

# Clarke St pop up park and share path

## – BikeWest Feedback

### Executive Summary

BikeWest would like to acknowledge that council seeks to provide community spaces for all people. This is a key consideration in our thinking. BikeWest is very concerned that the shared path as currently designed as part of the Clark Street popup park will not be suitable to be used safely by both cyclists and pedestrians, especially children and older people. BikeWest is convinced that the inherent conflict of the design will lead to accidents with resulting legal cases. The park will be perceived as unsafe and inconvenient by cyclists who will likely take a different, possibly more dangerous route to avoid it and hence it would result in wasted expenditure by council.

BikeWest would like to suggest changes that can be added with very little cost, increase visual amenity through additional greening, massively increase safety and have minimal impact on pedestrian space. Therefore, BikeWest cannot support the current design and suggest the following:

- planter box dividers to separate the bike path from the pop up park
- a rail at the corner with church
- designated zebra crossing at the northern end of Clarke St

### Scenarios

BikeWest have proposed two scenarios to help illustrate this design is not just poorly considered, it is fundamentally unsafe and does not meet Australian standards.

#### Scenario 1

A young family with a toddler sitting in the pop up park. In this scenario the parents are chatting with friends sitting in the “safe” space of a pop up park with no motor vehicles. The parents are chatting to friends and do not constantly monitor their toddler wandering around playing with their friends or chasing pigeons. The toddler randomly dashes across the park to chase a pigeon onto the shared path where the child is struck by a cyclist who is travelling at a very sensible 15-20kmh (the design speed for shared paths). The cyclist had no chance to stop. The child is knocked over and ends up in hospital with a head injury. The cyclist had no chance to slow down as the child was obscured by other people, street furniture and trees and the sudden movement of the child. Due to an unsafe design several people’s days, possibly lives have had a long term impact of life long disability and daily challenges. This is nobody’s fault. Parents want their children to be able to play freely and safely and should not be expected to keep their toddler on a leash in a pedestrian zone, the cyclist is behaving responsibly but has knocked over a child and put them in hospital with potentially life long consequences.

#### Scenario 2

An elderly church goer is chatting to their friends on the steps of the church. She says goodbye and walks down the steps of the church onto the shared path but is unable to see the cyclist travelling at a sensible 15-20kmh as it is a blind corner and steps directly into their path as they seek to cross the pop up park. The elderly person is knocked over and taken to hospital with a head injury. This is nobody’s fault. People are not able to look around blind corners and to expect them to do so is patently absurd. Cyclists should not be expected to come to a halt at every blind corner. Both the

elderly person and the cyclist are behaving responsibly but the cyclist has knocked over an elderly person and put them in hospital with potentially long term consequences of injury and disability.

## Design Flaws

These two scenarios are entirely predictable as is the legal case that is likely to follow. Fortunately both almost certain events can easily be prevented by providing a physical barrier to the cycle path from the park (ideally with planter boxes to increase greenery and hence visual amenity) and a rail to ensure pedestrians do not cross at the blind corner but rather at the designated zebra crossing beside the road with good lines of sight.

There is no need for there to be a shared path as approximately 85% of the space (including western footpath) is already dedicated to pedestrians and offer almost zero additional utility while simultaneously massively increasing risk.

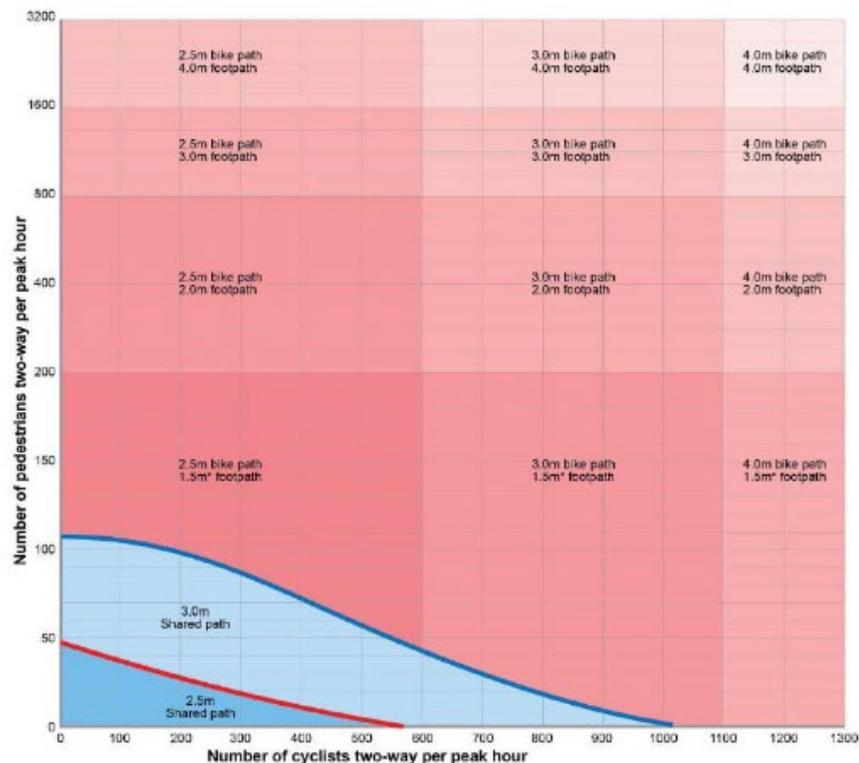
## Australian Standards

It would also appear the current design is not compliant with Austroad design guidelines.

### Shared Path Usage and Specification

According to Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling p28, if the space is used by more than 100 pedestrians per hour during peak times then there should be a separate dedicated bicycle path (Figure 1). If the park proves popular this is almost certain to be the case during the summer months.

Figure 1: Widths for Shared Paths



## Stopping Sight Distance

In addition, stopping sight distance is a key issue. Stopping sight distance incorporates both reaction time and time taken to stop after applying the brakes. As stated on p44 of the Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling:

“The available sight distance needs to enable path users to stop or take evasive action if necessary in order to avoid another cyclist, pedestrian, or an obstacle in their path”

The formula to calculate stopping sight distance is as follows<sup>1</sup>:

$$S = \frac{V^2}{254 \times (f \pm G)} + \frac{V}{1.4}$$

where

S = stopping sight distance (m)

V = speed (km/h)

f = coefficient of friction (typically 0.16 for a bicycle in wet conditions)

G = grade of path (+ for uphill and – for downhill)

Stopping sight distances for expected speeds are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Stopping sight distances

speed of cyclist (km/h)	stopping sight distance (m)
5	3.6
10	7.2
15	10.9
20	14.5

Clearly these stopping sight distances are not satisfied at the corner with the church but with a rail extending in north south orientation from the edge of the church building to a designated zebra crossing would provide the necessary stopping sight distance.

Being in contravention of Austroad design standards will be a considerable concern in any possible legal case.

## Design Changes

As a consequence, BikeWest cannot support the current design and suggest the following:

- planter box dividers to separate the bike path from the pop up park
- a rail at the corner with church
- designated zebra crossing at the northern end of Clarke St

These changes will add very little cost, increase amenity through additional greening, massively increase safety and have minimal impact on pedestrian space.

---

<sup>1</sup> Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling p45

## Potential Outcomes

There are two potential outcomes for the pop up park and shared path on Clarke St depending on different, currently unknown though predictable, path dependencies.

If the path dependency starts from the space being predominantly used for people cycling then pedestrians will stay away from the park as it will be viewed as unsafe for pedestrians, especially young children and older people. This will result in consistent complaints from church users about conflict, collisions and near misses with “rude and inconsiderate” cyclists. This will actually be a result of a design that promotes conflict as opposed to any innate moral failings of people choosing to ride a bicycle. The park will be underutilised by the general populace and considered a failure due to “those awful cyclists”.

The more probable path dependency starts from the space being predominantly used as a pedestrian space then hardly any people will cycle along the shared path as it presents too many barriers for its use. These barriers are the random movements of people of all ages (especially young children and elderly people). Even one barrier is usually enough to prevent people from getting on their bicycles for the first time. Having to dismount will prevent current bicycles users from taking this path and consequently they are highly likely to take a different possibly more dangerous route to avoid the inherent conflict of the design.

If the second outcome is the one that eventuates, the park will be considered a success for pedestrians and anecdotal evidence will suggest people do not cycle along Clarke St and the pop up park and hence the people of West Footscray do not wish to cycle. This false conclusion will be based on flawed infrastructure.

Experience in the Netherlands has shown that shared paths and disconnected bike paths don't work. For a bike path to be used it must connect, it must be safe, it must be easy and there must at no point be places where cyclists are expected to dismount or repeatedly stop. It is now accepted across most OECD countries that bicycles are vehicles and the infrastructure for cycling should acknowledge this and be separate from pedestrian facilities. This is supported by Victoria Walks in their report on shared paths<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Victoria Walks 2015 Shared paths: the issues