

Dear Sir, Ma'am,

I write to place a proposal for an enhancement to bicycle paths in the inner Canberra area.

Canberra wants to be world class city, that is cycle friendly and right now the progress of options for healthy transport are limited by infrastructure choices that consistently favour cars as the primary transport option. Whilst I acknowledge cars are an important part of life in Canberra, if engineered in, cycling could be just as important, especially for populations residing within 15-20km of major employment centres such as the city, parliamentary triangle, Woden, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong.

One of the best ways to lower the cost of public health is to make accessible preventative measures functional, practical and an easy choice to select. There has been a significant rise in ebike ownership in Canberra in recent years, highlighting the will to enjoy the outdoors whilst concurrently cutting the cost of living. Cycling eliminates the cost of parking and decreases the risk of many diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, both of which cost the public health system significant sums in reactive treatment annually and are only growing due to the more sedentary lifestyle Australians are choosing to live due to cost, convenience and culture. By improving the bicycle infrastructure, this is a direct investment in public health preventative measures and starts the generational change of improving health outcomes.

In addition to saving in public health, savings in additional road infrastructure for cars, parking and carbon emissions are decreased, as we head towards realising governments net zero policy, this is a key opportunity to realise potential in a willing community.

Whilst the Canberra example is slightly different in terms of relative density, it is worth comparing the cycle cities of Europe such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Berlin and Munich amongst other. What each of these have in common is well-connected, well-maintained cycle routes, not just to hub and spoke locations, but to and through major employment areas. Included in this infrastructure is bicycle parking inclusive of CCTV. I am not suggesting Canberra needs to go to the same lengths as Amsterdam, what I am saying is that it must start to make progress to make cycling an appealing solution.

It is well known that if you leave a locked bicycle in Garema place it will be stolen. As a result, our family will not ride our bikes to the city and this is a common story in cycling circles. By reviewing the system and addressing the key, highest level risks in it, you can easily eliminate reasons that prevent people from cycling to work whilst avoiding

placing extra pressures on other services. Well-engineered systems without turning every piece into a gold standard solution therefore increasing the average is a far more useful outcome than encourage usage. For example, sending the street sweeper down the on-road bicycle paths as well as the road so they are safe and usable.

The current bicycle infrastructure is a good beginning however, details such as connections and identifying where maintenance is required needs considerable improvement. As I live in the inner south, this is where the majority of my family's cycling experience sits however, I am sure the issues are more widespread than what we experience. I offer a list of areas to look at to start incremental improvements to improve preventative health and make Canberra a healthier and more enjoyable place to live.

Adelaide Avenue/ Yarra Glen road between Woden and the parliamentary triangle:

The on road cycle path is great and highly used by frequent cyclists. There are various places at which the cycle path crosses as on ramp and at these points cyclists often have to wait for very extended periods to be able to cross due to the car traffic volume. I placed a fix my street request in about this and after some weeks was advised it would be closed as pedestrian crossings could not be placed on ramps. The remedy includes many other solutions that do not involve a pedestrian crossing such as through public policy, a merging option for bikes, a tunnel or overpass, traffic lights and likely various other options. This doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be better to make it easy to use.

Fairburn Avenue between Campbell park and the Majura Parkway and Northcott drive:

This section of road has been newly resurfaced roads with bike lanes that are much too narrow, interrupted by holes, debris, trees, are not swept often so are covered in debris and unusable or have short segments of bike path. The same is true of Northcott drive between Campbell park offices and Russell offices, further outside R3 at Russell where two car parking spaces have been placed right in the bike lane for no clear reason. The remedy would see finishing widening the road to the same width throughout, removing overhanging trees, sweeping the road of debris regularly, and in the interim decreasing the speed limit to 60 KPH whilst policing cars crossing the double lines to pass bikes.

Kings avenue between parliament house and Russell offices:

Connectivity through the parliamentary triangle is heavily interrupted by sharp corners, steep curbs and road crossings without pedestrian priority such as the 'keep clear'

rather than pedestrian markings on the corner of Kings Avenue and King Edward Terrace in both directions. This currently forces bikes onto the road due to overengineering for specific cohorts and resultantly elevating risks to bikes using what is otherwise a lovely wide path. It must be accepted that there is some risk in every part of life. Developing a risk free culture results in an insatiable appetite for public monies to be expended on the most increasingly trivial of outputs. The 2 90degree bends in each approach to a set of traffic lights on this stretch are a perfect example of overengineering without consideration of the user, which ultimately make the product unusable. In the 1 KM stretch of Kings Avenue between State circle and King Edward Terrace there are 3 sets of traffic lights, 12 90degree bends and one traffic island without ramps on the sides that many an unsuspecting bicycle has run into in the dark expecting there to be a ramp at the obvious point. The remedy sees this path being straight, the traffic lights slow the traffic without needing extra bends to achieve this. Look where the worn grass is to see where the pedestrians actually cross the road and add paths in these locations where it is safe to do so.

All cycle paths:

Street sweeping – a schedule needs to be created for both on road and dedicated/shared paths to ensure the bike paths are kept free of the broken glass, rocks and tree debris which creates an environment which discourages use due to increased chance of punctures and slipping.

Raised sections of paths for repair – a program needs to identify and remedy these, particularly when the deciduous trees are dropping leaves these can be hidden and increasingly dangerous as the cold months bring darkness to the cycling routine.

Lighting – Lovely cycle routes become prohibitive in the winter months due to limited or absent lighting. A good example of this is between the Jerrabomberra wetlands in Kingston and Majura park. There are almost no lights on this stretch and as a result accessibility is limited.

Bike parking – Offering bike parking in well lit areas ideally within the reach of existing CCTV outside of major stores, incentivises cyclists to use bikes as an option as they perceive the risk of losing their bike is less.

Additionally, the process for requesting new works is inefficient, with the opportunity to submit these through the 'fix my street' mechanism that simply results in a 4-6 week wait followed by a request to apply to this budget process. In theory the 'active travel' area is meant to have a certain budget to resolve some of the lower cost options yet it seems from my experience submitting requests, the unpublished criteria are difficult to meet. If the process continues to be as difficult, time consuming and lacking feedback

then problems simply will not be elevated to where they are required because people just do not have the time to expend on this government process. It would be useful to look at how the motor registry has reformed its processes to be customer centric and efficient and apply some of these principals to cycle path improvement opportunities. I do request however, that instead of paying a consultant to review the relevant difference between departments you instead spend the money on actually resolving the bicycle infrastructure.

The cycle community of Canberra thanks you for your consideration. I am very happy to provide further information as required. Please know the cycle community is easy to access and are a great resource to draw on as they are out riding these roads and paths daily. They know where the problems are and are keen to have them resolved.

Kind regards

Lauren McHardy

Tel: 0438 836 404 – please note I work in an area where mobile phones are not accessible in the office, you are welcome to send me an email to arrange a time for a phone conversation if required.

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