

City of Wollongong

Pedestrian Plan 2017 – 2021

Introduction

The City of Wollongong's Pedestrian Plan 2017-2021 is a comprehensive blueprint for the city to become more walkable and accessible for pedestrians.

Walking is being promoted to the community as a safe, low cost recreational activity with fitness, wellbeing and environmental benefits.

Beyond just improving footpaths, the plan included policies, services and infrastructure improvements to help reshape public spaces that encourage walking as a form of transport.

The plan was informed by evidence including Census data from 2016:

- ▶ Almost 70 per cent of local residents drive to work and
- ▶ Approximately 7.5 per cent of trips to the city centre are taken by public transport.

An evidence-based approach

Road crashes involving pedestrians contribute to the evidence base of the plan. NSW Police data shows that between 2011 and 2016, 197 road crashes in Wollongong involved injuries to pedestrians. There were nine pedestrian fatalities, and 110 pedestrians were seriously injured.

The plan included a commitment to increase formal crossing opportunities, exploring opportunities for continuous footpath treatments, and implementing a zebra-crossing maintenance program.

Snapshot

- ▶ The City of Wollongong is in the Illawarra region and covers an area of 684km².
- ▶ Wollongong has a population of over 200,000 people.
- ▶ There were 950 fatalities and serious injuries from 862 crashes between 2014 and 2018.
- ▶ Unanderra, a suburb in Wollongong's south-west, is undergoing significant growth.

A community-driven initiative

The plan was developed by Council's transport and traffic management engineers, and drew on a range of experiences and expertise from people within Council. This included engagement with Wollongong Council's Active Transport Reference Group, which includes community representatives.

Consultation with the community through town-centre information sessions, community surveys and public submissions informed the plan. The plan also accounts for requests from the community for footpath improvements and walkability, as well as community survey results from 2008, 2010 and 2012.

Unanderra town centre

Drawing on strategic guidance from both the Pedestrian Plan and the Unanderra Access and Movement Strategy (2015), Council focused on improving pedestrian safety in Unanderra's town centre; a particularly challenging environment for pedestrians due to its proximity to the Princes Highway and numerous main roads running through its centre.

An important improvement was to implement a 40km per hour speed limit in high pedestrian activity areas on parts of Tannery Street and Central Road, and prioritising opportunities for pedestrian crossing movements.

Complementary measures included extending footpath networks across the 400m walking catchment of the town centre, and auditing footpaths for risks such as trip-hazards.

Project outcomes

- ▶ Prioritising pedestrian safety in comprehensive strategies supported the development of safe pedestrian environments in town centres across Wollongong, including Unanderra.
- ▶ Community engagement strongly informed pedestrian safety needs.
- ▶ Long-standing community feedback led to an increase in the amount and quality of footpaths, particularly in residential areas.
- ▶ Consultation and changes resulting from the plan opened up the opportunity for shifting conversations with the community from footpath quality to pedestrian safety.
- ▶ Some media agencies criticised the plan for being expensive, however future strategies have a practical set of guidelines to continually improve road and pedestrian safety.

Summary

Issues

- ▶ There are a high number of vehicle and pedestrian accidents happening in town centres, away from designated crossings.
- ▶ A large proportion of suburban streets lack good pedestrian footpaths.
- ▶ Car use in Wollongong has increased in the last decade, and fewer people have been walking.
- ▶ Traffic lights are optimised for vehicles.
- ▶ There is limited street signage for pedestrians.

Solutions

- ▶ Establishing comprehensive strategic plans and commitments.
- ▶ Installing and upgrading footpaths in places of priority.
- ▶ Widening shared pathways.
- ▶ Installing pedestrian safety features in town centres across Wollongong.
- ▶ Other solutions include improvements to crossings, refuge islands, traffic signals prioritising pedestrians, school crossings, street lighting and barriers.
- ▶ Strong engagement from the community.