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14 July 2001

The Director
Centennial Parklands Draft Transport
Access & Parking Plan
Locked Bag 15
PADDINGTON NSW 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: DRAFT CENTENNIAL PARKLANDS TRANSPORT, ACCESS & PARKING PLAN.

My interest in the plan is as a cyclist and regular user of the parklands. I am President of the Randwick Botany Cycling Club with some 120 members over 30 of who are junior members under the age of 16. The majority of our membership uses the park at some time of the week for training purposes. I represented my club as one of the Project Reference Group attending organizations and the Randwick Botany Cycling Club is listed in Appendix A as such. I will make the point however that at no time was I, nor any member of my club, contacted as part of consultation process of this study. Rather it was I who became aware of the study and sought right of attendance. To my knowledge none of the 69 other cycling clubs affiliated with the NSW Cycling Federation and their 4500 affiliated members were consulted. Neither were any of the NSW Triathlon clubs. Given this fact I can only conclude that Sinclair Knight Merz, hereafter referred to as the consultants, have either incompetently, negligently or quite purposely, not included the Cyclists, who are the single largest identifiable user group of the park, in their "comprehensive public consultative process".

As for my opinion of the draft plan, I would firstly like to applaud the consultants for the initiatives outlined in the action plan in respect of Access to and from the Parklands. These initiatives form part of a very responsible approach, which will assist bicycle riders to connect with the wider bicycle network and to travel to and from the Parklands in relative safety, which is very much in keeping with the goals and objectives of the New South Wales Government's BikePlan 2010.

I do have serious reservations however in respect of some of the strategies outlined in the Action Plan under the heading, "Access within the Parklands and between the Parks". My concerns are in respect of the:

1. Contra-flow bike lane;
2. Pedestrian Crossings;
3. Off leash dog areas; and
4. Parallel Parking and reduced carriageway width.

The consultant's submission form requests suggestions about alternatives/improvements to the draft plans. This sentence alone tends to suggest to me that the engaged consultants apprehend some doubts in respect of their own recommendations. They have been engaged at considerable cost to develop this plan and I am not about to do their job for them by detailing alternatives and improvements to their plans. Rather, I will now advise the Trust as to the reasons why the plan in respect of the internal arrangements within Centennial Park will not work and how it will expose users of the park to considerable risk of injury and the Trust to considerable liability

1 Contra-flow bike lane.

A Contra-flow bicycle lane would present a serious and unreasonable potential danger to all users of the bicycle lane. Regularly training cyclists often have to deviate their course and travel outside the outer edge line of the cycle lane. This is done sometimes as an overtaking manoeuvre as cyclists come upon slower roller skaters, recreational cyclists or children on bikes. Often it is done to give skaters a 'wide berth' as the biomechanics of skating demands that a skater changes direction constantly from one direction to the other in order to propel themselves forward. The width of track that a skater uses is very much dependent on his/her speed however I have witnessed fast skaters taking up some 2 metres width of cycleway as they launch themselves from side to side. Sometimes however cyclists and/or skaters travel outside the outer edge line as an emergency evasive action to avoid dogs or perhaps roller skaters who have fallen over. If a contra flow cycling lane is introduced and a cyclist or skater goes over that edge line, they will be immediately in danger of a head on collision with a motor vehicle. The closing rate speed of such a collision would be in the vicinity of 60kph (assuming that the motor vehicle was obeying the speed limit) and the result would in all likelihood be fatality. There are very few survivals from 60kph closing rate collisions. RTA statistics will support this statement, as it is the basis of their 50kph local street speed limits. RTA statistics show that pedestrian impacts at 60kph account for fatality in 85% of cases. When the impact speed is reduced to 50kph, the fatality rate is reduced to 45%.

1.1 Problems entering and exiting bike lane.

If the bike lane were to be made contra flow then any cyclists would have to make right hand turns to both enter and exit the Park. At the moment it is a simple left turn and merge manoeuvre to enter and a simple left turn to exit. We believe that such a right turn across the path of oncoming traffic presents an unreasonable potential danger at every proposed entry into the Grand Drive. Similarly on exiting the park the danger is perhaps amplified.

1.1.1 Scenario Example 1: Right Turn movement Exiting contra-flow lane

Take the example that one were heading east along the contra flow bike lane past the children's cycleway with the intention of exiting the park at the Randwick Gates. They arrive at the Randwick gates to find a line of oncoming traffic. They then have to wait there for a break in the traffic. The resulting right turn across the front of oncoming traffic is dangerous enough however if the waiting vehicle is a two seater pedal vehicle, which are quite regularly seen in the park, then effectively half the bike lane is now blocked presenting a significant hazard to following bicycles or skaters. In the absence of turn signals, following bicycles or skaters would possibly make the assumption think that the turning cycle had broken down and attempt to overtake it, move outside the outer cycle edge line onto the carriageway and once again we have the possibility of a head-on fatal accident.

1.1.2 Senario Example 2: Right Turn movement entering contra-flow lane

Take the example that one has entered the Randwick gates and has stopped at the edge of the Carriageway looking to his/her right for a break in the oncoming vehicles to make a right turn over to the bike lane. Firstly his/her line of vision is likely obscured by the line of parked vehicles, which are now on the outer perimeter of the Grand Drive. When making this turn not only does one have to time his/her entry perfectly in terms of judging approaching vehicles but they also have to time it so that there is a clear space in the cycleway when they arrive there. Imagine if one was to make the first part of the turn only to find that he/she was not able to enter the cycle lane because of congestion in same. The cyclist/skater would then have to wait on the carriageway until a gap in the cycle lane presented itself. Such a person would be particularly vulnerable to impact by a motor vehicle especially given the fact that the available carriageway is reduced by two metres by the parking lane on the outer perimeter. A motorist confronted with a stopped cyclist/skater on the carriageway would have significantly less manoeuvring room, than that which is available at present, because of the reduced carriageway width.

2 Pedestrian Crossings

The first consideration for implementation of a pedestrian crossing is the speed of vehicles, which, if excessive, would diminish available crossing time for Pedestrians and present a potential for collision. The speed limit in the Park however is only 30kph that allows ample time and opportunity for pedestrians to cross in safety. If a Pedestrian crossing were warranted, its implementation would be demonstrated by adverse accident history at a particular location. According to Appendix D or Vol 2 of the Draft Plan there have been only 3 pedestrian accidents recorded in the entire length of the Grand Parade since 1997. How could this possibly warrant the installation of a single pedestrian crossing?

The RTA has guidelines for the implementation of Pedestrian crossings. These guidelines are used by the RTA and Local Councils to warrant the implementation of pedestrian crossings on both the Local and State road networks. Before a pedestrian crossing is even contemplated there should be a demonstrated 'desire line'. The formula for this desire line is $PV=60000$ in one hour where P is the number of pedestrians crossing at a particular location, times V, the number of vehicles passing the location in one hour. The RTA guidelines state that the resultant number should be more than 60000 before implementation of a pedestrian crossing is warranted. In other words if traffic flow was at the rate of 100 vehicles per hour, 60 pedestrians would need to cross at a particular point giving a PV of 60,000 and warranting consideration of implementation of a pedestrian crossing. Anyone who is a regular in Centennial Park knows that there are no defined desire lines and that people cross the park everywhere around it's 3.8km perimeter. There is absolutely no location that could achieve a PV of anywhere near 60,000.

2.1 Scenario

Imagine a group of cyclists of some 14 as lawfully allowed by the Centennial Trust Act. All are circulating when a pedestrian steps out onto the carriageway exercising his/her right of way. The front 2 cyclists have just enough time to break harshly to stop for the pedestrian. The following cyclists reaction time would be substantially reduced and in all likelihood they would collide with the cyclist in front of them. The ensuing collision would likely see many of the 14 on the roadway and injured. How can the implementation of pedestrian crossings with the apparent goal of stopping the accident rate of 3 pedestrian accidents in 4 years, be possibly justified when it has the potential of seriously injuring more cyclists in a single accident?

On page 52 of the CP Draft Plan Vol 2, entitled "Topic 4 Centennial Park Internal Park Arrangements", Item 16 states:

"Southbound cycling would continue along the roadway with cars as at present."

Item 20 talks about the initiatives to better deal with training (pack) cyclists.

Whilst it is not stated it would seem to be inferred that the consultant's strategy is to ensure that the "Pack" cyclists do not use the cyclist lane at all. The contra-flow lane would appear to be for the exclusive use of recreational skaters and cyclists and commuters. The "Pack" cyclists seem to be considered as a nuisance in this plan rather than bonafide major user group. They would appear to have been given the ultimatum of either travel clockwise with the motor vehicles or leave the park. The very term "Pack" is an insulting and derogatory term usually associated with animals or criminal according to my Collins English Dictionary. It does however convey an insight into how the consultant, and perhaps the trust, regards the training cyclist.

I can see no merit whatsoever in the implementation of these pedestrian crossings other than perhaps presenting yet another obstacle and hence incentive for training cyclists to leave the park by exposing them to another potentially dangerous situation. The consultant in proposing these crossings has totally disregarded tried and tested guidelines used throughout this State by Local Government and the Road Traffic Authority. At a meeting with the Consultants on Monday 9 July at the Trust Administrative building, one of the Consultants told me, "We don't have to comply with those guidelines within the Parklands." I was then informed by the consultant that pedestrian crossings, as traffic management facilities, were very much in favour and were being implemented in large numbers. I have sat on the Local Traffic committees of Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick and South Sydney over the past 8 years and I cannot even recall the last pedestrian crossing that was implemented. It is my experience that they are very much out of favour as a traffic management facility. I truly question the experience and expertise of the consultants involved in this project. The implementation of the proposed pedestrian crossings is unwarranted and would pose an unreasonable and serious threat of injury to training cyclists.

3 Off Leash Dog Areas

At the earliest opportunity during the workshop held on the 1 February 2001, I voiced my concern that off leash dog areas should be nowhere near the vicinity of the bicycle lane. The Trust has recently made the entire outer perimeter grassland area immediately adjacent to the Grand Drive an off leash dog area. It would appear as mentioned above that it is the Trust's intention to force training cyclists to travel with the motor vehicles in a clockwise direction. When they do that they will once again be in significant potential danger of having a dog run out in front of them. We totally refute the records as contained in Appendix D or Vol 2 of the Draft Plan, which report that there have been 5 cyclist/dog accidents in 3.5-year period from 1997. In a previous letter to the trust, I reported the fact that two of our club's members were injured by collisions with dogs in only the past 3 months.

4 Parallel Parking.

Not only will the training cyclists have to contend with unleashed dogs but the consultants are now proposing to place parallel parking around the entire outer perimeter of the Grand Drive. As if the dogs were not bad enough, now the Trust proposes to introduce the second major cause of injured cyclists, opening car doors. By placing parking on the outside of the park the carriageway width is immediately reduced by 2 metres. The resultant reduced width carriageway will see cyclists travelling close to the offside (driver's side) of the parked vehicles and exposing them to considerable risk of collision with an alighting driver. Another risk associated with parallel parking is reverse parking. The turning path of the front of a reverse parking vehicle will take up a considerable amount of the reduced sized carriageway again providing significant potential for collision with all vehicles travelling clockwise including training cyclists.

In the absence of a credible plan that does not expose cyclists and other road users to considerable risk of injury and perhaps fatality, it is my recommendation that the Trust disregard the consultant's recommendations in respect of the internal arrangement of Centennial Park and leave the internal arrangements as they are at present.

Yours faithfully

John Buckton
President Randwick Botany Cycling Club.