



VICTORIA POLICE

# Road Safety for Older Pedestrians

An important safety message from  
Assistant Commissioner Doug Fryer

## Road Safety for Older Pedestrians – a safety message from Victoria Police

Between 2011 and 2015, there were 66 pedestrians aged 70 or above killed in collisions. Although only accounting for one tenth of the population, the 70 up age group accounted for about one third of all pedestrian fatalities in that time period. There were also six collisions involving pedestrians who were riding motorised mobility scooters during this time, however there is no indication that there is an increase in fatalities involving older pedestrians using these aids. These statistics are similar across the developed world.

With increasing age and a decline in general health it is likely that older people will be taking one or more prescription medications on a regular basis, many of which are likely to affect their ability to use the road safely. Moreover, not all medications have clear and understandable messaging of their likely impairment on a person's mobility, especially pedestrian performance.

Both aging and medication can gradually affect a person's ability to cross roads safely. This is shown in the contributing factors to the 66 collisions including:

- Failing eyesight and hearing
- Poor gap selection
- Inability to judge the speed and distance of approaching vehicles
- Limited mobility and
- Slower movement.

These contributing factors can also be accentuated by what the Victorian Coroner described as the "...legal maze through which drivers and pedestrian traffic must negotiate, to determine right of way ...". As a consequence it has been determined that VicRoads, AustRoads (both of whom develop road rules) and local councils need to work toward eliminating the confusion.

But in the meantime what can you do to increase your safety as a pedestrian;

- Always cross roads at traffic lights or at marked crossings when available or at least intersections - even if you have to walk a little further
- Walk and cross with other pedestrians whenever possible
- Give yourself more time to cross by waiting for a newly turned green or walk signal
- Keep scanning for vehicles as you cross
- When crossing roads – take the shortest route. If there is a pedestrian refuge cross the road in two stages
- Wait for vehicles to stop completely
- Make eye contact with the driver before crossing in front of a vehicle
- Use the footpath when available
- Watch for turning vehicles, before stepping off the kerb and while crossing
- Do not step off the kerb before checking for cyclists
- Consider your own mobility – be mindful of how quickly you can move – it may take you longer than you think to cross the road or get out of the way of moving vehicles
- Make sure you know how to use any mobility device (stick, frame or scooter) before leaving home

**For your safety, always be aware of yourself, aware of your surroundings and be alert!**