Kensington-Kingsford Precinct Traffic Sub–Committee

Lifestyle First

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Notes on Meeting with Council, Traffic Engineers and Community Liaison Officer, 16th April 2004

Present:
Ken Kanagarajan, Council Traffic Engineer,
Stephen Calderon, Council Traffic Engineer,
Luisa Simeonidis, Council's Community Liaison Officer,
Stephen Gatt, Chairman Kensington-Kingsford Precinct,
Terry Lustig, Convenor, Kensington-Kingsford Precinct Traffic Sub-Committee

The meeting started at about 2.45 pm. The discussion was wide-ranging and the issues were not discussed in any particular order. However, in order to provide a coherent record, the points of discussion are grouped here by issue rather than in accordance with the sequence of the discussions.

1. Stephen Gatt outlined the overall concerns and set out the criteria that had been adopted by the Traffic Sub-Committee and the Precinct to determine the merit of any traffic alteration or important measure.

2. Terry Lustig put forward the curve developed by Brindle for assessing the effects of traffic volume on residential amenity. Stephen Calderon expressed doubts on its validity. He later agreed to review a supporting paper provided by Terry Lustig. Mr Calderon suggested that there were many other models.

   Stephen Calderon did not accept the figure of 2000 vehicles per day as being the maximum acceptable volume of traffic. The Traffic Engineers pointed out that while such a limit was 'ideal' it was not achievable in a big expanding city. Ken Kanagarajan considered it was unrealistic to aim for this in a big city like Sydney. Terry Lustig accepted that it could not be done overnight, but it had been done in other parts of Sydney.

3. This brought up the issue of West Kensington. This had fewer than 2000 vehicles per day. Virginia had 1400 vehicles/day and Baker had 1700 vehicles/day.

   Ken Kanagarajan said that the proposal for West Kensington had been determined by Council. As an officer of Council, he was obliged to follow Councillors' decisions imposed on the traffic engineers. Mr Kanagarajan advised that what was being proposed for West Kensington was under review.

4. Ken Kanagarajan reviewed the history of the studies to date and stated that Council was concerned that it should not build a white elephant. He and Stephen Calderon outlined the concerns he had with the Stapelton Report. Terry Lustig felt that some of these concerns were not quite justified. Mr Kanagarajan stated that the works currently being proposed concentrated on reducing traffic speed and not traffic volume. He stated that what was being proposed would have only a small effect on traffic volume. He said that if Terry Lustig wanted to see traffic volumes reduced substantially, he was wasting his time.

   From the point of view of the Precinct representatives however, both speed and volume needed to be reduced. This had already been outlined by Stephen Gatt when presenting the criteria. (See Item 1 above.) Stephen Gatt pointed out that the residents were aware that there were some realities (eg. rising numbers of traffic movements) which could not be ignored.

5. The other major concern by the Precinct was that consultation should entail more than just a letter from Council. Stephen Calderon considered that consultation was not the role of the traffic engineer. This was the job of the Councillors and the Community Liaison Officer. Stephen Gatt and Terry Lustig did not go along with this: in their opinion, the more modes of consultation, the better. The Engineers and the Community Liaison Officer pointed out that there were fixed mechanisms for imparting information eg. letter drops.

   Terry Lustig suggested that with improved consultation, the project's design would improve. In issues like traffic, it was often better to have face-to-face discussions to resolve matters. This was not accepted by Ken Kanagarajan and Stephen Calderon. In Ken Kanagarajan's view, it was imposed upon them to conduct the consultation by letter.

   Ken Kanagarajan stated that he could not understand why people communicated amongst themselves, with the sub-committee or with the Precinct and not with the Traffic Engineers directly. He said that if he received direct communication from residents (written or by telephone), he would consider their views.

   Ken Kanagarajan stated that he and Stephen Calderon were too busy to come to Precinct meetings or other consultations. Council made no provision for this.

   Terry Lustig then tried to give Ken Kanagarajan copies of emails from residents. Ken Kanagarajan refused to accept them on the grounds that they might have been made up.

   Terry Lustig asked Ken Kanagarajan if he wanted to be on the mailing list of the Precinct Traffic Sub-Committee, but he did not.

6. Luisa Simeonides said that all communication should be to Council. On the other hand, the volume of correspondence coming from the Traffic Sub-Committee was too voluminous for Council to deal with.

7. Ken Kanagarajan stated that because the original letters went out late, the period for receiving submissions had been extended. In fact, he would continue to accept submissions up to the time of his preparing the report to Council. He stated that he had read all of Terry's letters and he read all letters that were sent to Council. He said that he had not received many submissions.

8. Ken Kanagarajan and Stephen Calderon said that they consulted with the whole community, not just the Precinct Committee. Luisa said that she was worried how representative the Precinct was, since perhaps 30 people attended.

   Terry Lustig said that it was recognised that it was not the role of the Precinct to be representative. It was the role (under Council's constitution for precincts) for the Precinct to facilitate communication between the community and Council.

9. Terry Lustig said that the Precinct Traffic Sub-Committee had resolved to set up a website and a chat room so people could discuss traffic issues. Ken Kanagarajan said that he wasn't interested in such a chat room. Little of this material would reach Council. What was important was that people should write to Council. Luisa Simeonides stated that a website was outside what Council could be interested in, and Council would not pay attention to what was there.

10. Terry Lustig brought up the strategy of increasing the delay times for the traffic lights around the Study Area. Ken Kanagarajan said this was very difficult to organise with the RTA. Also the current delay times are about average for what is in other areas.

11. Ken Kanagarajan was concerned that the Precinct was opposed to proceeding with what had been approved by Council. Stephen Gatt reiterated that the Precinct Committee stood by its support for these works. However, The Precinct Committee wanted there to be additional similar traffic calming devices in other zones within the Precinct.

    Ken Kanagarajan and Stephen Calderon said that there were many other areas of the City that needed treatment and the next stage of works for the area already treated would have to come as a very low priority after those other areas.

12. Ken Kanagarajan said that Stephen Calderon was an experienced traffic engineer who had worked hard to produce a cost-effective design. Stephen Gatt and Terry Lustig were both professional people with their own fields of expertise, who should accept that Stephen Calderon was well qualified to arrive at the optimal solution in light of budgetary constraints.

    Terry Lustig said that they accepted that Stephen had expertise in traffic engineering. However, from the Precinct's perspective, the wrong criteria were being used. They should be speed and volume of traffic, not just speed.

    Stephen Calderon said that safety was the highest priority and that therefore traffic speed needed to be tackled first. Terry Lustig said that the literature he was aware of stated that reducing traffic volume was even more important than reducing traffic speeds for improving safety. In his opinion, the most cost-effective strategies were those that addressed both criteria.

    Stephen Calderon said that even if he were to agree with Terry, nothing could be done while RTA and Police representatives on the Traffic Committee were opposed to such moves.

13. The proposed partial closure of Boronia at Anzac was brought up. Ken Kanagarajan and Stephen Calderon said that this move was mainly determined by the RTA on the basis that there had been 35 accidents in 5 years at this intersection. The majority of them were from cars turning right from Anzac into Boronia. The line of sight for on-coming traffic was poor, so it was most likely that the RTA would decide to close the median strip.

Stephen Gatt suggested a "box intersection" with closure of the third lane (except for left-hand turns into Boronia) as an alternative. An example is at the intersection of College and Liverpool in the Sydney CBD. Stephen Gatt was advised to contact the RTA directly about that. Stephen Gatt pointed out that closing the median strip would mean that people living in North Kensington coming from the City would have to go home via Todman. Ken Kanagarajan said that an alternative would be to drive past Boronia, do a U-turn and then turn left into Boronia.

Terry Lustig had earlier indicated that the Boronia Street issue was one where better community consultation was needed, as there were opposing views within the community. On the other hand, if RTA was resolved to close the median strip, there would be a small benefit in reducing through traffic to the rest of the Precinct.

Stephen Gatt referred to the fact that more work needs to be done to solve the Boronia Street problems, particularly at the crest of the hill where visibility was poor. Ken Kanagarajan and Stephen Calderon agreed that this needed to be looked into.

14. Terry Lustig brought up the issue of people driving south along Tunstall, turning left (east) into Gardeners, right into Slattery Place, turning around in Slattery and then left into Gardeners to go west. A resident had seen a near miss because of this dangerous manoeuvre. Ken Kanagarajan said that this resident should write to him. Closing the median strip in Gardeners was an option. Terry Lustig said he would ask the resident to write.

15. Terry Lustig pointed out that Council had already spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on traffic in the Study Area. The traffic counts showed that not all the measures had been effective and that some situations had been made worse. It would be advisable to review the effectiveness of what had been done before determining what to do next. Stephen Calderon said that he wasn't looking at the past. He was starting from the situation as it is now.

16. Terry Lustig expressed concern that the proposed line markings along roads such as Cottenham would not be very effective. Anecdotal evidence along Doncaster where the line markings had been installed indicated that this strategy didn't work well. Stephen Calderon said observations by lay people were sometimes not accurate.

17. Terry Lustig relayed comments by residents living in the northern part of Tunstall Ave. The parking bays are very successful, the traffic calming has only improved traffic behaviour a little. There are still difficulties with access to driveways because of impatience by other drivers. There is still drag racing and overtaking on the double line at the crest. Stephen Calderon said that traffic calming devices could not stop hooligans. They could only slow the average speed. Terry Lustig said the rumble bars are coming off. Ken Kanagarajan said they weren't meant to be there: they were put in by mistake.

18. Stephen Gatt said that nothing had been done for the south east of the Precinct, particularly Houston Road. Houston Road had a raw deal. It had been a relatively quiet street (about 2500 vehicles/day in 1983) and now it had the highest traffic volume of the Precinct (about 6500 vehicles/day). Stephen Calderon said that the Traffic Committee had determined that there was no problem there, so no measurements were taken.

19. Ken Kanagarajan mentioned that Council was liaising with the RTA to Improve the intersection of Dacey Avenue and South Dowling Street. This would help traffic bypass the Study Area.

The meeting finished at 4.30 pm.