



To the Parliamentary Petitions Committee,

EQUESTRIANS UNITE FOR VULNERABLE ROAD USER STATUS

The New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network (NZEAN) with the support of New Zealand Riding for the Disabled (NZRDA), Equestrian Sports New Zealand (ESNZ), The New Zealand Pony Club Association (NZPCA) and Te Hapori Hōiho - National Māori Horse Association Aotearoa Trust are requesting an amendment to the [Land Transport \(Road User\) Rule 2004](#) to formally recognise the vulnerability of horse riders and carriage riders in transport legislation.

Formal support for the Vulnerable Road User Petition includes [37 equestrian organisations and groups \(refer evidence 1\)](#), many of these organisations are the backbone of the equine community and contribute by way of employment, economic spend and wellbeing. In three months the Petition secured 8,966 signatures of support.

The intent of the [VRU Petition \(refer evidence 2\)](#) is to ensure horse riders and carriage drivers are formally recognised as a VRU and included in road safety messaging and education. This recognition must also formally result in equestrian's inclusion in safe off road pathways, like cyclists. We suggest an inquiry into road user behaviour towards VRUs, including horse riders, if decision makers require further evidence of the unintended consequence of poor legislation. A similar inquiry was recently undertaken in the Australian State of Victoria and has led to a suite of proposed recommendations, including VRU status for equestrians. [Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users \(parliament.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Why is Vulnerable Road User status important?

Currently there is no definition in New Zealand Transport Agency literature to define a Vulnerable Road User (VRU). This means VRU treatment and application is left up to interpretation and this is evident in local and central government planning. Consequently, for horse riders, they are left out of road safety education and more often than not, excluded from new off road trail developments. Loss of existing horse rider access to shared spaces is also occurring at an alarming rate. I draw your attention to Foxton in particular. [LOST ACCESS EXAMPLES.docx \(refer evidence 3\)](#) Horse riders are considered an 'other road user' in transport legislation and the lack of clarity, detail and meaningful safety initiatives

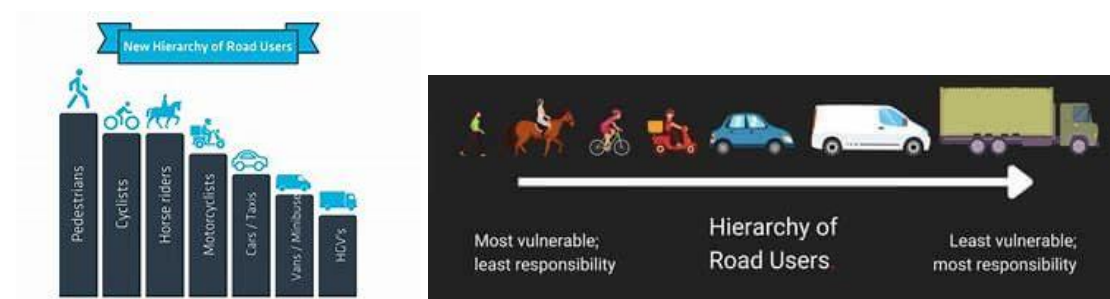
that comes with that label puts horse riders in an extremely vulnerable position on New Zealand roads. The status quo must not be allowed to continue.

The European Commission provides a clear definition of a Vulnerable Road User. “Vulnerable road user (VRU) is any “non-motorist” road user in the role of a pedestrian, a highway worker, a person riding an animal, a stranded motorist, a skateboarder, roller skater, a scooter, or a cyclist, to name a few”.

We ask that New Zealand Transport Agency Literature include a definition of a VRU.

We ask that a VRU hierarchy explanation, similar to that of the UK Highway Code be considered in communicating vulnerability and responsibility of all road users. A suite of changes to improve VRU safety, including horse riders, was introduced in Scotland, Wales and England in January 2022.

For Example “The new hierarchy of road users ensures that those who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger they may pose to others.” [The Highway Code: 8 changes you need to know from 29 January 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/highway-code-changes-2022)



Horse riders/ carriage drivers are considered equal in vulnerability to Cyclists

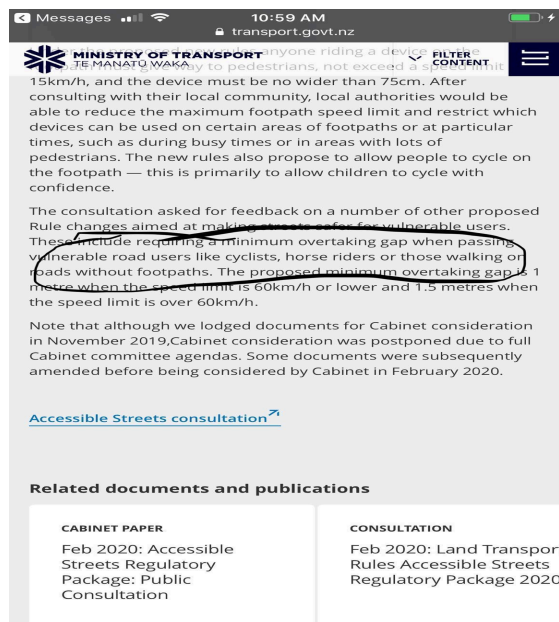
Local and Central Government

With no meaningful status in legislation, there is a dismissive culture in New Zealand at local and central government decision-making tables towards the recreational horse-riding community. This is evident in the loss of existing access rights to public spaces and trails, exclusion from existing and new infrastructure spend and loss of land or facilities used by the horse-riding community.

False hope is communicated in formal Local and Central government public consultation documents that is not followed through in application and treatment. The [Central South Trail - Bike | Walk | Run](#) is one example where initial community engagement and rhetoric stated an inclusive trail design, but despite horse rider advocacy and participation, it is a two user group tourism focused project. It is funded by public funding organisations, ratepayer and taxpayer money. Consultation around existing and continued horse riders access at Waitangi Forest Park started positively and then suddenly, without communication or explanation, padlocks were installed on gates and access was denied. Access for other passive recreational user groups continues.

The [Road-to-Zero-strategy final.pdf \(transport.govt.nz\)](#) failed to mention horse riders as a road user group. This is by far the most offensive example of horse rider consideration in a nationally focused investment and educational framework that is used to inform local and central government road safety initiatives and enforcement priorities - the very authorities tasked with reducing trauma, injury and death on the roads.

The [Accessible Streets | Ministry of Transport](#) package is an example of where horse riders were consulted as a VRU and included, along with cyclists in a recommendation for a minimum passing distance of 1.5m. This package fell over in 2020, and in the interest of efficiency, we ask that it be considered in how you proceed with this submission.



We have presented to 10 Local Government Regional Transport Committees (RTC) throughout the country to highlight flaws in legislation for the horse-riding community. We have received formal support from 9 of the regional transport committees to date. This includes The Auckland Transport Board, Auckland RTC, Waikato RTC, Bay of Plenty RTC, Hawkes Bay RTC, Greater Wellington RTC, Tasman-Nelson Joint RTC, Canterbury RTC and Northland RTC. Taranaki RTC has not committed whilst it awaits a staff paper on the issue. We will speak with the West Coast, Otago/Southland and Gisborne RTCs in October/November. Attached are the RTC letters of support and we are thrilled we can confidently say Local Government leaders recognise horse riders' legitimate case to be formally recognised in transport legislation as a vulnerable road user. [VRU Letters of support \(refer evidence 4\)](#)

As part of presentations, we have asked that there be a complete shift in mindset around what is considered inclusive and that all off-road pathways/tracks/ trails be approached as multi-use from the outset. This is inclusive of all passive recreational users. In New Zealand's Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004, shared pathway users are listed as pedestrians, cyclists, riders of mobility devices and wheeled recreational devices. Horse riders are not.

We asked that territorial authorities look to develop a 10-year Walking and Riding Strategy. One does not exist formally, however the Hurunui District Council is in the midst of drafting

one for public consultation in November. The council's Hurunui Trails Trust, which champions the existing strategy, has for a number of years been working on an inclusive framework that includes horse riders, cyclists and walkers. [Planning to move strategically - Hurunui District Council](#) (*refer evidence 5*)

The horse riding community is perplexed as to who and why planners have been allowed to determine that horse and carriage riders/drivers can't safely be included in spaces and places where cyclists and walkers frequent. Where is the evidence that this is unworkable? We accept that in some cases it is not practical, but we can find many examples across the country where our exclusion is not evidently informed. Remember horse riders can go over and under, and do not require extensively compacted expensive footing. We require permission, access provision, dirt on the side of a trail and the ability to park a float and safely tack up. Signage and education is critical to spaces being safe for all users, and examples of this are few and far between, but do exist. Examples include; Kapiti Expressway, Otaki River Trail, St James Homestead Run, Hanmer Springs, Waikanae River tracks, Queen Elizabeth Park, Bottle Lake Forest, Christchurch, Redwoods Forest, Rotorua, Leithfield Beach track, Otago Rail Trail.



Who are horse riders? The majority are women and girls, but the community of horse riders is diverse and large. I have had the privilege of speaking with hundreds of people across the country in person, via social media or in my approach to organisations for support of this work. What is clear is how special the horse is to culture, wellbeing, personal growth, disability access to the outdoors, and recreational aspirations. From Cowboy Challenge, Rodeo, Endurance and Competitive Trail Riding to Pony Club, Eventing, Mounted Games to retirement planning or mental health healing. People who take up riding or carriage driving come from all walks of life and the horse or pony provides learning and joy that is unmatched in other areas of their life. For many horse owners and riders, owning and riding horses is their main form of physical activity, equally important for both mental and physical wellbeing. There is no age limit to owning or riding horses and it's one of the few sports or activities where men and women compete on an equal footing, from grassroots right to high performance sport. We take our safety and the safety of our animals seriously, because the horse is for many a companion for life.

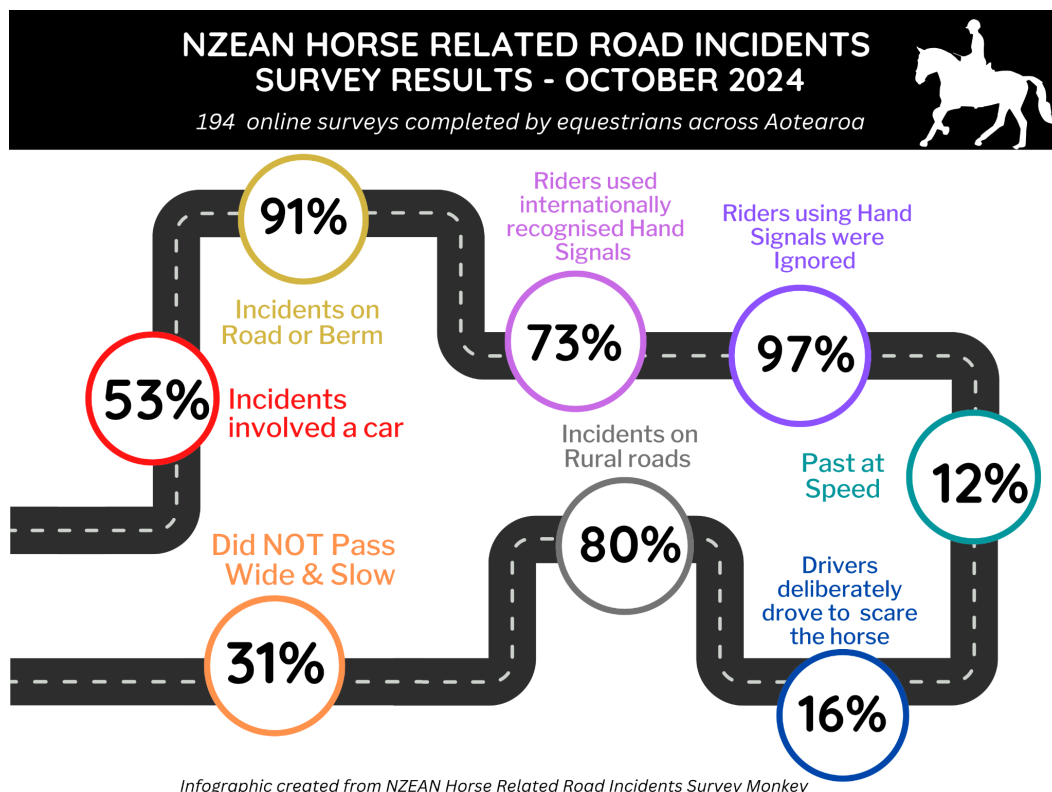
Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa, the Outdoor Access Commission has a role to play in ensuring all recreational user groups are included and consulted where possible in all public outdoor accessible trails. Its website now reflects this by way of a horse rider presence. [Public access for horse riders | Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa, the Outdoor Access Commission](#) (*refer evidence 6*)

We ask that Local and Central Government make the necessary changes to legislation and policy to include horse riders and carriage drivers formally in the community by way of road safety and off road trails/ pathways. Work is undertaken to strengthen the relationship with equestrian community advocates to understand their specific needs and ensure there is no further loss of facilities/ land or existing access.

No Data = No Idea

No single agency captures near misses or incidents, and when equestrians aren't consulted, how does any authority know what is happening on our roading network? The near miss stories of riding on the road, and worst-case scenario of serious injury or death of a rider or horse are recounted everywhere by riders. For the three months of this campaign, NZEAN has asked riders to complete a survey on road related incidents and behaviours whilst riding or driving a carriage on the road. The results are illustrated below. Of note is 82% of riders didn't report the incident and stated it had a short to long term effect on them.

"Mid afternoon, fine day, 50 km speed limit, bus vs horse. As the rider, I requested the bus that was coming up behind me to slow down to give me adequate time to get into a driveway which was literally metres away. The driver did not slow down at all and spooked my horse when it passed. My horse spun around on the road and collided with the back of the bus and then ended up in a wire fence causing injury to the horse. The bus chose to keep going when it was clear that something had happened as the passengers were motioning to me." [Connect to read more stories from the NZEAN survey \(refer evidence 7\)](#)

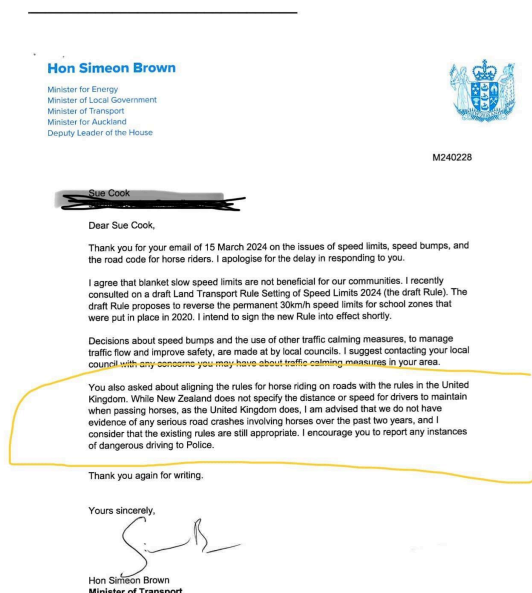


Speaking to many of the children and their adults from 31 Pony Clubs across the South Island at the recent Springston Trophy event, it is evident the stories of injury, trauma, near

misses and death of horses is an issue everywhere. Here is a snapshot of stories from riders across the country that have been captured over the past three months.

[ROAD RIDING STORIES FROM NZ RIDERS .docx - Google Docs](#) (refer evidence 8)

How can the transport minister publicly state there is enough provision in the Transport Act for horse riders' safety when there is no data that can be extracted around incidents or serious crashes involving a horse and rider? An Official Information Request to New Zealand Police was made following the minister of transport's public statement on [One News](#). This confirmed little to no data is held by NZ Police or NZTA that is specific to horse and riders. [Official Information from NZ Police](#) (refer evidence 9) Based on the OIA response, we formally requested that NZ Police look at how it can capture data around horse rider and carriage driver complaints, infringements and chargeable related incidents for the purpose of informed road safety and enforcement decision making. We understand this is a low to no cost measure as it is effectively a new tick box exercise. We were not impressed with the response. [PDF NZ POLICE - NO DATA RESPONSE.pdf](#) (refer evidence 10)



We request New Zealand Police and the Ministry of Transport - NZTA to promptly introduce data collecting measures specific to horse riders and carriage drivers on the roading network.

Enforcement

The only data we have been able to obtain is around a \$55 infringement for drivers that fail to exercise due care to a person moving animals/ riding an animal. There have been 13 issued in 13-years. This appallingly low enforcement rate does not match the anecdotal evidence from riders across the country with respect to driver behaviour that is endangering and compromising horse rider and carriage driver safety on the road. We suggest the low enforcement rate can also be linked to why driver behaviour has developed to include more serious and deliberate cases of using a vehicle to insight fear, cause injury and damage. As a result, we have recognised the need to empower horse riders to make a complaint, to inform the complaint with as much evidence as possible - keeping in mind these incidents happen quickly and managing an animal doesn't always allow time to capture a number

plate - and for riders to know their basic legal rights. We met and spoke with NZ Police to inform this work and have shared it with the equestrian community.

[Reporting incidents to NZ Police.docx - Google Docs](#) (*refer evidence 11*)

We ask New Zealand Police to prioritise horse rider safety on the road by way of improved education and enforcement. The frequency and severity of ignorant and deliberate driver behaviours must be reduced. There is provision in the law to do this and we ask it is ramped up considerably to prevent further road related trauma and injury.

Road Safety messaging and education

Whilst we wait for the Central and Local Government to prioritise horse rider safety on the road, we are leading the driver behaviour change we require.

The international Pass Wide and Slow road safety message has been brought to New Zealand and is supported by the horse-riding community to educate drivers on how to approach and pass a horse on the road safely. A permanent educational road safety platform [Pass Wide and Slow New Zealand](#) has been established with the aim of reducing the number of incidents and near misses on the road. The skill set behind the platform includes a journalist, marketing strategist, who formerly worked for NZTA in road safety messaging, a Police officer and our representative for the rangatahi. You can [watch PWASNZ rangitahi deliver a powerful speech to the council](#). The creation of this important brand and strategy has helped shine a light on the petition work and allows the education and awareness messaging to continue beyond the delivery of the petition.



Stakeholder support is critical to the mindset change required to make our roads safer for both motorists, horse riders and carriage drivers. PWASNZ has secured support for the road safety message with New Zealand Police, The Automobile Association, New Zealand Trucking, National Road Carriers Association, Protranz Earthworks Ltd, Transporting New Zealand, the Bus and Coach Association of New Zealand, Ritchies, and the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association. All have agreed to promote and share an educational flyer on tips around approaching and passing a horse and rider/ carriage driver, with NZ Police being the first to collaboratively endorse the material produced by PWASNZ marketing specialist Eve Leniston-Howell. NZ Police have agreed to distribute the educational flyer across their stations and with the driver network as and when appropriate. The cost of printing this resource is being met by PWASNZ secured sponsorship. We are awaiting a formal response from St John Ambulance and FENZ.



WE NEED YOUR HELP TO KEEP HORSE RIDERS SAFE ON OUR ROADS

Your considerate driving matters. Be empowered by these **Pass Wide and Slow** tips.



Pass Wide and Slow

Give at least 2 metres space and slow down as you approach or pass.



Please Do Not

Toot, shout, rev your engine as you pass or drive away.



Riders Hand Signal

Take notice and follow the riders hand signals.



When Towing

Take extra care when towing, make sure nothing is flapping or making noise as this can scare the horse.




Thank You
Aotearoa



Educational Material Produced by PWASNZ in collaboration with NZ Police

[NZ Trucking Association](#) ([refer evidence 12](#)) have shared and endorsed the Pass Wide and Slow message, and its reference to road safety being a collective responsibility is appreciated. It also touched on the vulnerability hierarchy by way of trucks being the largest and safest and the need for its drivers to look after those more vulnerable.

 [NZ TRUCKING ASSN LETTER.pdf](#) ([refer evidence 13](#))

We have found one example of an operator that has been leading in this space for the past 18-years. The Standard Operating Procedure for Protranz Earthmoving Ltd includes education for its driver network on how to approach and pass a horse and rider safely. It asks drivers to consider their speed, distance in passing, engine noise, wind draft as they move past a horse. The company's vision to ensure their drivers are doing everything they can to keep vulnerable road users safe is leadership that is deserving of recognition. At its own cost it installed \$2,500 cameras on a number of its fleet to allow the driver to have a clear line of sight when the vehicle turns. Protranz has now updated its SOP to include the Pass Wide and Slow road safety message.  [PROTRANZ SOP](#) ([refer evidence 14](#))

Pass Wide & Slow around Horses

“Road safety is a collective responsibility, everyone has a role to play in ensuring that our roads are safe for all users.”

Our New Zealand roads are shared by a diverse range of users, each with different needs and responsibilities, but all have the equal right to share our roads. This shared space requires everyone's cooperation, awareness, and respect to ensure safety and efficiency. This is especially important on roads where larger vehicles like trucks and campervans operate alongside smaller vehicles and more vulnerable road users like cyclists, pedestrians, and horse riders.

Truck drivers in New Zealand play a crucial role in road safety, especially when sharing the road with horse riders. Given the size and noise of trucks, it's important for drivers to take extra precautions to ensure the safety of horse riders and their animals.

Tips for Safe Driving Near Horses:

- ✓ Slow down and pass carefully, give the horse and rider plenty of room.
- ✓ Don't sound your horn, rev your engine or pass at speed.
- ✓ If the horse and rider are on a bridge or narrow road, be very careful – slow down or stop.
- ✓ If the horse appears frightened, stop.
- ✓ At night, dip your headlights when approaching a horse.
- ✓ Avoid passing another vehicle near a horse.

Driving safely around horse riders is crucial to ensure the safety of both the riders and the horses, every small action contributes to a safer environment on New Zealand's roads. It's a simple but powerful way to make our roads better and more accommodating for everyone.

0800 338 338 | info@trucking.nz | www.trucking.nz



We ask that all stakeholders tasked with reducing road trauma, including Local Government road safety groups, work with PWASNZ and its capability to provide relevant and targeted road safety messaging and content to meet horse riders needs and safety. We ask that decision makers encourage heavy vehicle operators to adopt the PWASNZ messaging in their SOP and incentives safety tools.

Waka Kotahi - The New Zealand Transport Authority has yet to confirm its endorsement for the Pass Wide and Slow road safety message.

Social media posts on [NZ Police \(refer evidence 15\)](#) and [AA New Zealand \(refer evidence 16\)](#) platforms endorsing the Pass Wide and Slow road safety message have been successful in spreading awareness. In September, there were 50 organised awareness rides across New Zealand and it was heartening to read the majority of public comments were supportive of the road safety message and need for education in this area. The NZ Police Facebook post organically reached over one-million people and the Automobile Association post was equally successful. All branded content and material was created and provided by Pass Wide and Slow New Zealand to organisers and media.



The awareness rides were a first for New Zealand and coincided with rides in the UK, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, America and Canada. Organisers here worked hard to engage with their local council, police and roading authority to ensure the purpose - to raise awareness of rider's vulnerability on the road - was understood and supported. The differing response from regions is illustrative of the inconsistencies that exist from one council to the other in how horse riders and carriage drivers are treated. The 'safety' measures and cost being asked in some regions caused stress and anger because the

irony being, horse riders take their life into their own hands everyday when they ride the roads, more so than any other road user due to a lack of education and enforcement.

NZEAN have rolled out high vis vests with the pass wide and slow message as we recognise the need to be visible on the roads. Sponsorship allowed for some vests to be distributed to pony clubs and communities where affordability is a concern, but the majority have been purchased by riders. The response to wearing the vests has been extremely positive, and contributing to the driver behaviour change we are seeking.



We ask that this annual Pass Wide and Slow road safety awareness ride is proactively supported by relevant authorities going forward.

The media have played a significant role in providing understanding in the community of the issues for New Zealand's horse riders, and the coverage has been both positive and consistent in messaging. This can only be described as remarkable. To experience this degree of consensus and supportive rhetoric from the media, shows the evidence and approach is both sensible and reasonable. **VRU In the media**

Equestrians are asking for a mindset change whereby the law reflects riders' vulnerability and road safety messaging is explicit. Decision makers must view equestrian needs as equally as important as other vulnerable road user groups like cyclists and pedestrians.

When legislation is bold and clear, it sends the message that we care.

The time for change is now.

Kind Regards,

Julia McLean

New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network
Canterbury Equestrian Advocacy Group Chair

Let's deal with the facts

- There is currently no definition in the New Zealand Transport Agency literature to define a Vulnerable Road User (VRU). Pedestrians and cyclists are treated as vulnerable road users by Waka Kotahi and local authorities, which deliver the Government's transport spend and Active Mode work programme.
- No authority collects data on incidents involving horse riders or charges brought.
- May 2024 - The Victorian Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Final Report for the inquiry into the Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users recommends horse riders be recognised as a VRU. It also recommends a VRU advisory group be established to inform road safety

interventions and awareness campaigns, review the need to specify a lower speed limit to pass a horse, Government to introduce a road user hierarchy system so all road users understand their responsibility, to introduce Pass Wide and Slow messaging on signage and a new method to report dangerous driving.

[Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users \(parliament.vic.gov.au\)](https://parliament.vic.gov.au)

- The UK Highway Code (England, Scotland and Wales) was amended in January 2022. Horse Riders were already treated as a VRU, but a suite of changes to improve safety were introduced. The UK Highway Code now provides clarity and a hierarchy of road users (referenced by Victoria State inquiry). Pedestrians are most vulnerable followed by horse riders and cyclists (equally). It highlights that irrespective of the method of transport, those who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat they may pose. Other changes include; vehicles must pass at no more than 10 mph, vehicles must allow at least 2m of space when passing. Dead Slow messaging (driver behaviour) is now incorporated into the Code <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code>
- In New Zealand, horse riders are referred to as 'other road user' in the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004. The best example we can find to champion horse rider safety is 7.22(a)ii - a road user must exercise due care towards a person riding an animal on the road. [Land Transport \(Road User\) Rule 2004](#).
 1. There is no rule around the speed in which you must pass a horse. Minimum speed limits are explicit for passing a school bus, towing a trailer, heavy vehicles and light rail.
 2. There is no rule around the minimum distance a vehicle should give a horse whilst passing.
 3. No suggestion or rules around driver behaviour and vehicle use whilst passing a horse
 4. No suggestion around rider visibility
 5. Horse riders are not listed as a Shared Path user.
- Funding for alternative shared pathways to get vulnerable road users off the road is managed by Waka Kotahi, and in many cases a co-funding arrangement is made with local authorities to build new infrastructure.
- A 2011 Economic Impact of the Sport Horse Industry [content](#) is the most recent paper that exists. We know the Racing industry contributes significantly too by way of employment and spend.
- According to NZTR there are 130,000 horses in New Zealand, and 30,000 of them are thoroughbreds. Recreational riders are critical to giving horses retiring from the racing industry a second career.
- The [2013-14-sports-profile-equestrian-and-horse-riding.pdf](#) document provides the most recent data on community participation in equestrian and horse riding activities. Of note, 86,000 adult riders.
- Equestrian Sports New Zealand 2024 figures show there are 40,000 people registered with ESNZ affiliated Clubs.
- New Zealand Pony Club has 7,500 members



As the author and spokesperson for the Vulnerable Road User Petition, I appreciate the trust shown by the five member organisations in endorsing this work. My background is in journalism, local government leadership and community led projects. A horse riding accident on the road 16-years ago had a devastating impact on my life - I was in an induced coma for six-days and my head injury resulted in the loss of my career as a broadcast journalist.

Fast forward, and two years ago I got back into riding. The stories from riders about their treatment at the decision making table led me to make enquiries. I am proud to deliver this work on behalf of New Zealand's equestrians, and will continue to make roads safer with the creation of Pass Wide and Slow New Zealand.



New Zealand Equestrian Advocacy Network – Its vision is that horse riding on public land in New Zealand is preserved for future generations, and that we retain, regain, and improve equestrian access and road safety nationwide. It supports equestrian advocacy groups to engage with decision makers around the country.



Equestrian Sports New Zealand – is the national sports organisation for equestrians in Aotearoa, New Zealand. It aims to provide safe environments for members and the wider equestrian community, to enjoy competition and recreational equestrian pursuits at all levels of participation. www.nzequestrian.org.nz



New Zealand Riding for the Disabled – Riding for the Disabled (RDA) was formally introduced to New Zealand in 1962. Today, there are 48 groups affiliated to NZRDA and located in every region throughout the country, from Kaitia in the north and all the way down to Invercargill in the south. The Core Purpose of NZRDA is to provide interaction with horses to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for people experiencing disability, or who have specific challenges or needs. We aim to enable and support them to achieve good lives including meaningful participation in, and contribution to, important life activities and roles in their community.



Te Hapori Hōiho - National Māori Horse Association Aotearoa Trust - brings awareness and further culturally validates Māori horsemen and women. Te Hapori Hōiho aims to consolidate the unique values of our Māori culture, and affirms our values and connection to the whenua, Reo, whakapapa and whānau through our horses. [Te Hapori Hōiho \(tehaporihoiho.org\)](http://tehaporihoiho.org)



New Zealand Pony Club Association – The New Zealand Pony Clubs Association (NZPCA) is a not for profit, youth voluntary organisation for young people interested in ponies/horses and riding. The NZPCA is represented nationally by its 90 Clubs, 136 Branches and over 7500 members. We provide instruction on riding and horse/pony management with a structured certificate system that allows young people to gain qualifications, promoting the highest ideals of behaviour, sportsmanship, citizenship and loyalty, to create strength of character and self-discipline. [New Zealand Pony Club - Home \(nzpca.org\)](http://nzpca.org)