



Attn: Hon. Troy Buswell
Minister for Transport
13th Floor Dumas House,
2 Havelock Street,
West Perth, WA 6005

Dear Minister,

DAMPIER HIGHWAY PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Located next to each other on the Dampier Highway, Karratha's recently opened new facilities, the Karratha Leisureplex and the Karratha Senior High School (KSHS) have resulted in a significant increase in vehicle and pedestrian traffic into this important public area. The large number of young people accessing these facilities has caused widespread community concern regarding the safety of children crossing the busy Dampier Highway. I am writing to raise these concerns and seek immediate action to bring forward the design and implementation of a permanent long term solution.

Background

The Dampier Highway is a multilane road currently owned and maintained by the Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA) Pilbara Office. There is an agreement in place for the Shire of Roebourne to take ownership of this road upon completion of construction and rectification of defects satisfactory to pass audit requirements. Once handover is complete, the stretch of road outside the KSHS will be redesignated a local road and the Shire will be responsible for its maintenance.

As indicated above, however, pedestrian safety has become a major community concern and Council believes resolution of this issue cannot wait until transfer of ownership occurs.

A report on the pedestrian crossings was prepared by Millar and Associates in 2012, prior to the completion of the KSHS and the Karratha Leisureplex. Utilising forecast road usage data, the report estimated approximately 400 vehicle movements would occur on the Dampier Highway during school access/egress times and pedestrian usage (KSHS students who would walk or cycle to school) would comprise one third of students attending. The report recognised the pedestrian crossings were unsatisfactory and detailed six possible solutions with a final recommendation that:

- the crossings be relocated
- the crossings be connected to the internal paths at both facilities
- further research on this issue be undertaken.

Since that time, the crossings have been relocated and internal paths connected to the crossings at both facilities. However, since the completion of the KSHS, vehicle movements are double the originally estimated figure and the community concern about student safety crossing the road has risen exponentially.

Community Concerns

The Shire and Councillors have received many complaints about the existing pedestrian crossings on Dampier Highway to the two new facilities. The community is making it very clear they are not satisfied with the current short term solution and are worried that serious injury or worse could occur at any time.

Key concerns raised by the community include:

- Traffic speeds are not appropriate to an area designated as a school zone.
- There are no permanent school signs installed to alert drivers that a school is in the area.
- Crossings are not clearly marked nor are they monitored by a School Traffic Controller.
- There is no safe drop off area adjacent to the crossings (though there is a satisfactory drop-off area in the school grounds themselves).
- Parents are dropping off children on the side of the road, sometimes resulting in the child running across the busy highway to get to school.

KSHS Concerns

Greg Kelly, Principal of KSHS has raised concerns regarding the increasing of student numbers attending the school and the planned expansion to welcome younger age groups. When first opened, KSHS saw 220 Year 11 and 12 students move to the new site. Student numbers then increased in July 2013 when 380 Year 8 to 10 students were brought into the new KSHS campus. In 2015, there will be a further 250 Year 7 students transferred to the school roll. This will total approximately 850 students making their way to the school grounds five days a week.

Due to concerns over the pedestrian crossings, the KSHS rolled out a road safety awareness education program for both parents and students. Information sessions were held with all students prior to moving to the new school site with the importance of road safety addressed twice at school assemblies since the move. There has been continued reinforcement to students at the school which has been supported by providing information for parents via school newsletters and local newspapers.

MRWA Response

The MRWA Pilbara Office has responded to the Shire's concerns by undertaking an observation survey and has investigated the option to designate a section of road adjacent to the school as a school zone. This would have had an immediate impact by reducing speeds from 70 km/h to 40 km/h. However, this was not progressed and MRWA recommended instead that the KSHS apply for the employment of a School Guard Controller.

The MRWA Pilbara Office recently decided to undertake a Traffic Video Survey, the results of which are still pending.

Recommended Action

The Shire and Council are most concerned about this situation and consider that the Dampier Highway falls short of the Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA) '*Guidelines for Road Safety Around Schools*' in addressing pedestrian use of this stretch of road. These guidelines clearly outline how to best maintain or improve road safety for children travelling to and from school grounds. It is apparent that the *Guideline* recommendations have not been addressed at this location.

Road safety should be of significant concern to all those in Government, particularly when it comes to our community's children and young people. The Office of Road Safety recently ranked the Pilbara third in Western Australia for deaths and serious injury caused on roads - a statistic that the Shire of Roebourne does not want to contribute further to.

We therefore request that the Minister advises the Shire on an immediate plan for the Dampier Highway pedestrian crossings, bringing forward the investigation, decision and implementation of the most appropriate long term solution.

Should you have any queries regarding the above information, please contact me on (08) 9186 8555.

Yours faithfully



Peter Long
SHIRE PRESIDENT

12 November 2013

cc. Hon. Brendon Grylls