

Pedestrians: the forgotten road victims.

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The organiser of the World Sight Day event in Dunedin today has called for a full government inquiry into pedestrian deaths.

Dr Lynley Hood, spokesperson for the Visual Impairment Charitable Trust Aotearoa says:

“Successive New Zealand governments and government agencies have failed to address, or even to recognise, the horror of pedestrian deaths on New Zealand roads.”

“Between 2006 and 2015, almost four times as many pedestrians (348) as cyclists (90) were killed on New Zealand roads. Pedestrian deaths among people over 65 (104) also outnumbered total cyclist deaths (90) over that period.”

Dr Hood is concerned that the government appears to be in denial about the seriousness of the problem.

“Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary in its own data, the Ministry of Transport claims that walking is one of the safest modes of travel available.”

Dr Hood points out that elderly pedestrians are particularly at risk.

“Between 2006 and 2015, 30% of pedestrian deaths and 23% of cyclist deaths involved people aged 65 and over.”

“Roading engineers often fail to grasp how dangerous our roads can be for people with limited mobility and poor eyesight.”

Dr Hood is also frustrated that the government often blames the victims of pedestrian accidents involving old people.

“The Ministry’s Crash Facts 2015 blames pedestrian deaths on texting, listening to music, playing games and lying on the road – none of which are indulged in by old people, who just want to cross the road without getting run over.”

Dr Hood, who is hosting a series of events for World Sight Day in Dunedin, wants the government to give pedestrians the same priority as cyclists.

“The NZ Transport Agency has a Cycle Safety Action Plan, with actions that include co-investing more than \$350 million in urban cycling infrastructure. But there is no mention of any Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, nor mention of any increased investment in urban pedestrian infrastructure.”

“The words ‘pedestrian’ and ‘footpath’ are absent from Budget 2016 Vote Transport, and from the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2015/16 - 2024/25. I can only say I’m horrified that pedestrians don’t get even a mention.”

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