

INQUIRY INTO PEDESTRIAN SAFETY (MINISTERIAL REFERENCE)

Organisation: Private Citizen
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This submission is based on my experience within the Manly LGA, and particularly Seaforth. However I expect some of the comments, suggestions and observations will apply to other areas.

My involvement in Local Government activities in the Seaforth Area has been as follows:

Former Chairman, Seaforth Precinct Community Forum
Former Convenor of SPCF DA Assessment Team
Former Member Seaforth TAFE Site Community Reference Group
Former Member Surplus Land Sale (Warringah Expressway)
Steering Committee
Former Member Seaforth Childcare Steering Committee

In summary I have been involved in a wide range of activities which have an impact on vehicle and pedestrian movements.

My points are.

1. There appears to be a lack of planning and co-ordination between RTA and local Government and other Government agencies e.g. Sydney Buses. This becomes obvious when piecemeal changes are made, or when there are attempts to find cohesive and strategic solutions. Who is in charge?
2. RTA seems to have a primary focus on vehicular traffic. The local Manly Traffic Committee is a State instrumentality which serves vehicular needs. Manly Council has a Bicycle Committee. No one is responsible for the interests of pedestrians and their various needs. Pedestrians include children, the elderly, and pram pushers whose safety depends on respect from others.
3. Residential areas seem to have an automatic right for roads but not for footpaths. This reinforces the primacy of vehicles over pedestrians. There is a policy for new dwellings to provide new footpaths. In some areas all this does is create a series of unconnected concrete islands, which do not encourage pedestrian traffic.
4. Pedestrians are subservient to cars. Cars are bigger, faster, more numerous and have the capacity to "over utilise" public or civic space. Carparks and turning areas have to be bigger. There is an assumption of the right to "park at the door" for any activity. School drop off is a typical example of the problem. Cars now are comfortable with good suspension yet we baulk at installing calming devices for fear of a slight discomfort to fast travelling vehicles.
5. Shared footpaths for bicycles utilise and compromise pedestrian space. The mix of disparate forms of movement serves neither user satisfactorily. Car users are protected from compromise e.g. slowing down in residential areas, but pedestrians are not. Shared multi use roadways in residential areas are virtually non existent.

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6. We celebrate our climate and a healthy lifestyle, but by intent or otherwise we encourage the use of the air-conditioned, fully upholstered, stereophonic, soundproofed vehicle on roads needing more and more maintenance because of the increase in traffic especially by heavier vehicles.

7. Except for major shopping malls and some small token plazas, there is no consideration given to high quality design for pedestrian traffic. There is a difference between meandering within a shopping precinct and the movement from residential areas or off site public transport and parking areas to places of retail or entertainment. The specification for the suburban footpath does appear to have changed over the decades. In established and settled areas, such as the inner west the scale and relationship for cars and people is more human. In other areas footpaths are forever on the wish list. The nature strip has become the bastard child which no one wants.

8. Pedestrian movement is hampered by wide roads with no signals, crossings or refuges. The primacy of the car and its need for parking and footpath crossings in retail areas discourages pedestrians from using the more traditional suburban shopping strip. What should be a simple and safe walk to the local shops can be fraught with danger. If there are no footpaths, roadways have to be used, which increases the danger for pedestrians. If the roads are busy or wide it is difficult or unsafe to cross.

9. Pedestrians need to be given equal status with other road users. Perhaps the mandate for the RTA needs changing. The RTA web site acknowledges that pedestrians exist but only in terms of trauma and safety and how they interact with vehicles. The focus needs radical change so that pedestrians are given primacy in areas of predominantly residential, retail and entertainment settlement and use.

10. Local Government needs to be given support to rethink its provision of pedestrian facilities. More attention should be given to detailed planning at the micro level. Let's assume that people walk. People are more likely to "belong" to their community if they see it at walking pace or bicycle pace rather than through the windscreen of a vehicle. They might even stop and engage with other residents. Consider providing local mini bus services so that there is a mix of public transport and pedestrian facilities to encourage people to leave their cars at home.

Attachment.

Map of Seaforth Town centre with notes on pedestrian problem areas.

Submitted by

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TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN MANAGEMENT IN SEAFORTH WORKS AGAINST PEDESTRIANS.



There is no safe crossing on this road which is a bus route. It is unsafe to cross the road to get to Seaford shops. Otherwise you can go to Frenchs Forest Rd to use the new signalised pedestrian crossing which has been moved away from the shops, then go to the lights on Sydney Rd.

To cross Ethel St you have to traverse busy lanes coming off the roundabout, from which most cars accelerate. Otherwise you have to go to the other end of Ethel St to use a pedestrian refuge.