

ATTACHMENT TO LETTER FROM PEDAL POWER TO NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY

RE: KINGS AVE/PARKES WAY OVERPASS PEDESTRIAN LIGHTS

Summary

Pedal Power ACT is concerned about the replacement of two pedestrian crossings with call-button or on-demand traffic lights on the Kings Avenue Parkes Way Northern overpass (the Russell overpass crossing) creating a sequence of four lights over a short distance. This concern reflects feedback from Pedal Power members working at Russell Hill and other members who use the overpass on a regular basis.

According to NCA, the purpose of the works was to 'improve pedestrian safety measures', catering particularly for the users of the Boundless playground in Kings Park.

Pedal Power ACT applauds the NCA's adoption of the Road Users Hierarchy giving preference firstly to people who walk, then those who cycle, over motor vehicles. However, this installation does not successfully apply that principle. We submit that it has actually reduced safety and amenity for people walking and cycling.

Pedal Power ACT asks the NCA to:

- revert to the previous installation, i.e. decommission the two outer lights and revert to zebra crossings while retaining the two inner traffic lights; and
- make more parking spaces available inside Kings Park to service the Boundless playground.

BACKGROUND

The Russell overpass crossing is utilised during working days by a large number of the commuters travelling to the Russell precinct, commuting workers accessing the Parliamentary Triangle, as well as Russell workers accessing Lake Burley Griffin for walking and jogging particularly during lunch time. It is also used by the Boundless playground users who are unable to find parking in Kings Park and walk from the Russell parking areas.

The previous traffic arrangement allowed traversing the intersection by crossing one zebra crossing, two on-demand crossings and one final zebra crossing. It worked well with a minimum of delays for people walking and cycling. The present arrangement involves four on-demand crossings and can typically take three minutes to cross.

Path users



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Cycle Facilities Rating

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Bicycle Maintenance

Faced with the prospect of delays in waiting for four uncoordinated traffic lights to turn green, people walking and cycling are not waiting. They are often risking their safety by trying to pick 'safe' gaps and scrambling across between passing cars. It is clear that the current programmed responsiveness is not meeting the needs of users. The new installation is not meeting its objective and is in fact increasing the danger to people walking and cycling. The introduction of a pre-emptive system of detection may help responsiveness and improve the situation provided that all crossings are synchronised so that a user walking or cycling at low speed would be able to cross from one side to the other seamlessly.

Road users

As path users are often crossing without waiting for the signals to change, traffic is needlessly disrupted when the light turns red and nobody is waiting to cross. This is different from the previous system on the two pedestrian crossings where slip lane traffic would only be halted by people walking or cycling approaching the crossing.

Other Problems

While adhering to accessibility requirements, the poles for the push buttons obstruct the approaches used bike riders. Also the kerb ramps are much narrower than the paths they serve. These factors lead to sharp turning angles that impede cycling.

Furthermore, the Kings Avenue on-road bicycle lane provides second rate access to Russell as it does not continue as a green strip towards the intersection and does not exist for more than 250 metres. There are no ramps onto the shared path where the on-road lanes cease.



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Kings Avenue crossing Parkes Way, Parkes and Russell

Access to Lake Burley Griffin

With the Bowen Drive crossing now in place, the lake circuit provides a marvellous uninterrupted 5km loop of Lake Burley Griffin. Prior to the new traffic lights on the overpass, Russell Hill workers had convenient and safe access to the lake circuit. That is no longer the case. Runners and walkers must now run the gauntlet of four sets of lights while they try to squeeze in a lap of the Lake during their busy day. NCA promotes a healthy workplace and wants to make it easier for users of the wonderful Boundless playground. However, the new arrangements run counter to that objective and place users at increased risk.

Road Users Hierarchy

The Canberra Time article of 30 September 2014 report entitled "Car no longer king as free parking ends" quoted the NCA Chief Executive as follows:

The NCA chief executive said that Wednesday marked another watershed in the history of the city; the end of the car as king of the road in the national precinct, with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport passengers all given priority over private vehicles.

"We don't apologise for the fact that we've got the car on the bottom of that triangle because it is fundamentally about improving access for all modes," Mr Snow said.



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One of our members has been advised by the NCA that the timing of the lights could not be changed because of the need to “maintain the safety and function of the overpass as a whole”. This suggests that maintaining traffic flow is being given a higher priority than walking and cycling, contrary to the Road Users Hierarchy.

Consultation

Our Russell Hill members were disappointed that the consultation arrangements did not give sufficient time to register objections before the works began. We are told that our members received notice of the proposed changes just two days prior to works beginning.

Pedal Power stands ready to facilitate consultation between NCA and users of this overpass. The Department of Defence intranet is another opportunity to tap into the large workforce on Russell Hill. We urge the NCA to take up these opportunities.

18 April 2016



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