

20 March, 2017

Angela Moore

Manager, Traffic Engineering, City Infrastructure

Hobart City Council

16 Elizabeth Street,

Hobart, Tasmania, 7000

Dear Angela,

At your invitation, I have reviewed Council's proposed plans for West Hobart, in particular Hill Street. The problem reported and discussed in detail with some local representatives was that traffic was behaving irresponsibly, and that the current environment was too intimidating for pedestrians. The feeling from the local community expressed to the MRCagney team was that this was preventing people from walking around the suburb, and in particular, walking to school.

MRCagney reviewed the options for Council to improve the pedestrian environment in West Hobart and provided a report in 2016 recommending some physical changes as well as some suggestions on future land use changes and community-based action that should improve the overall pedestrian environment in West Hobart.

One element that MRCagney is generally in favour of, but cautious about its use in West Hobart, is zebra and/or 'wombat' crossings. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, except for one isolated location (Hill/Lansdowne/Patrick) there are not nearly enough pedestrians at each intersection. This is explained in the report, but ironically it can in some circumstances be more unsafe to have a zebra or wombat crossing than to not have one. The Hill/Lansdowne/Patrick intersection is overall not really suitable for a roundabout and the best way for Council to improve pedestrian conditions there is to install signals, designing the phasing to favour pedestrians.

It is worth discussing here that there has been some community agitation to reinvigorate the old concept of zebra crossings at the roundabout legs. MRCagney did thoroughly explore this option in its previous investigation, as it is an extremely common treatment. In the Hill Street case there are two sites where this is physically possible, at the Hill/Warwick Street intersection and at the Lansdowne/Hill/Pine Street intersection. It is MRCagney's opinion that this type of treatment is not physically possible at the Lansdowne/Hill/Patrick Street given the sight distance, bus turning and property restrictions. This of course could be confirmed with survey and detailed design. However, the zebra treatment on roundabouts is really a 'band-aid' type solution. It is a compromise to try and maintain traffic flow and provide some level of safety for pedestrians. It is significantly inferior to traffic signals, except for the cost factor. It is not a treatment you would generally use if there are other options, as was the case. Whilst there are not any of these treatments in Hobart and they are not particularly innovative treatments, they are a bit of a backward step. In the Melbourne municipalities of Port Phillip and Bayside where MRCagney has done a significant amount of work, they are relatively common however they are only used where other treatments are not available.



The two locations mentioned above would be satisfactory physical locations for wombats or zebras at the roundabouts. However there needs to be more pedestrians using these locations to justify the treatments. The MRCagney report clearly outlines how the community could achieve this. Zebras or wombats at these locations could reinvigorate these street corners, if the community is prepared to re-engage with Hill Street. In addition to the elements mentioned in the MRCagney report, another more direct measure to encourage more walking would be to reduce the amount of car space at the school drop off. This would create a more safe environment around the school(s) as well as encourage more walking.

The other issue in Hill Street is that due to its topography and the relatively low pedestrian activity cars tend to unintentionally drive faster than is appropriate. For children and the local elderly population to really enjoy walking in their suburb, the actual travelling speed needs to come down to about 30km/h, preferably less. There are pedestrian refuges in Hill Street, however they are the old State Growth standard treatment. MRCagney's assessment of these has been well documented and we have recommended generic replacements with and without a median treatment as shown below. The treatments in the Hill Street concepts are generally in keeping with these suggested treatments in the original MRCagney report, however we would like Council to consider the following:

- The landscaping element of these treatments is key. Quality mature elements are essential, people won't feel the genuine invitation to walk until the trees have grown up;
- The speed environment needs to be less than 30km/h. These treatments will need to be large and imposing on the street from day 1;
- Notwithstanding it is new, the crossing treatment at the northern end of Hill Street near Arthur Street should also be examined for upgrade;
- The intersections at Hill/Warwick Street and the intersection and the Hill/Lansdowne/Pine Street would be suitable for zebra/wombat treatments if the existing scheme along with some community based activity does get people reconnected with their street;
- The intersection of Hill/Lansdowne/Patrick Street needs to be treated with signals. The existing treatment of a roundabout is serviceable for vehicles and unsuitable for the current level of pedestrian activity. It is definitely not the type of treatment that will encourage pedestrian activity;
- Zebra/wombat crossings at roundabouts are sometimes suitable as a stop gap measure when other treatments are not available or at small roundabouts with high pedestrian volumes. This type of treatment is not suitable at the Hill/Lansdowne/Patrick intersection due to topography, size and shape of the roundabout and direction of the bus route(s). This could easily be confirmed with detailed survey/design, but our recommendation is as per our original report that signals are the best option at this location.



TYPICAL NEW CROSSING

New pedestrian crossings are to be built to improve pedestrian safety and to create a pleasant street atmosphere. Lowered kerbs and tactile paving. These crossings also have a typical new crossing with built-out footpaths. They also provide generous, shaded, non-slip spaces.

A pedestrian crossing with public space highlights pedestrian movement. The main street is to be built as designed by John Mongard Landscape Architects and create high vehicle numbers per day.

A plan for Hobart's local retail precincts



TYPICAL NEW CROSSING WITH MEDIAN

New pedestrian crossings on wide boulevards and on streets with higher traffic volumes, such as Hill Street, may require raised pedestrian crossings. In some locations, the surface can be combined with tactile paving for additional tactile safety and visual clarity.

New crossings create open pathways which will provide movement to all spaces for more street activation.

A plan for Hobart's local retail precincts

MRCagney in collaboration with Inspiring Place, John Mongard Landscape Architects, Village Well and Freshstart Communications

There are some risks associated with the treatments in the Council concept:

- High community expectations about certain solutions – the community has been led to believe from other sources that certain solutions will provide better outcomes and may well feel let down if these solutions do not come to pass;
- The proposed concept if correctly implemented with a significant landscape component will reduce traffic speed in Hill Street and some of its desirability as a commuter route to the City. This will of course be good news for some people in West Hobart and may be an excellent demand management tool, but some commuters will naturally express their displeasure at this perceived inconvenience;
- MRCagney are of the opinion that with the level and advanced nature of the landscaping required, \$300,000 may not be enough money to complete all the works indicated in the concept.



MRCagney

Having reviewed the concept, MRCagney are generally satisfied with the intent of our report of 2016 including our comments outlined above.

Yours Sincerely

Steven Burgess

Principal – Urban Strategy
MRCagney Pty Ltd