



27th November 2008

Engagement Team
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RE: CROWN STREET MALL RENOVATION OPTIONS

The Illawarra Active Transport Taskforce (IATT) represents the interests of cyclists and pedestrians in the Illawarra. Our members include local Councils, the Roads and Traffic Authority, Healthy Cities Illawarra, the Heart Foundation, NSW Health, bike businesses and bicycle user groups. The IATT is an important forum and we very much appreciate Wollongong City Council's continuing commitment to the Taskforce.

Part of the Taskforce's aim is to make our cities more amenable to pedestrians and cyclists and educate planners and the public about the benefits of active travel.

The proposals to re-open Crown Street Mall have been canvassed on a number of occasions over recent years. The most recent of these was less than two years ago, in February 2007 (*see Healthy Cities Illawarra submission 16/02/07, attached*). In surveys carried out in August 2005 and August 2006 the great majority of people wanted the Mall to remain closed to traffic.

The IATT supported Option B in the last round of consultation about the Mall. This option was to refurbish the mall, and keep it open for pedestrians only. However, this has not occurred, and the Mall remains as it was. Therefore the same issues remain as were present in 2007, including poor visual amenity and security fears.

Of the current options, the IATT supports **Option A: Renovation**. Arguments that opening the Mall to private vehicles will increase its usage can be refuted by looking at the more easterly parts of Crown St, which are already open to vehicles. The Kembla St to Corrimal St block is not well-used at night, and is not safer or more attractive to people wanting to eat out late at night.

Alongside Option A, we recommend a three-pronged approach which will help to address some of the present concerns.

1. **Make the Mall attractive to pedestrians**

A commitment to attractive public landscaping, including high quality flower beds, natural shade and sufficient public seating, will increase the use and satisfaction with the Mall. Where shade trees are to be

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planted, they should be of suitable local native species, to provide part of the city's green corridor for native birds and animals.

City centres which include public art are often more attractive, and can help shape people's behaviour and attitudes to their surroundings. Sensitively-chosen public artworks should be installed within the Mall to increase users' sense of ownership.

As our previous submission stated¹:

"A United Kingdom Government report² identifies 7 ways to design out crime and security issues. They include:

- *Ownership – places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community,*
- *Activity – places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times, and*
- *Surveillance – places where all public spaces are overlooked"*

2. Provide good quality active and public transport infrastructure

Wollongong should lead the way in providing good quality, integrated active transport and public transport infrastructure around and into the city centre. As part of the move away from the private vehicle, there should be dedicated cycling and walking pathways provided to and around the Mall, and include plentiful, well-designed bike parking facilities.

Also from our previous submission:

"Environmental consequences of our current way of life have recently begun to be fully understood by communities and politicians alike. Inefficiencies in the way our buildings are built and used, outdated processes used in industries, and our reliance on the internal combustion engine for most of our transport needs has culminated not only in wasted resources and polluted air, but climate change. Additionally, the insecure nature of the supply and price of oil means the days of the car being the best ways of getting around are limited. The planning of the future of Wollongong needs to recognise the needs of a city that can't afford to follow deep-seated unsustainable practices of the past. Keeping the mall car-free is a symbolic and meaningful way of showing national leadership of the issue of encouraging active transport whilst limiting car use."

We recommend that a light rail system be developed for Wollongong, which would take in Wollongong rail station, Crown St Mall, the beach frontage, North Wollongong, the Innovation Campus, the University of Wollongong and Wollongong Hospital. Such a public transport system would vastly improve access to these major trip generators, while reducing the traffic load around the city – it should therefore be a free or very cheap public service.

3. Ensure the built form is human friendly

The built form surrounding the Mall is one of the major factors in its useability and attractiveness. Any future developments should not block out sunlight from the northern side of Crown St, nor add to the wind-tunnel effect created by flat walls and overpasses. There should be no blank-faced walls at street level and no underground car-parking entrances in or adjacent to the Mall.

¹ 2007, Illawarra Active Transport Taskforce submission to 'Proposed Improvements to Wollongong's Crown Street Mall'

² Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (UK), 2004. Safer Places – The Planning System and Crime Prevention. Thomas Telford Limited, London. [accessed online at www.odpm.gov.uk/planning]

Council has the capacity to limit the height of buildings to the north of Crown St, and can also ensure that all new buildings are of a human-scale, take into account the prevailing weather conditions and are sympathetic to the local environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment once again on the future of the Crown St Mall. This is an important feature of Wollongong City and should be upgraded and updated to reflect current trends in city design, recent moves towards active transport, and a carbon-constrained future. The Mall's ideal central location, leading down to the beach, close to the major shops, McCabe Park, the Civic Centre and the railway station, should make it one of the best in Australia.

We look forward to seeing it develop as an attractive and safe town centre, with beautiful landscaping, cycle facilities and sympathetic building design.

Yours sincerely

Jill Merrin
Community Environmental Health Officer

Att.: 2007, Illawarra Active Transport Taskforce submission to 'Proposed Improvements to Wollongong's Crown Street Mall'