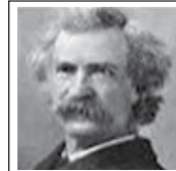
SASTR continues to demand an urgent review of the current project plans and, to this end, we have supplied a detailed submission to the Assistant Transport Minister.

Our submission suggested road improvements that can be accomplished in ways that minimise environmental harm and maintain both the biodiversity and tourism value of Toodyay Road.

After six weeks, we are still awaiting a response.

Perhaps labelling Toodyay Road as the most dangerous road in the State has been the most effective strategy in reducing the road toll.

Lastly, a big thank you to everyone who bought a ticket in our recent Easter raffle and congratulations to the winners.



There are lies, damned lies and statistics.  
– Mark Twain