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More Canberrans cycling, more often, for a better community

MEDIA RELEASE

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97 per cent support for footbridge over Bowen Drive

Pedal Power ACT today said public consultation had overwhelmingly supported the provision of a pedestrian/cycling footbridge over Bowen Drive near the National Gallery. The crossing is part of the very popular Lake Burley Griffin cycle path which Pedal Power believes is the best half day cycle ride in Australia!

Pedal Power spokesman, John Armstrong, said comments in the public consultation had been strongly supportive of the new crossing with 97% of respondents to the National Capital Authority survey supporting the building of a footbridge to make the crossing safer. Only 3% supported the other two options which involved installing traffic lights.

Mr Armstrong said that (as at 7:00am this morning) 287 people had supported a pedestrian and walking footbridge and only 8 people had voted for the other two options. The public consultation period closes today and had been in place for almost two months.

Mr Armstrong congratulated the National Capital Authority on its public consultation and on comments from its CEO Gary Rake that the NCA has set aside funding within its existing budget that is sufficient to cover the cost of a footbridge. Mr Armstrong urged the NCA to start design work on a footbridge. 'This crossing is the most dangerous crossing on Lake Burley Griffin cycle path. It is heavily used by people cycling, walking and running around the Lake. Cars sweep out from under Kings Avenue Bridge leaving drivers little time to see people crossing and little time for those crossing to react.'

Mr Armstrong said a footbridge from Kings Avenue Bridge to the Lakeside path would be safest for walking and cycling, the least disruptive to motor traffic and would assist Canberra in staking its claim as being the Cycling Capital of Australia. 'An architecturally designed footbridge would enhance the safety and beauty of this location. For instance, the pedestrian Webb Bridge over the Yarra River near Docklands – designed for a similar purpose - has won a number of architecture awards' said Mr Armstrong.

The crossing is used by Canberrans, tourists and school groups. Jillian Edwards from Mr Spokes Bike Hire takes school groups cycling around the Lake and says crossing Bowen Drive is difficult.

'The kids love the bicycle ride around the Lake, they get to see all the buildings they have only seen on television and the ride is great fun. However I am always nervous trying to get school groups across the crossing. This is the most popular bicycle ride in Canberra for Canberrans and visitors. It should be a lot safer,' said Ms Edwards.

Pedal Power ACT Inc is supported by the ACT Government under the ACT Health Promotion Grants Program and by ACT Sport and Recreation Services



The Heart Foundation ACT, which runs Heart Foundation Walking and the Active Living Programs, funded by ACT Health, also supports the opportunity to consult on this pivotal crossing.

Heart Foundation ACT CEO Tony Stubbs says that with rising rates of overweight and obesity all stakeholders need to make being active the easiest choice for people to get around Canberra and the lake, whether this be to walk or cycle to work or walk to meetings, family recreation or exercise.

“We don’t need to put a lack of safety as another barrier to getting your daily 30 minutes of moderate activity. Many charities and community groups (including the Heart Foundation ACT) organise fundraising walks and important events around the two bridges and the safety of this stretch of the walk is always a major concern for organisers,” Mr Stubbs said.

Mr Armstrong said that ACT Government reports in 2005 and 2007 ranked the crossing as the number one priority cycling capital work. ‘We have letters stretching back ten years from the National Capital Authority saying work would take place but, to date, nothing has happened. We welcome the end of public consultation and hope design work can commence soon.’

‘Kingston Foreshore is being developed. The Jerrabomberra Wetlands path has been completed. The ACT Government is doing an excellent job in providing cycle path signage around Lake Burley Griffin. Cycling around the Lake is just increasing in popularity. It is time the crossing was fixed.’

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The Bowen Drive crossing is heavily used and dangerous because of obscured sightlines.



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