

The Hon. Jo Haylen, MP
Minister for Transport
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister Haylen

Oxford Street East Cycleway Consultation Report – December 2023

We write in response to your Department's recent Consultation Report - December 2023. While we acknowledge the work involved and the quality of presentation, we consider the concept behind the Oxford Street East Cycleway (**OSEC**) project remains flawed. We provide the following comments in the spirit of frank feedback to Government.

We consider the Report lacks a meaningful understanding of the disruption and damage the proposed design will deliver to the Oxford Street East community. Alternative routes, including but not limited to Moore Park Road, have not been considered, such that the **OSEC** project strategic position fails to address the important community issues outlined below:

Route Suitability

Oxford Street East is a classified arterial road as well as a high street to the villages of Paddington, Darlinghurst and Woollahra. The **OSEC** project design makes Oxford Street East the only classified arterial road in NSW accommodating a bidirectional bike path, three intensively used bus services within a vibrant, active heritage conservation area. Its functionality cannot be sustained when its capacity to serve its purposes is diminished by the loss of two traffic lanes, reduced access to public transport, reduced pedestrian amenity to cross the street, and turn restrictions into key areas supporting its functions.

Place-Making

Oxford Street East has always been a complex and appealing place, serving as a traditional high street for residents and visitors to Darlinghurst, Paddington and Woollahra. The connections to both sides and along its path are complex and interrelated. TfNSW's approach using the **OSEC** as a new *place-making* construct is disingenuous and an inadequate tactic to justify building a bicycle path where there is not enough space available. Insertion of the cycleway is likely to reduce Oxford Street's current significance as an established place and will block future public domain improvements such as widening of pavements, avenue tree planting, or a light rail corridor.

The proposal delivers a conflict between increasing visitor access to Oxford Street East as a *place* while limiting public transport and other vehicle transport options in favour of cyclists.

User Priorities

Oxford Street East is already the *desire line* for tourists, residents, workers, students/parents and service/delivery providers. There is an alternative parallel route for the cycleway in Moore Park Road, that connects with the Bourke Street Darlinghurst-cycleway. Unlike Moore Park Road Oxford Street East provides several access points for the side street parking that is heavily used by businesses and residents, and to other convenient easily accessible parking for businesses. The

Report states that current parking will be kept as close as possible to current arrangements but has not provided any quantifiable evidence regarding how this will be achieved.

The community and businesses cannot be served if Oxford Street East becomes a *desire line* dedicated to cyclists as its priority. All users need equitable access to the Street and its kerbside. Reducing the number of bus stops and making getting on and off buses by using island bus stops reduces the appeal and access to public transport. Priority should be given to pedestrians and public transport users since they are – and will be for many years to come – the biggest users.

Right turn restrictions

Oxford Street East is the only practicable access point to at least 1,000 premises in South Paddington Council Parking Areas 13 and 15, affecting an estimated 3,000 residents as well as school communities, churches and small businesses. The suggested Flinders Street detour for cars travelling east from the Sydney CBD or crossing from the north is not a *minor inconvenience in exchange for the safety of cyclists*, especially when there are events at the Sports Precinct. Safety considerations should apply equally to all road users, especially given that vehicles heading west along Oxford Street will still cross the cycleway and pedestrian crossings during when turning left.

Detours and consequent rat-runs increase emissions, increase travel time and expense and increase the risk of crashes and near misses between frustrated vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Vulnerable users

Many older people and people with disabilities live in Paddington, Darlinghurst and Woollahra. Reducing the number of bus stops is a significant reduction in the ability of the ageing, and people with disabilities, to access public transport. They will be required to cross a cycle lane when getting on or off buses, exposing them to very real risks to their personal safety due to cyclists charging through zebra crossings. Cyclists can't be identified, and do not have CTP insurance to cover anyone injured. There's no evidence to suggest that a broader mix of cyclists in the **OSEC** will suddenly improve cyclist behaviour.

Consultation

Your report admits that people do not support the cycleway. The Report states that 51% of ALL communications oppose the project, 42% support it, and 7% are undecided. Respondents were not aware that the on-line survey would be the *main feedback channel*. A community member who contacted your Department after the release of the Report commented: *It seems your government is disengaged with our community. The majority don't support the Oxford Street cycleway.*

Business Community

Sadly, some Oxford Street East businesses are already preparing to leave. The Report does not include information on what protections will be put in place to protect business continuity and business viability during and after construction. It reinforces the direction determined at a political level many months ago.

The separated cycleway must remain in Moore Park Road.

For and on behalf of community organizations (Business Partnership Paddington, Paddington Society, Queen Street & West Woollahra Association, Three Saints Square Project) and Darlinghurst, Paddington and Woollahra community members.

cc:

Senatore Andrew Bragg
Kellie Sloane MP, Member for Vacluse
Clover Moore, Lord Mayor of Sydney

Allegra Spender MP, Member for Wentworth
Alex Greenwich MP, Member for Sydney
Richard Shields, Mayor of Woollahra