

Dunedin City Council Infrastructure and Services Networks Committee

Dr Lynley Hood, oral submission 14/8/2017

Kia ora koutou. Thank you for this opportunity.

I'm from VICTA - Visual Impairment Charitable Trust Aotearoa. Our members are among Dunedin's 20,000 older folk who live active, independent, socially engaged lives in our city. They strongly support cycling and cycling safety, but not at the expense of our most vulnerable road users: pedestrians.

This submission goes much wider. I'm asking you to consider the active transport needs of locals of all ages and abilities who lack the strength and balance and skills to ride a bike, or the reflexes to jump out of the way of a bike, or who can't afford a bike - and to consider all to us who would rather walk than bike because walking means travelling at the pace of thought. It's the only form of transport in which mind, body and the environment can be wonderfully synchronised. When we walk, we're actually *in* the environment; not just passing through it.

The cycleways report you're considering today ignores the concerns of pedestrians. I have a simple, low cost, solution, but first I need you to understand why it's so important.

On cycleway issues, council staff consult cycling, motoring, business, land owning, and law enforcement interests. But this project includes shared paths - paths shared with pedestrians. Pedestrian weren't consulted, and when they raised their concerns they were ignored.

I know the NZTA holds the purse strings, and they only fund cycleways. But you can't make the problem go away by building cycleways and calling them shared paths.

You'll see from the graphs on p.2 of our submission, that the people who do the most walking are too young or too old to drive. Those kids should be free to run around. And those oldies are the canaries in the coal mine of Dunedin's future. They want to keep active. It's the best thing they can do for their health, for the economy, and for the environment. Their numbers are escalating. And they hate shared paths.

Heaps of people wrote to the parliament recently to say that walking and cycling don't mix. Some of their comments are on p. 3 & 4 of our submission. I'll read a few:

*"The advent of well-intentioned 'shared' pathways is already making walking more stressful for pedestrians, especially for the elderly, and those of us with young families."*

*"Imagine taking a child along a walkway. You want the child to be able to run forward, see a bird, stop and watch it for a while, then run to the other side of the track to look down at the stream, and then spot another bird and follow it to the other side of the track, and then be distracted by an interesting fern, and so on. That behaviour is not possible if there is a risk that a fast cyclist will come around the corner."*

*"I am elderly, have hearing difficulties, but my biggest problem is my personal balance... The footpath is now the only place left for me to walk safely as all walkways are used by cyclists."*

*"Try walking around the Farm Cove Walkway in Pakuranga, Auckland and see how you get on. Those cyclists are not aware of sharing with care and in fact it's frightening. As people age and start to slow down, lose their hearing and sight, should they not walk because of the dangers imposed by cyclists on paths?"*

Our traffic planners must know that all the international guidelines - including the ones cited by the NZTA - say that if you've got the space, the best way to avoid conflict between pedestrians and cyclists is to have totally separate walkways and cycleways.

We need to future-proof our city. We need to make it an accessible, inclusive, wonderful place to live. A good place to start is by having a separate walkway at street level along the harbour front between Fryatt and Birch Streets - for three good reasons.

First: there's plenty of room. No excuses there.

Second: Cyclists will enter both ends of the cycleway from the road at motor vehicle speeds. Why should they slow down? They don't want to smell the roses. They want to enjoy whizzing along in a car-free space.

Third: a refreshing stroll along a centrally-located, safe, street-level, harbour-front walkway, with a gorgeous view, will be a joy for people of all ages and abilities. People walk there now, and they'll walk there in much greater numbers in the future.

If you don't have the funds for a separate walkway now, then please set aside the land for it. Now. And prioritise its construction in a future DCC budget.

I'll close with the wisdom of Diogenes - Solvitur Ambulando "It is solved by walking".