

## RESOURCE 4—STUDENT SCRIPTS FOR INQUIRY INTO FOOTPATH SAFETY

### ROLE PLAY

#### COMMITTEE CHAIR SCRIPT

**Committee Chair:** Welcome to the committee inquiry into Footpath Safety. The terms of reference for the inquiry are to determine if there has been incidents of footpath damage, how extensive this damage might be, whether the safety of Canberrans has been affected and any other related matter.

**Committee Chair:** The committee will hear from six witness groups, the:

- Minister for Transport and City Services and staff;
- Risk Management Co-ordinator from the City Services Directorate
- ACT Public Safety Association;
- Individuals from the ACT community affected by footpath damage;
- ACT Restorations and Driveways Engineers; and
- Pedal People ACT.

*[Call first group of witnesses for questioning]*

**Committee Chair:** I welcome the Minister for City Services and staff, please come to the table.

*[wait for all witnesses to move to their positions at the witness table]*

**Committee Chair:** Please state your name for the Hansard record.

*[wait for all witnesses to say their name]*

**Committee Chair:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

*[wait for Minister to read an opening statement]*

**Committee Chair:** Committee members do you have any questions?

*[allow each committee member to ask a question]*

**Committee Chair:** I thank the Minister and staff for appearing before the committee today.

*[wait for first group of witnesses to return to their seats]*

*[call second group of witnesses for questioning]*

**Committee Chair:** I welcome the Risk Management Co-ordinator and staff from the City Services Directorate, please come to the table.

*[wait for all witnesses to move to their positions at the witness table]*

**Committee Chair:** Please state your name for the Hansard record.

*[wait for all witnesses to say their name]*

**Committee Chair:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

*[wait for Risk Management Co-ordinator to read an opening statement]*

**Committee Chair:** Committee members do you have any questions?

*[allow each committee member to ask a question]*

**Committee Chair:** I thank the Risk Management Co-ordinator and staff for appearing before the committee today.

*[wait for second group of witnesses to return to their seats]*

*[call third group of witnesses for questioning]*

**Committee Chair:** I welcome the ACT Public Safety Association, please come to the table.

*[wait for all witnesses to move to their positions at the witness table]*

**Committee Chair:** Please state your name for the Hansard record.

*[wait for all witnesses to say their name]*

**Committee Chair:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

*[wait for ACT Public Safety Association member 1 to read an opening statement]*

**Committee Chair:** Committee members do you have any questions?

*[allow each committee member to ask a question]*

**Committee Chair:** I thank staff from the ACT Community and Public Safety Association for appearing before the committee today.

*[wait for third group of witnesses to return to their seats]*

*[call fourth group of witnesses for questioning]*

**Committee Chair:** I welcome people from the ACT community affected by footpath damage, please come to the table.

*[wait for all witnesses to move to their positions at the witness table]*

**Committee Chair:** Please state your name for the Hansard record.

*[wait for all witnesses to say their name]*

**Committee Chair:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

*[wait for ACT Community member 1 to read an opening statement]*

**Committee Chair:** Committee members do you have any questions?

*[allow each committee member to ask a question]*

**Committee Chair:** I thank the individuals affected by footpath damage for appearing before the committee today.

*[wait for fourth group of witnesses to return to their seats]*

*[call fifth group of witnesses for questioning]*

**Committee Chair:** I welcome the ACT Restorations and Driveways Engineers, please come to the table.

*[wait for all witnesses to move to their positions at the witness table]*

**Committee Chair:** Please state your name for the Hansard record.

*[wait for all witnesses to say their name]*

**Committee Chair:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

*[wait for ACT Restorations and Driveways Engineer 1 to read an opening statement]*

**Committee Chair:** Committee members do you have any questions?

*[allow each committee member to ask a question]*

**Committee Chair:** I thank citizens from the ACT Restorations and Driveways Engineers for appearing before the committee today.

*[wait for fifth group of witnesses to return to their seats]*

*[call sixth group of witnesses for questioning]*

**Committee Chair:** I welcome the Pedal People ACT, please come to the table.

*[wait for all witnesses to move to their positions at the witness table]*

**Committee Chair:** Please state your name for the Hansard record.

*[wait for all witnesses to say their name]*

**Committee Chair:** Do you wish to make an opening statement?

*[wait for Pedal People member 1 to read an opening statement]*

**Committee Chair:** Committee members do you have any questions?

*[allow each committee member to ask a question]*

**Committee Chair:** I thank the members from the Pedal People ACT for appearing before the committee today.

*[wait for sixth group of witnesses to return to their seats]*

**Committee Chair:** The committee hearing is now adjourned. The committee will consider the evidence from today and write its report which will be tabled in the Assembly.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS SCRIPT

### QUESTIONS FOR MINISTER FOR CITY SERVICES

1. Does the Minister think that footpaths in the ACT are safe?
2. What is the Government doing to ensure that footpaths are safe for people with mobility issues and vision impairment?
3. Some footpath accidents occur as a result of poor education of pedestrians/cyclists. What is the government planning to do about this?

### QUESTIONS FOR RISK MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATOR AND CITY SERVICES STAFF

1. What are the barriers preventing quick repair of footpaths in the ACT?
2. What can the government do differently to ensure that less injuries occur?
3. What is your section doing to ensure that vulnerable people are safe on footpaths?

### QUESTIONS FOR ACT PUBLIC SAFETY ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

1. What are some of the issues that the more vulnerable people in our community experience on Canberra footpaths?
2. What does your organisation recommend to ensure that footpaths are safer?
3. In the past some of the areas in the ACT were developed without footpaths, leading to accessibility issues. Can some of your members share their experiences?

### QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS FROM THE ACT COMMUNITY AFFECTED BY FOOTPATH DAMAGE

1. Can you tell the committee about your experience on ACT footpaths?
2. In your opinion, what could assist long-term safety and accessibility on ACT footpaths?
3. What is the most important issue that needs attention regarding ACT footpaths?

### QUESTIONS FOR ACT RESTORATIONS AND DRIVEWAYS ENGINEERS

1. What are the most common issues that your organisation encounters in terms of footpath safety?
2. Does your organisation feel that the age of some ACT footpaths is a contributing factor to condition and safety?
3. In your organisation's opinion, what could assist long-term safety and accessibility on ACT footpaths?

## QUESTIONS FOR PEDAL PEOPLE ACT

1. Since the start of the year, do Pedal People have any statistics on injuries/issues experienced by members on shared paths?
2. Has enough been done to ensure that footpaths are fixed in a timely manner?
3. What actions could the ACT government take to ensure safety and security for Pedal People members?

## MINISTER FOR CITY SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT STAFF SCRIPT

### OPENING STATEMENT

All Canberrans have the right to travel on footpaths in the ACT in safety and security and the government is committed to the safety of all its citizens. A number of ACT footpaths were installed up to 40 years ago and dealing with these older footpaths has been a costly and difficult exercise. Footpaths need to be inspected and if they are found to be damaged they are marked for repair. The government has been working to establish a regular inspection roster, and allocate money from each budget to fixing damaged paths. Replacing paths in older areas in Canberra has been hard due to electricity and light poles, gardens along the path and the cost of materials used in surfacing.

### INFORMATION THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. The great majority of the footpaths in the ACT are safe for people to ride, walk or run on. Every year a number of issues impact ACT footpaths, such as fallen tree branches due to storm activity, cracks caused by tree root activity or deliberate damage. These problems are dealt with on as they occur. Often we are advised of the issue by a member of the public and we attend to it as soon as we can.
2. The government responds to every report of footpath problems and fixes them depending on the level of urgency. If a path is affected by something that restricts the movement of people with disabilities this receives a high priority order to be fixed.
3. The government has partnered with Pedal People and we are developing a cartoon video, aimed at primary and high school students that demonstrates the safest way to travel on shared paths with other path users.

## RISK MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATOR AND CITY SERVICES STAFF SCRIPT

### OPENING STATEMENT

The City Services Directorate is in charge of managing a certain amount of money from the budget each year which is used to build new footpaths, repair and rebuild older footpaths in order to assist all Canberrans to have a positive, safe and enjoyable outdoor experience.

### INFORMATION THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. There are several issues that affect prompt repair of footpaths. One is that there is a fixed amount of money for footpath creation, repair and rebuilding each year. The work is changing, new issues arise and priorities have to be updated. The money and work have to be managed every day to make our paths safe. Another issue is if we have staff away from work when they are sick which slows down work on footpaths. A third barrier is that if we don't know about a footpath problem then we can't fix it.
2. I think we do a good job with the money and staff resources we are given each year. To reduce injury we could make sure that dangerous paths are fixed quickly by setting a time period for the work to be done. We could also increase our inspection rate to make sure we find any problems faster.
3. As soon as we are alerted to a major footpath defect we section it off to ensure no one can walk or ride across it. We would give this a high priority to fix the problem as quickly as we can.

# ACT PUBLIC SAFETY ASSOCIATION MEMBERS SCRIPT

## OPENING STATEMENT

The ACT Public Safety Association believes that Canberra has one of the largest networks of shared paths in the country, but that the ACT government could do more to facilitate safety of path users. Our organisation has only been in existence for 7 years, but in that time has received over 1200 complaints about the state of or the lack of shared paths. We liaise with the ACT government on behalf of our members and advocate

## INFORMATION THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. Canberrans with vision impairment/blindness or mobility issues can experience significant issues while navigating damaged shared paths. Trips, falls and injuries have resulted from contact with paths that have deteriorated over time.
2. We encourage the government to widen their scope for path inspection. We feel that all paths should be inspected annually and that heavily used paths should be inspected every few months. If a heavily used path is reported it should be fixed within one week.
3. Yes, my name is Vera Little. I am blind and use a cane to assist with my mobility. Last year I tripped over an extensive crack in a footpath in my local area, fell over, spraining my wrist and grazing my hand. Later I learned that the footpath with the crack had not been inspected for almost two years, is not considered a priority area and that it may be 12 months before it is fixed. This seems like a very long time to wait and in the meantime, I do not feel it is safe for me to walk along that path.

## INDIVIDUALS FROM THE ACT COMMUNITY AFFECTED BY FOOTPATH DAMAGE

### OPENING STATEMENT

We represent the organisation that assists with building and repairing footpaths and shared paths around the ACT. Our aim is to complete the work in the safest possible manner while causing the least amount of disruption to path users. Our job can be made difficult by cyclists who ignore “roped off” areas, damage caused by vandals, and the amount of work to be completed. The ACT path network is one of the biggest in the country and work is done as the government budgets and priorities allow.

### INFORMATION THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. My name is Linda Lee and I have a 6-year-old daughter named Laurel. One day last year she was skipping along the footpath on our street. This footpath had many trees next to it, but one tree in particular had some roots that had grown up underneath the footpath, making it lumpy instead of smooth and flat. On this day, Laurel tripped over the bump on the footpath and fell over. When she fell, she knocked out two teeth, grazed her knee and broke her arm. She will need continuing orthodontist attention to ensure that her adult teeth come through properly, she required three stitches and had a pin put in her elbow and had to wear a cast for 6 weeks. There will be ongoing issues because of this accident that could affect her the rest of her life.
2. In my opinion all footpaths that are reported with a serious defect should be fixed within one week. If a defect has been reported, the area should be cordoned off to ensure that no injuries occur. To ensure that all footpaths are examined, there should be a roster system that ensures that all footpaths are looked at on a 6-monthly basis.
3. We think educating the public about the “Fix My Street” app and website would go a long way to making sure that more of the footpath issues are fixed. Had I known about this site I would have reported the defect as soon as I saw it. But the government also needs to fix these problems quickly. My daughter was both lucky and unlucky. Lucky that she didn’t sustain a serious head injury, but also unlucky that this defect wasn’t reported, roped off and fixed. I call upon the government to make this a priority as a matter of public safety.

# ACT RESTORATIONS AND DRIVEWAYS ENGINEERS

## OPENING STATEMENT

We represent the organisation that assists with installing new footpaths and shared paths around the ACT. Our aim is to complete new or refurbishment path work in the ACT in the safest possible manner while causing the least amount of intrusion or disturbance to path users. Our job can be hampered by cyclists who ignore “roped off” areas that are being refurbished, damage caused by vandals, and the sheer scale of the amount of work to be completed. The ACT path network is one of the most comprehensive in the country and we aim to keep expanding as government budgets and priorities allow.

## INFORMATION THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. The most prevalent issues that we come across are raised paths due to root intrusion from nearby plant and tree life, paths that have been deliberately damaged or paths that have been damaged/altered due to storms or hot weather conditions.
2. There are some footpaths in the ACT that while they are decades old, are perfectly serviceable while others are worn, damaged or in poor condition. The differences are due to a range of factors including path positioning that results in greater exposure to the elements that contributes greatly to a quicker degradation of path materials. Storm activity can change the conditions around the path, causing or increasing damage to the path. Having said all of that, older paths that are exposed to the elements and storm damage will degrade quicker than newer paths.
3. The implementation of an official path inspection officer or officers would assist us in locating damaged paths before they impede users. Also a larger budget would ensure that we could assign more staff to this project, meaning that more works could be carried out over the year.

## ACT PEDAL PEOPLE

### OPENING STATEMENT

Active transport, such as walking and cycling is one of the best ways to maintain good health and fitness. Over the past 30 years the government has built many shared paths through the Canberra region to assist both bike riders and pedestrians, but our organisation still feel that they have more work to do. We continue to monitor bike accident statistics that show that the safest passage for bike riders is on shared paths. However, as mentioned to the government on numerous occasions many shared paths don't follow the most direct route to town centres thereby making time-challenged cyclists less inclined to use them and more likely to engage in on-road cycling.

### INFORMATION THAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. We only have anecdotal evidence regarding injuries, but the ACT government keeps road injury and death statistics and I can confirm that 29 cyclists have reported injury since January this year with no deaths recorded.
2. There are two issues – finding out about a damaged path and then fixing the path once it's been reported as damaged. We feel that the government could be more proactive in inspecting paths. Regarding fixing of damaged paths – sometimes this can take weeks or months, leaving cyclists with no safe options.
3. The installation of more shared paths and the institution of an inspection officer for shared paths. Both of these would help to keep cyclists off the roads and out of active traffic areas and assist in making ACT's cycling paths the safest they can be.