

2019

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**Response to the Coroner's Inquest into the death
of Constance Harrison**

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**RESPONSE TO THE CORONER'S INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF CONSTANCE CAROLLE
HARRISON
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Overview

Coroner B. C. Boss's Inquest into the death of Constance Carolle Harrison concluded on 28 June 2018 and determined that Ms Harrison died as result of a severe crush injury resulting from a motor vehicle accident on 10 September 2014.

Although no formal recommendations resulted as part of the Coroner's findings, the Coroner did find that a matter of public safety arose from traffic conflicts at intersections where signals changed simultaneously to permit both vehicles and pedestrians to enter an intersection at the same time.

The ACT Government considers the matter of public safety identified by the Coroner was of the highest priority and urgent work was therefore undertaken to reduce the likelihood of a similar fatality occurring at signals where turning traffic and a pedestrian proceed in the same phase as occurred in Ms Harrison's death.

The Report noted that following the death of Ms Harrison in September 2014, the Coroner liaised directly with Roads ACT to have the traffic light changed at this intersection, to allow pedestrians to walk unimpeded for several seconds prior to any other traffic receiving green signals and entering across that intersection.

The ACT Government extends its sympathies to Ms Harrison's family and friends. The changes implemented since the death of Ms Harrison are outlined in this response and involve a combination of particular traffic operations and management improvements, education and awareness and ongoing policy commitments to mitigate the risk to the community.

Matter of Public Safety

This response outlines the steps that have been taken to improve the management of similar conflicts at traffic signals between turning traffic and pedestrians and cyclists in the ACT. These measures include both directly through signal programming modifications at intersections, and indirectly, through the ACT Government approach to improving road safety on the transport network.

Traffic signals adjustments at Manuka Circle

The Coroner acknowledged that Roads ACT had voluntarily agreed to modify the signals programming at the intersection of Canberra Avenue and Manuka Circle and accordingly, these adjustments were completed on 5 November 2015. Specifically, the new programming of the lights allows for four seconds between the commencement of the 'walk' signal for pedestrians to cross the eastbound carriageway of Canberra Avenue on the eastern side of the intersection, and the start of the green signal for southbound traffic on Manuka Circle.

In the period since Ms Harrison's death, many more ACT intersections have now been modified to allow a period of time between the pedestrian walk signal and the allied green road traffic light so that pedestrians get a 'head start' on the crossing and are therefore more visible to turning traffic. As this is not practical in all instances, (such as particular complex intersections), then Roads ACT have developed a specific operational policy to individually assess where particular protection measures and signal adjustments may be appropriate.

Roads ACT policy on conflicts at traffic signals between turning traffic and pedestrians

Pedestrian crossings are commonly installed at signalised intersections and high-volume pedestrian locations across the ACT. As virtually every trip begins and ends with walking, Roads ACT support the importance of walking as a crucial mode of transport and the position that pedestrians / cyclists share the same road space with motor vehicles.

The policy provides direct guidance on the operational steps that Roads ACT staff will take to manage the safety risk through a process of inspection and monitoring to reduce the likelihood of a crash where pedestrians and motor vehicles proceed in the same phase. Interventions may include additional warning signage or changes to signals phasing.

Specific provisions under the policy are as follows:

Traffic signals incorporating a left or right turn through a pedestrian crossing phase that currently meets the Australian Road Rules, **Rule 62 (1)(a) A driver turning at an intersection with traffic lights must give way to any pedestrian at or near the intersection who is crossing the road the driver is entering.**

Pedestrians can start crossing at any time whilst the green crossing symbol is displayed. On turning to flashing red, pedestrians can complete the crossing however they cannot start a new crossing. Upon pedestrians clearing the crossing, motorists can then turn left or right with care. At no time whilst pedestrians are on the crossing can a motorist move to travel through the crossing. A motorist is responsible for ensuring the safety of the pedestrians in this movement.

A conflict between a motorist and a pedestrian may occur in this turning phase. When advised of these occurrences, Roads ACT will inspect the intersection, reviewing the signals to address any issues that may be apparent and recommend and carry out modifications to the intersection. These modifications may include;

- Additional warning signage for motorists and pedestrians,
- Changes to signals phasing, or
- No change is warranted.

When carrying out an inspection, each signalised intersection will be reviewed in isolation to other signalised intersections to ensure that a 'one size fits all' approach is not applied and the correct outcome for each intersection is achieved. This is because successful interventions to protect pedestrians and promote safe walking require an understanding of the nature of risk factors at any particular intersection, as well as an analysis of the localised land use circumstances and movement data.

The policy works in conjunction with all other Roads ACT traffic management policies and warrants and is available on the Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) website.

ACT Road Safety Framework and Future Directions

The ACT Government has adopted a vision of zero road deaths and serious injuries as committed to in the ACT Road Safety Strategy 2011-20 and National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020. The strategic goals of the Road Safety Strategy are to: contribute to a national reduction in the annual number of fatalities and serious injuries of at least 30 per cent by 2020; develop an ACT community that shares the responsibility for road safety; and develop an approach to road safety that involves all stakeholders working together to improve road safety.

To achieve this vision, all ACT Government Directorates have committed to the adoption of the Safe System approach which provides the technical methodology and policy framework for achieving Vision Zero and relies on the components of Safe Speeds, Safe Roads and Roadsides, Safe Vehicles, and Safe People and Safe Behaviours.

The Safe System approach acknowledges that humans make mistakes and there is a known physical limit to the amount of force our bodies can take before sustaining debilitating injury or death.

The ACT Road Safety Strategy recognises that a substantial benefit to pedestrian safety will be achieved through a strong focus on promoting Safe Roads and Safe Speeds and the focus on avoiding injury for vulnerable road users amounts to a focus on avoiding crashes and thus exposure to risk.

Implementing this approach to road safety will improve the safety of the transport network and, more importantly, it will reduce the emotional and psychological harm that families and communities suffer when people are killed or seriously injured on ACT roads.

ACT Road Safety Action Plan

The Road Safety Strategy is supported by multi-year action plans which are based on the Vision Zero philosophy and the Safe System approach to road safety improvement. In 2016, the Government released the ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2016–2020. The Action Plan includes 39 action items aimed at saving lives, reducing injuries and strongly prioritising a Vision Zero approach to transport policy making.

Each year the ACT minister responsible for road safety provides a report to the ACT Legislative Assembly which sets out the implementation status of the Road Safety Strategy and other road safety related commitments and road safety performance data.

In addition to work being progressed as part of these road safety action plans, a number of other reforms and commitments are being progressed in response to the Assembly Inquiry into vulnerable road users in 2014.

Vulnerable Road User Inquiry

Driver licensing requirements have been strengthened to provide a greater focus on driving safely around vulnerable road users in pre-learner materials. Learner drivers are required to demonstrate good observation skills, recognition and risk management and display

appropriate and calm decision making to mitigate and avoid risk and harm to vulnerable road users as part of their progression to provisional licensing. The Justice and Community Safety Directorate is planning to commence a review in 2020 (as recommended by the Assembly committee) of the road rules at intersections to assess changes that could be made to existing road rules that would mitigate risks to vulnerable road users.

Share the Road Campaign

An ongoing priority of the road safety program is the safety of vulnerable road users. This focus has been progressed through the Government's "Share the Road" campaign, with materials specifically developed to educate road users on the importance of sharing the road with motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians. Previous instalments of the campaign have included information about minimum passing distances when overtaking cyclists, conditions for motorcycle lane filtering, safety around light rail vehicles, and sharing the road with buses. The Share the Road campaign is currently being expanded for launch in 2019, to focus on sharing the road with pedestrians and promoting pedestrian safety.

ACT Road Safety Fund

The ACT Road Safety Fund (the Fund) was established in July 2015 to fund projects and initiatives related to road safety research and education and road trauma prevention, in support of the ACT Government's Road Safety Strategy. The Fund is financed by a \$2.50 road safety contribution which is levied by the Government on ACT motor vehicle registration. Funding is allocated through an annual grants program as well as targeted strategic projects.

In 2016, the Fund provided a grant to establish and facilitate an education program for seniors that aims to increase road safety by providing information on driver safety, pedestrian safety, planning for a successful transition from driver to non-driver, and alternative transport options. In 2018 the Fund granted a project to investigate the impact of age and gender on spatial and temporal distributions of vehicle-pedestrian crashes in the ACT. The hotspots and hot-times of pedestrian crashes will be identified, and recommendations will be provided to enhance pedestrian safety in the ACT.

The Fund also granted a strategic project to complete a Safe System review of fatal crashes in the ACT over 2007-16. The audit, which is due to be finalised in early 2019, will identify opportunities for revised policy and infrastructure management to achieve a Safe System compliant ACT road network. The outcomes of the Safe System audit will ultimately inform the development of the next ACT Road Safety Strategy, and is likely to include recommendations specifically related to the enhancement of safety for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

Road and Infrastructure Design

The ACT Safe System approach also addresses road infrastructure and design which works hand in hand with traffic operations. This approach takes a whole of road network and route level perspective, not just individual crash sites, and recognises the importance of

investing in our road network to specifically reduce or eliminate hazards and provide a more forgiving road environment – in the event that a pillar of the Safe System fails.

As the manager of the ACT transport network, TCCS has a significant role to play in infrastructure implementation. Although past practices to roadway design have not always sufficiently catered to the needs of pedestrians, TCCS has introduced the Safe System Assessment Framework (SSAF) as a practitioner assessment tool for measuring how well a particular design or concept aligns with the Safe System objective of minimising severe injury. It will be used to highlight areas of residual severe injury risk and to assist in identifying design improvements to achieve the Safe System objective.

Movement and Place

In 2018, an ACT Movement and Place Framework was adopted to underpin the strategic policy settings within the new ACT Transport Strategy (released in draft in December 2018) and the ACT Planning Strategy refresh (released in December 2018). It is intended to provide a basis for better coordinating road planning and place making across the ACT.

Nationally, the 'Austroads Guide to Traffic Management Part 4 – Network Management' recommends a Movement and Place approach for all road agencies. Movement and Place is an aid to defining the strategic objectives of the road network, and is a way of integrating transport planning with place-making to create more liveable, permeable and functional city.

Implementing the movement and place framework acts as another aid to identify safety solutions, particularly those based on infrastructure improvements that might be applied to help achieve Safe System outcomes in different road environment types, such as where high levels of foot traffic can be anticipated.

Bus Driver Education and Awareness

Although the particular bus involved in Ms Harrison's accident was not a Transport Canberra operator, TCCS are also committed to best practice safety management systems in public transport and educating and increasing the competency of Transport Canberra drivers.

As part of both new driver training and driver continuity training, Transport Canberra cover the road rules around all pedestrian crossings and high-risk areas such as interchanges, schools, shops, urging extra vigilance for drivers to always check the near side mirror before completing the turn.

Transport Canberra provides a presentation on the size and location of blind spots specific to buses, giving practical solutions on how to manage these types of situations.

During on road driving, trainers check to make sure drivers are completing head and blind spot checks and are travelling at appropriate speeds for the location and situation.

Conclusion

The ACT Government takes the matter of public safety identified by Coroner B. C. Boss very seriously and is committed to improving traffic management, operations and transport planning in the ACT in a meaningful and long-lasting way.

Since the death of Ms Constance Harrison in 2014, the Government has increased efforts so that all Canberrans can feel confident that the ACT has in place a robust approach to road safety that will contribute to moving towards the ACT Government's vision of zero road deaths and serious injuries and also supports achieving the objective of building safe, caring and connected communities.

This work will continue into 2019 as the ACT Government moves further towards a best-practice Safe Systems approach.