

COMMUNITY PUSHES FOR



SAFER CROSSINGS

• CHANGE: Warracknabeal Townscape Committee members Joy Swagerman, Adrienne Kreegher and (far right) David Kranz, joined by Peter "Dingo" Schulz, are pushing for a change of the unsafe pedestrian crossings on Scott Street. Committee members will be seen along Scott Street this Friday with surveys for Warracknabeal residents to fill out about their experiences with the crossings.

Photo: DAVID WARD

By Sammie Louise
WARRACKNABEAL Townscape Committee are pushing for Yarriambiack Shire council to install wombat crossings at the pedestrian crossings on Scott Street.

The townscape committee, a sub-committee of Warracknabeal Action Group, have had the dangerous crossings on their radar for

approximately four years. "Probably a month ago I was crossing there and I could easily see that the driver didn't see me because she was having a full conversation with the passenger," Committee member Adrienne Kreegher said.

"I was noticing and just watching her, she didn't even see me as she crossed there."

The two pedestrian crossings are located approximately in front of the Historical Society Museum and the Royal Mail Hotel and have 'give way to pedestrian' signs.

A raised pedestrian crossing, or wombat crossing, is a regular zebra crossing that is placed in a flat top road hump. The crossing provides pedestrian crossing priority and gives further prominence to pedestrians, encouraging motorists to slow down to approach the crossing.

A recent study undertaken by Safe System Solutions showed that wombat crossings can lower casualty rates by over 60 percent and are

effective at reducing vehicle speeds.

In hopes of coming to a community agreement, townscape committee members will be walking along Scott Street on Friday, June 17 and June 24, with a short survey that community members can fill out about their experiences with the crossing.

The townscape committee said that it should not come to an injury of a pedestrian before something is done to protect the walking community.

"This is what council is waiting for, they want a serious injury before they recognize the potential threat," Ms Kreegher said.

"We don't want a death or someone to have a brain injury."

The townscape committee will also be giving the surveys to the Lions Club, Rotary and Woodbine in hopes that enough people will sign it and show the council that Warracknabeal needs the crossings changed.

By producing the survey in paper form, the

committee hopes that more people will engage with it as an online survey conducted by the Yarriambiack Shire regarding the speed limit for Scott Street was lightly participated in, resulting in no action.

"The worry is that you have these young kids, even aged up to 25, who's brains aren't fully developed yet, and they cross (the street) wherever and put themselves in danger," Ms Kreegher said.

"We have an older population and a disabled population, it's a very vulnerable population and these crossings pose a risk to them."

Pedestrians are amongst the most vulnerable users of roads, according to the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), who recorded over a third of pedestrian deaths in the last decade being elders, aged 70 and over.

The most common types of crashes involving pedestrian deaths between 2014 and 2018 were caused by a pedestrian crossing a road and being struck by the driver's side.

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Community responds to wombat crossings

By Sammie Louise

THE Warracknabeal Townscape Committee members will be continuing their routes across town with forms for residents to fill out about how safe they feel using the Scott Street pedestrian crossings.

The committee will continue their routes along Scott Street each Friday until July 1, or until they have 300 names on the forms. The committee will then give them to the Yarriambiack Shire Council to be actioned.

Committee member Adrienne Kreegher said that they have had a good community response and have heard some concerning stories from residents regarding the crossings.

"It's actually been surprising on how many people have actually had near misses on one of the pedestrian crossings," she said.

"Someone's kids had gotten loose and run out in front of a car. They were able to grab their kids in time after running off.

"They were at the start of the crossing about to cross on the correct side and the car just didn't see them.

"The car was visibly going faster than what it should be. (I've heard of) people just not observing properly and not slowing down or being able to react in time."

The two pedestrian crossings are located approximately in front of the Historical Society Museum and the Royal Mail Hotel and have 'give way to pedestrian' signs.

A raised pedestrian crossing, or wombat crossing, is a regular zebra crossing that is placed in a flat top road hump. The crossing provides pedestrian crossing priority and gives further prominence to pedestrians, encouraging motorists to slow down to approach the crossing.

Ms Kreegher said that she was also told a story of someone having to stop in front of a person on a mobility scooter as they approached the crossing to protect them from oncoming traffic.

"The person on the scooter couldn't see the cars ... fortunately, the walking pedestrian was in front because the car coming along wasn't going to be able to slow in time," she said.

The townscape committee, a sub-committee of Warracknabeal Action Group, have had the dangerous crossings on their radar for approximately four years.

As a road safety educator, Ms Kreegher said that it was "horrifying to hear these stories and it justifies what we are doing."

"(We're) putting this survey/petition onto Council's agenda to not do a simple fix. We want a good fix, a fix that is going to force drivers to slow down," she said.

"There is a pedestrian education element on this as well but drivers need to slow down, if they can't see pedestrians on an intersection or pedestrian crossing because of trees or parked cars, they just need to slow down to avoid a collision, and that's what the wombat crossing will do.

"There's just too much of a gap between roundabouts and pedestrian crossings which allows drivers to pick up speed ... it all needs to be seriously looked at."

Ms Kreegher said that the safety of the pedestrian crossing is not just about drivers, but also pedestrians that should be educated to use the crossings.

Although it may be faster to cross the road where there is not a crossing, it is far riskier than

crossing at a designated space.

Forms are currently available to be filled out by Warracknabeal residents at Neighbourhood House, Woodbine and from committee members on Scott Street.

Ms Kreegher said that residents are welcome to approach her if they see her around and she will take down their details for the form.

Horsham Rural City Council has begun the process of making their crossings safer across

Horsham City following the endorsement of proposed pedestrian safety work during their recent council meeting on June 27.

The works include the installation of a temporary rubber wombat crossing at McLachlan and Firebrace roundabout for a trial period to determine feasibility.

Two raised crossings will also be installed between Darlot Street and Glead Street and O'Callaghans Parade and Firebrace Street.

THE CHILDREN ARE LOOSE!



• TWO WEEKS OF FREEDOM: School holidays are picking up in Warracknabeal as children of all ages can be seen roaming and participating in school holidays activities. Children of Dustin and Deanne Jonasson, Prep student Angus, 6, and little brother Zeppelin, 3, are pictured beginning a performance of Beauty and the Beast's 'Be Our Guest' on the community piano. One week into the holidays, plenty of activities are still available for restless youth with Yarriambiack Shire funded movie nights coming up of Clifford the Big Red Dog in Rupanyup and Murtoa on Friday and Monday, respectively. Murtoa Library Neighbourhood House is also hosting June Wallis for mini-Mallee-music. Get the kids out and see what else the Yarriambiack has to offer during the holidays. Photo: DAVID WARD



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