



MINUTE OF THE MAYOR

Dated: 24 February 2020

RE: Prioritising Pedestrians

In late January I was contacted by someone who witnessed a near miss outside the Xavier Terrace Retirement Village in Mackenzie Street, Lavender Bay. An ambulance officer who was transporting a resident with a medical emergency to hospital, narrowly missed being hit by a cyclist which came flying down the pathway next to St Peters Park and swung into Mackenzie Street at high speed. A Police car arrived shortly after with all lights blazing to support the Ambulance crew while they completed the transfer of the patient into the ambulance.

Interestingly, a couple of weeks later the Traffic Committee considered a report on the option of removing the cycleway signage from that exact pathway next to the retirement village. The report arose as a result of community feedback given to Council last October when we consulted on upgrading the pathway. Clearly the January incident is not a one-off event.

Within a few days of the Traffic Committee agenda being posted on Council's website, the cycling group Bike North had written to all councillors strongly urging us to keep the pathway as a shared pedestrian and cycle path.

The letter drove home to me the imbalance that now exists between cycling and pedestrian interests in the North Sydney Council area. Without someone to advocate for pedestrians, their interests get overlooked and the needs of cyclists, which have a strong lobbying voice, are given priority. In the case of the pathway next to the retirement village, the need for the older residents to be able to walk safely to shops, medical services and public transport has somehow been over-ridden by the needs of commuter cyclists.

The purpose of this Mayoral Minute is not to review the St Peter's Park pathway, but to highlight the need for stronger pedestrian advocacy within Council. Despite our commitment to active transport, we rarely hear voices advocating for wider footpaths or shared zones in our village centres. Most people in the Council area live within comfortable walking distance of a local shopping village. We should be encouraging walking as the first choice of transport, not the last.

The answer may lie in employing a part time pedestrian officer who can give a dedicated pedestrian perspective on Council projects. Alternatively, we may need an overarching review of all pedestrian thoroughfares leading to our village centres. Or perhaps we need a multi-pronged approach that ensures the needs of pedestrians are considered by all Divisions.

I therefore recommend:

1. THAT staff prepare a report on options for improving our focus on pedestrian needs, and that the report considers how to ensure that all voices are equally heard when balancing the needs of motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and public transport.

**COUNCILLOR JILLY GIBSON
MAYOR**