

21 May 2021

To:

Bart Mellish MP, Member for Aspley;
Cr Fiona Hammond, Marchant Ward;
Melanie Castles, TMR Metropolitan Region.

Cc:

Anna Campbell, Queensland Walks;
Gayle Dallaston, Shady Lanes;
Brisbane City Council Bikeway Project Team.

Dear All,

I am writing to explain my concerns with the signalisation that TMR is proposing at the slip lanes at the intersection of Webster Road and Gympie Road in Aspley, in conjunction with the building of an active transport path along the Ellison and Gympie Road service road currently underway by the Brisbane City Council. **The proposed treatment is dangerous** and will result in injury and death to vulnerable road users.

Background

The current treatment of the slip lanes is with zebra crossings, and I understand why TMR considers this unsatisfactory, due to both sight distances and speed. The slip lanes are a high-speed, free-flow design originally constructed as a semi-rural highway junction in the late 1960s. The current speed limits are 70km/h on Gympie Road and 60km/h on Webster Road. This is not a safe environment for pedestrians or cyclists, much less a high-volume active link between Aspley and Chermside.



Solutions such as a raised wombat crossing or rebuilding the slip lanes to modern high-angle standards have presumably, and rightly, been dismissed as being too costly and disruptive to build, and not providing an adequate safety improvement over the current situation.

Instead, TMR is proposing to replace the current zebra crossings with signalised pedestrian crosswalks. These crosswalks would use a red-yellow-off aspect cycle for the traffic-facing signal heads: a green light cannot be used, as motorists must still give way to pedestrians and conflicting traffic on the road ahead.

The widespread signalisation of slip lanes is a relatively recent innovation and is mandated by TMR's 2020 Road Planning and Design Manual any time there is a 'compelling operational justification' to provide a slip lane. Signalising slip lanes appears to be unique to Queensland and Australia (with other jurisdictions specifying removal or non-construction as the only valid practice), and there are no public studies as to their practical safety benefit. Rare historical examples, like at Rainbow St and Bowser Parade in Sandgate pictured, are on high-angle lanes in low-speed environments, not on free-flowing highway slips like those at Webster Road.



Why the Proposed Treatment is Dangerous

Deploying this type of signalisation on the slip lanes at Gympie and Webster Roads is dangerous and inappropriate, because:

1) Pedestrian and cyclist compliance will be extremely low.

TMR's Traffic and Road Use Management manual reports that pedestrian compliance at a typical two-stage signalised crossing is less than 50%. The same document also recommends against signalising single slip lanes due to even lower expected pedestrian compliance.

The signalisation of the slip lanes will create, along a major active transport path, a *three*-stage crossing, with the outer stages comprising crossings of single slip lanes. We must expect that the overwhelming majority of pedestrians and cyclists will not stop, push three buttons and wait three times to cross, but will simply observe traffic and continue across the intersection regardless of the signal lights.

It is of no comfort to know that, when a pedestrian is struck by a car here, we'll be able to shrug our shoulders and say "it's their own fault; they should have waited for the lights". Instead, we should avoid building environments that criminalise ordinary pedestrian behaviour.

2) Motorist awareness of pedestrians will be significantly reduced.

The current pedestrian crossings on the slip lanes feature large, reflective signs and zebra pavement markings. Observing this treatment reminds motorists of their responsibility to give way to pedestrians on the slip lane, and they will scan the

immediate area for pedestrians and, typically, stop and give way if necessary, although the high speeds, short sight lines and high traffic and pedestrian volumes at this particular intersection mean the crossings remain unacceptably dangerous.

By comparison, the proposed treatment renders pedestrians *effectively invisible* in the motorists' workflow. Motorists who stop to comply with a red signal are paying attention to the signal, not to pedestrians; while motorists who observe the signal to be blank will not be reminded of their responsibility to pedestrians, and will immediately switch to scanning for conflicting road traffic.

Motorists in Queensland have a responsibility to give way to pedestrians and cyclists at all slip lanes, but generally do not stop and give way at slip lanes without zebra crossings – either because they're unaware of the obligation, or more often because their attention is elsewhere and they do not see the pedestrians at all. Adding a traffic signal makes this situation worse; it both draws motorists' attention away from pedestrians crossing the road, and many motorists will incorrectly interpret a blank signal aspect as indicating the roadway is clear and they have right of way.

These two factors, combined with increased pedestrian and cyclist activity expected as a result of the bikeway upgrade, would significantly increase the risk of fatal and serious accidents at this intersection.

A Proposed Solution and Future Opportunities

There is no safe treatment option for these slip lanes. **The slip lanes must be closed.**

The conversation around the closure of the slip lanes could be used to build local support for future improvements to the Gympie and Webster intersection. Specifically, closing the slip lanes should be the first stage in a process that could include:

Closing Webster Road entirely north of the intersection, removing the remaining signalised crossing from the bikeway and reuniting the Lions Park with Marchant Park as a continuous public space, as they were in the 1960s. This would also remove rat-running traffic from local roads, particularly Kirby Road, and streamline peak-hour traffic flow along Gympie Road.

Removing the remaining slip lanes from the intersection, and restoring the missing pedestrian links and crossings on the western side. This would dramatically improve local active connectivity, including improving access to the Chermide Markets shopping centre and the high-frequency 340 bus service.

But these are discussions for later. The immediate priority must be closing the slip lanes north of the intersection. Signalising them will only make them more dangerous.

Yours sincerely,

David Dallaston
Aspley, 21 May 2021
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