



**RTSZero**

## Pedestrian and bicyclist safety takes different paths

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Has COVID-19 and our rush to embrace (or re-embrace) active transport and outdoor activity made better pedestrians and cyclists of us? Provisional road trauma data appears to be as encouraging for pedestrians as it is alarming for bicyclists.

Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) data for 2020 shows 136 pedestrians died in crashes on Australian roads. This is a decline of 14.5% on the previous year.

Of those crashes 47 occurred in an area with a 50kmh speed limit. That could very well be the street where you live or work.

In 2011, the first year of the 2011-2020 National Road Safety Strategy period, pedestrian deaths peaked at 186. Over the course of the decade, pedestrian deaths nationally have fallen by 27%.

We can all agree that some of our busiest outdoor spaces are footpaths – particularly when you consider that at some point in our day, we are all pedestrians. As metropolitan areas keep sprawling and housing estates keep popping up – do authorities and developers need to look at making this shared space a wider, more forgiving environment that will keep up with the demands of an aging population?



We've had a year of everyone telling us to keep roughly 1.5m away from other humans where possible. Everyone from local sporting groups to government health bodies have been offering handy guides ranging from birds and native animals to beach towels to help us sort it all out.

*Photo Left: COVID-19 signage at Lake Mulwala, Yarrowonga, taken by RTS Zero.*

During the 2011-2020 National Road Safety Strategy period, pedal cyclist deaths peaked at 45 in 2013 and 50 in 2014 according to BITRE data. The following two years were the lowest

for pedal cyclist deaths, with 31 killed in 2015 and 29 in 2016. Sadly, pedal cyclist deaths in Australia have been trending upwards since then.

BITRE data shows 42 pedal cyclists died on Australian roads in 2020. This is an increase of 8% on the previous year (2019).

Demand for bicycles spiked during the 2020 lockdowns with some retailers selling as many bicycles in six weeks as they would have in six months.

Motorists throughout Australia should be aware of minimum passing distance laws around cyclists enacted by state parliaments during the last five years.

More research into the events leading up to each crash would be needed to determine what role passing distance played, if any. But the conversation about why we can generally keep our personal space in the shopping centre versus the challenge of doing the same thing on the road – might need to be had.

### **The Authors – RTS Zero**

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*This work is their personal analysis of current events.*