



24 May 2012

Ms Katy Gallagher
Chief Minister, Minister for Health and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Pedestrian safety near Canberra Hospital

Dear Chief Minister

We share your concern about pedestrian safety near the Canberra Hospital, and propose nine ways to improve safety at the intersection of Bateson Road and Yamba Drive.

The 2km section of Yamba Drive Drive between Launceston Street and Hindmarsh Drive has more than ten times the crash rate needed to qualify for Black Spot funding. On 11 January this year a teenager was injured when his bicycle and a car collided at Launceston Street. On 3 May a hospital staff member was killed, and another was injured, by a car at the Bateson Road intersection. The alleged driver was injured in a subsequent crash at Hindmarsh Drive. On 4 May a motorcyclist was injured in a collision with a car, also at the Bateson Road intersection.

We accept that the casualties on 3 May were due primarily to driver behaviour, and we acknowledge the success of the ACT Police strategy of having a more visible presence on Canberra's roads since September 2010.

Nevertheless there is significant scope for engineering changes to improve the safety of this road. Some improvements can be implemented immediately, while others could be implemented in conjunction with future road reconstructions.

In the following pages we list and explain the nine proposed improvements.

With my best regards

Leon Arundell
Convenor

Proposed road safety improvements near Canberra Hospital

We propose the following improvements:

- 1) Reprogram the pedestrian signals;
- 2) Remove one right turn lane from Bateson Road;
- 3) Remove the “turn left at any time with care” sign;
- 4) Offset the pedestrian crossings;
- 5) Relocate the car park;
 - Alternatively, improve safety across the car park entry and exit roads.
- 6) A pedestrian crossing north of the intersection;
- 7) Relocate the shared path;
- 8) Move the bus stops;
- 9) Lower the speed limit.

The locations for these improvements are shown on the next page, in clockwise order starting at the end of Bateson Road.

We have not recommended a pedestrian bridge over Yamba Drive. We suspect that many people would choose to cross Yamba Drive directly in twenty seconds, rather than spend an extra minute walking up and down steps. A bridge might be difficult for mobility-impaired hospital patients to negotiate.

1) Reprogram the pedestrian signals.

Canberra's pedestrian signals routinely show red at times when a red signal provides no benefit to either safety or efficiency. Most are programmed to show red until the pedestrian call button is pressed. In most cases they continue to show red until the next cycle of the traffic lights, even when there is enough time for a green phase in the current cycle.

A quarter of the people who use the Yamba Drive crossing cross against the red signal. Five out of six cross against red at the Bateson Road crossing.

Almost half of the people who cross Yamba Drive walk across to the north of the intersection, rather than at the southern pedestrian crossing. Studies have shown that such crossings, though not illegal, are eight times as dangerous as crossing at a green signal.

In 2011 the Pedestrian Forum recommended improvements to traffic signal programming on Northbourne Avenue. When these improvements were implemented, fewer people crossed against red signals and only half as many people crossed away from the intersection.

Many people walk cross Yamba Drive during the pedestrian phase, and then cross against the red signal at Bateson Road. Unless vehicles are waiting to turn right from Yamba Drive into Bateson Road, there is no reason for the Bateson Road pedestrian signals to be red at these times. Activating a “call ahead” to the Bateson Road crossing, when the western Yamba Drive pedestrian button is pressed, will allow many of these people to cross on green.

There is probably scope to introduce “auto-start” at the pedestrian crossing across Bateson Road, to coincide with the start of the Yamba Drive vehicle phase.



Illustration 1: Proposed safety improvements Yamba Dve & Bateson Rd

2) Remove one right turn lane from Bateson Road.

We doubt that Bateson Road carries enough traffic to warrant two right turn lanes into Yamba Drive. Removing one of these lanes would reduce the time that pedestrians spend on the

roadway. It would also allow the Bateson Road pedestrian signal phase to be shortened, thus reducing delays for vehicles that use Bateson Road.

3) Remove the “turn left at any time with care” sign.

A faded “turn left at any time with care” sign (pictured right) encourages drivers at the Bateson Road exit to enter the intersection against a red light, and turn left across the path of pedestrians who are crossing Yamba Drive with a green pedestrian signal.



The adjacent left turn slip lane makes this sign unnecessary. Moreover, the Road Rules no longer support “Turn left at any time with care” signs.

A “Give Way” sign on the left turn slip lane would be more appropriate.

4) Offset the pedestrian crossings

Pedestrian signals on the existing crossings at this intersection cannot safely show green when it is safe to proceed across one carriageway, but not the other. This is because pedestrians waiting at red signals to cross the near carriageway might be confused by green signals intended only for the far carriageway. The existing signals delay vehicles on both carriageways for the entire time that it takes to walk across both carriageways.

Offset pedestrian crossings are used at the intersection of Hindmarsh and Melrose Drives. They reduce the time required for a pedestrian phase. They also allow traffic on the far carriageway to proceed while pedestrians are crossing the near carriageway, and vice versa.

5) Relocate the car park

This car park requires Canberra Hospital patients and staff to cross four lanes of 60 km/h traffic on Yamba Drive, to get to or from the hospital

It would be safer to relocate the car park to the hospital side of Yamba Drive.

Alternatively, safety on the car park entry road could be improved by maintaining it as a single lane until after it crosses the footpath. Safety could also be improved by installing a zebra crossing where the car park exit road crosses the footpath.

6) A pedestrian crossing north of the intersection.

Almost half of the people who cross Yamba Drive do so to the north of the intersection, either from the bus stop or from the community path from Albemarle Place. Studies have shown that such crossings are eight times as risky as crossings at green pedestrian signals.

To use the pedestrian crossing to the south of the intersection would require them to detour, and also to cross the car park exit road and Bateson Road.

A pedestrian crossing at the north of the intersection would encourage these people to cross more safely.

7) Relocate the community path.

The community path from Albemarle Place currently leads to Yamba Drive at a point some distance to the north of the intersection. People who use this path cannot cross at the intersection without detouring across the car path exit road.

If the path led direct to the intersection, it would encourage people to cross more safely at the intersection rather than crossing away from the intersection.

8) Move the bus stops.

People who arrive or depart by bus cannot currently cross at the intersection without making a detour that includes crossing the car path exit road.

If the bus stops were located closer to the intersection, that would encourage more people to cross safely at the intersection, rather than crossing away from the intersection.

9) Lower the speed limit .

Until 50 years ago Australia's blanket urban speed limit was 30 mph (48 km/h). “... *the choice of 60 km/h rather than 50 km/h for the urban area speed limit has resulted in the deaths of about 2,700 pedestrians in Australia since 1974* “ (McLean A.J. and Anderson R.W.G., 2008; *Metrication of the urban speed limit and pedestrian fatalities*; . Centre for Automotive Safety Research, University of Adelaide).

Research by the Canberra Pedestrian Forum has confirmed that most Canberra pedestrian deaths occur on roads with speed limits of 60 km/h or higher.

Reducing the Hospital Zone speed limit from 60m km/h to 50 km/h or lower would improve pedestrian safety. This would be consistent with the current general 50 km/h speed limit and the 40 km/h speed limits in school zones and near shopping centres.