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Animal Justice Party

RESPONSE:

What is your view regarding the current active transport infrastructure in your electorate?

The world, this nation and our electorate are changing rapidly. Building, development and urban sprawl are inevitable. The divide between areas previously considered “city” and “country” are softening, and along with it a growing awareness of the ways in which our planning decisions affect the health of current and future generations. As our world is becoming increasingly digitally connected, many people feel more internally disconnected than ever before.

We are fortunate in Lowan to have well planned walking and hiking trails through the spectacular Gariwerd mountains. Yet most of our roads connecting towns don't accommodate active transport, when they could. Our transport infrastructure outside of the walking and hiking trails prioritises cars. Whilst retaining the need for vehicular transport, there is potential for our current road infrastructure to support active transport in our electorate. We all know that roads throughout Lowan and the wider Western District need urgent repairs for cars, pedestrians and wildlife. However, even before those repairs take place, we can immediately improve active transport by establishing tracks alongside roads where appropriate. These are already in place in other electorates, and are known to be well utilised. Shorter tracks can be established between a town and its outskirts, and longer tracks between regional towns. These are great ways to support active transport in regional areas.

Active transport is crucial for activating peoples health as well as facilitating social connections between people. These are both key to human health and wellbeing, and feeling a sense of belonging. Active transport can inspire a sense of awe and wonder as people engage meaningfully with our ancient and magnificent area. These deeply gratifying feelings of connection risk being lost if we don't make conscious endeavours to revitalise the way we move.

What actions will you take to improve active transport in your electorate?

- Review our roads from multiple perspectives. Roads are considered

places for vehicular travel, but in reality roads are shared spaces. Therefore, regional roads surrounding small towns need to be bike safe, and pedestrian and wildlife friendly. As well as the pot holes and damage that need fixing, speed limits in some areas need to be reviewed. The winding narrow roads through the Gariwerd mountains have a 100kph limit which is the same as a city highway. This creates dangers for humans and wildlife alike. Reducing the speed limit to 80 will reduce the stress on drivers, make it safer for wildlife and encourage people to get on bikes, legs or use some other form of active transport.

- Work with the relevant Ministers to amend our legations and regulations to ensure that any time we build any new infrastructure - whether roads or buildings - that active transport be a required and integrated part of planning.
- Meet with each council in the Lowan electorate to ensure that state planning laws trickle down to the local level, where development and infrastructure is friendly to humans, animals and the environment. We are all interdependent and so when consider the needs of all, everyone enjoys the benefits.
- Establish regular active transport days, communicated widely through council areas. Locals are inspired when they see fun enjoyable activities that their friends and neighbours are participating in. We could come up with themes like “farmers on bikes” for instance. It could be fun and light-hearted, strengthening social cohesion.
- Support the above actions with a campaign stimulating local governments to promote active transport. Encourage LGAs to invite their communities come together in new ways, and to revisit their local areas with fresh eyes. The healthy movement of people through spaces needs to be a priority in any development. Integrating active transport encourages people of all physical abilities to get out, get active, and get social so they can enjoy the emotional, social, physical and mental benefits

Active transport spending at the state level is less than 2 per cent. In your view, what is a 'fair spend' for active transport?

My background is anthropology not economics. So rather than come up with a dollar or percentage figure, I suggest that whatever it costs to integrate active transport in all planning and development is a cost that we must pay, and that will well pay for itself in the mental and physical health, and emotional and social wellbeing of our Lowan communities. Healthy people are happier, more productive, require less pharmaceuticals and pose less demands on our regional health systems. We can incentivise active transport through grants scheme, pay back schemes, and donations in kind of bikes etc. The benefits of a healthier community will pay back its own rewards to the entire electorate.