ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Discuss Pedestrian Safety in Car Parks

Members

Mr J. Eren
Mr S. Leane

Mr B. Tilley
Mr P. Weller

Chair—Mr J. Eren

Witness

Mr C. Raywood, Group Property Operations Manager, South Corporate Property, Woolworths Ltd.
CHAIRMAN’S WELCOME

Mr RAYWOOD—Yes, okay. My name is Chris Raywood and I am the Group Property Operations Manager. I actually look after the southern half of Australia in the property operations context. By that we mean all the Woolworths property activities, be it supermarkets, Big W, which is our discount department store, Dan Murphys liquor and petrol and other businesses.

Julian Concato here works in our department and assists with some of the research activities we might do on special projects and the like.

Our activities generally obviously range from managing our existing property assets and interests, leasehold interests and the like, and obviously development of new stores for Woolworths and our associated businesses.

In terms of the issue and certainly your inquiry into carpark safety and so forth, probably the first thing I would say in a Woolworths context, the number one issue for Woolworths when it comes to agenda items and the like in all facets of the business, is safety, health and safety and the risk and the management of that.

Our CEO, Mike Luscombe, whenever he presents to us at Bella Vista and so forth, which is pretty much once a month, the first thing he talks about is risk and safety, and initiatives and those sorts of things, so it is paramount for Woolworths, both for the customers and the staff in all our stores and offices around the country.

Carpark-wise, obviously it is closely aligned to both an operational context and a property context in terms of the way we might develop the carparks, but also the way that we operate the stores.

The underlying issue that we constantly address both from a design and ongoing operations point of view is pedestrian and customer safety and the movement of cars and trucks.

With trucks, I suppose if there is one area that we need to be more cognisant of is their movement. We have 19 metre pantechs, for the most part, some smaller trucks in certain stores but the big ones need lots of room to move around and obviously to get in and out of loading docks safely. Wherever possible we endeavour to separate loading docks from public carparks or customer carparks, both in terms of the way they come into a site and the way they might exit the site and obviously reverse back into a loading dock.

From a design perspective we are very, very conscious of trying to get that separation. That said, it is not always possible, given site constraints and the like but where we can achieve that we do. We try to make sure there is plenty of width, turning circles and all those sorts of things to minimise any potential conflict. As I said, separation is the main area where we can achieve this. Obviously the training of drivers, the trucks and some of the measures, as in reversing beeps and cameras and the like, measures our transport section needs to introduce, they are always looking at those sorts of things to make sure that we are top of our game when it comes to the actual movement of trucks within sites.

The CHAIR—Just on that, I am very happy to see Big W in Geelong, it was a huge call for Woolworths to set up shop in Geelong. I also know that Westfield actually control that carpark in Geelong.

Mr RAYWOOD—They do, so we are a tenant of Westfield.

The CHAIR—But there are other Safeways, for example, like my local Safeways store, obviously is a very busy one but there are trolley attendants that collect the trolleys from the supermarket and obviously there are some issues there in relation to training of those types of employees.

How do Woolworths go in terms of training those people that are constantly out in the carpark?

Mr RAYWOOD—With the trolley collectors, they are contracted by Woolworths, so basically separate organisations that engage staff to collect those trolleys but we do contract them, so they are trained by the contractors.
The store manager within a supermarket, if you are talking about a supermarket, would obviously induct them onto the site in terms of showing a contractor around the site and all the issues that might be associated with it, where trolleys need to come from and go to and all those sorts of things.

The actual training is done by the contracting firms.

**The CHAIR**—Do you have a recommended speed limit in your carparks?

**Mr RAYWOOD**—Not as a policy. We tend to take advice from traffic engineers, although in some carparks we don’t. If not all, certainly the vast majority of our proposed developments would go before a traffic engineer that we would engage and we also generally have project control groups and so forth where internally we obviously put our own expertise into it and we take the advice of traffic engineers in that instance, whether it is a speed limit or other speed control devices that need to be implemented and then obviously we go through the approval process with Councils and so forth, and if anything there needs to be implemented, then it is, but as a general rule it is a site by site proposition.

That said, in most cases our carparks and our standard requirements for carpark sizes and aisle widths and so forth generally exceed Australian Standards. That is for a couple of reasons, one for the issue of safety, wider aisles, longer car spaces, that sort of thing can lead to less congested carparks, which obviously improves safety and also we prefer to have more carpark numbers than what is typically required or what could otherwise be approved from a retailing point of view as we feel that more carparks provides a better environment by way of convenience, amenity and everything else for the customer, which ultimately leads to a safer environment as well.

The other thing I should probably just point out, that we are focussing a lot more at the moment in our developments and refurbishments where they are undertaken on pedestrian paths through carparks. I suppose if you look at an older style supermarket or stand alone Big W or the like, you will not necessarily find a lot of designated pedestrian paths beyond the front door out the front of the store.

Now we are certainly more focussed on this area and this is not being forced onto us or anything like that by Council. We want to make sure that if you come out of a travelator or a lift or the front door out onto the carpark, there is a designated path to travel as a pedestrian, so whether it is zebra crossings or footpaths or whatever that get you to the other side of the carpark where possible.

**Mr LEANE**—Can I ask how you are going and I will actually use an example, when you are a tenant of a multiplex and the example I was going to use was Canterbury Gardens in Hillside there is a Safeways store there and it has got some specialty stores around. I think that you are the star and there are specialty stores around it.

**Mr RAYWOOD**—Yes.

**Mr LEANE**—Yes. In those sort of situations, if you move into a new area similar to that, can you request those particular walkways, which is your policy if you own the land? How do you get movement from a landlord?

**Mr RAYWOOD**—I might just point out, probably close to 90 percent of our stores are leased by Woolworths across various businesses. So in most cases, we're in the hands of landlords in that sense. If it's a new store we, can influence the design through the negotiations.
Mr LEANE—A lot of times will they want you there? You're an attractive client.

Mr RAYWOOD—we're the largest tenant, yes, and we have a lot of influence. In fact, we would put more time into the design of a store and a site than we would probably the commercial negotiations, to be frank. So we can certainly influence it there.

Once the lease is up and going, which is, for the most part, most of our stores, we've got 3,000 odd leases around Australia and various businesses, we have a couple of options. If there's some lease renewals that are coming up or an option that's got to be exercised, we can say we're happy to exercise the option but we need to improve the carpark.

We quite often and quite regularly refurbish our stores. Our supermarkets, for example, every six to seven years, would probably be a typical pattern at the moment for refurbishment. So we can use that process through the negotiations that might come of that to be able to reconfigure a carpark or introduce some safety measures, if need be.

I might point out, if it is a genuine safety measure and the lessor won't do something, in most leases we have the ability to step in, even if what we're doing something is otherwise illegal. If it was a genuine safety measure we'd probably step in if it was not on a massive scale, and look to fix it, if our customers or our staff were at risk.

To answer your question, a lot of it is by negotiation, but there's probably enough things that are involved in our tenure there.

Mr LEANE—Yes, I would have thought so too.

Mr RAYWOOD—that said we could probably come to, as we do in most cases, a reasonable arrangement with our landlord and there's always one or two occasions whereby for example an elderly gentlemen or lady who doesn't want to get involved in the process. The property might be held in a trust and it's very difficult to get somebody to make a decision.

Mr LEANE—So with your 3,000 stores, are we talking Safeway and Big W?

Mr RAYWOOD—and the liquor, petrol and Dick Smith stores.

Mr LEANE—the whole lot. So with those 3,000 stores, how many landlords would you have in that 90 percent? Are there hundreds?

Mr RAYWOOD—I don't have the exact figure but that would be, yes, certainly in the hundreds. Most of our lessors are private investors. Our largest lessor of supermarkets is Centro Properties but they would be, in percentage terms, quite minuscule compared to the number of private investors.

Mr TILLEY—Those incidents, that small number where you're negotiating carpark design, in your experience with dealing with local government, can you give us your thoughts? Do they have the capability of being able to implement or give proper advice to yourself when it comes to issues of planning carparks in your area?

Mr RAYWOOD—Yes, I think, generally, yes is probably the answer. When an application goes in, whether it's one of our lessors or it's ourselves undertaking it, more often than not the issues, if they come up, tend to be centred around carpark ratios, that's a common one. Vehicular ingress and egress, in and out the carpark and how that might impact on some of the streets, and truck movements.

So I think it's fair to say that certainly the local authorities, through their internal traffic engineers and sometimes external, place a lot of time and focus on making sure that the building is safe from a traffic and...
access point of view.

Obviously other issues which come into play might be design, scale, bulk, and the economics. But fair to say that truck movements, carpark ratios, that sort of thing probably make up, I'm guessing a little bit, in the order of 50 percent of the issues that you'd be confronted with through an application.

Mr Weller—When there are incidents in your carparks, do you have a database of the incidents that have been in your carparks in Victoria?

Mr Raywood—Yes, we have a Risk & Safety Section within Woolworths. So we do endeavour to log those incidents that occur.

Mr Weller—Could we get access to that?

Mr Raywood—I can quote a couple of figures that we've got in Victoria. Between 2004 and 2009, for example, we had some 2,338 reported incidents across all divisions. So right across, 2,338 reported incidents. Of those, approximately 1,746 were reported for property damage, supermarket trolleys were the main offender in that instance. Some 554 were personal injury and approximately 38 were miscellaneous or unclassified.

Mr Weller—Do those personal injuries ones break down into the ones where there was a moving vehicle running into a person?

Mr Raywood—No, most of those, if I can take you to the next step, in fact it's about 2 percent of those. The largest contributor to personal injury incidents is falls and trips, which is in excess of 80 percent of personal injury reports. This is followed by injuries caused by trolleys. So pedestrian conflicts with vehicles, is less than 2 percent of personal injury reports.

Mr Leane—So over what period of time is that?

Mr Raywood—2004 to 2009. So most of the injuries that occurred within carparks, are trips and falls and the like.

Mr Weller—So you're saying over five years, it would be 2 percent, about forty incidents with vehicles and pedestrians?

Mr Raywood—Yes, correct, and we've had no reports of any serious fatalities or anything of that nature. So by and large, it's a pretty rare occurrence, given the number of 800 supermarkets for instance, 150 Big W stores and 3,000 odd businesses in total, if you include petrol and those sorts of things.

Mr Weller—Those ones where the cars and pedestrians collided or ran into each other, were they reported to the police?

Mr Raywood—I couldn't answer that question now but I can only assume that if it warranted a police report, as it would be in a normal traffic environment, they may well be. But I don't have those statistics available.

The Chair—And once an accident occurs in that manner, what is your procedure from then on?

Mr Raywood—The store manager would fill out an incident report and that would be channelled through to our Risk & Safety Section, which would obviously collate it. Obviously, if there are any insurance issues, if there was any follow-up required on a personal front for any individuals, the store manager would focus on that directly.

If there's any on-going trends that develop in the collection of any of those incident reports which go to our
Risk & Safety Section and they would decipher those and make recommendations for appropriate action.

So occasionally, for example, being in the property area we look after the existing assets as in new store developments and so forth. If there is a requirement to fix a carpark or something of that nature, that might come back through our Risk & Safety area, or perhaps even through our maintenance area, then obviously we take that action if need be to either negotiate with the landlord to try and get something improved, or if we're in the control of the asset ourselves, make an assessment and fix it ourselves.

**Mr TILLEY**—Recognising Woolworths' high priority for safety, if government was to accept recommendations that may or may not come no doubt from the Road Safety Committee, and thinking on a business case, if it considered retrospective fit-out or a cost for treatments to separate pedestrians, or something like that, what would your thoughts and attitude be there? Considering the cost with a number of stores throughout the state and what sort of impact that would have on a business case?

**Mr RAYWOOD**—Look, I guess the first thing we'd say is the incidents that have occurred in carparks, the vast majority is trolleys, property damage, that sort of thing. So there is a very, very low percentage of any physical injury that's related to conflict with cars or trucks or the like.

We would first of all say that we don't see any radical change required in that regard. If there were more, I suppose, specific requirements that were implemented in terms of separation from pedestrians and trucks and all that sort of thing, yes, it would have a cost impost.

There is quite often some debate around the position of loading docks and trucks, why don't you put the trucks underground and all those sorts of things. Some times they do go underground, depending on certain economic situations and the physical nature of the land with an elevator up or something of that nature. But by and large, that adds significant cost to a project and I would say that in many cases those sorts of issues would likely lead to projects being non feasible.

Certainly carparks. Let's just say, for example, there were more pedestrian footpaths that had to crisscross carparks and so forth, that's more land that's required, more construction costs. So again, it places more pressure on those costs and projects being feasible.

The environment we operate in at the moment is most projects are very, very difficult to make feasible and make safer. Whether it's Woolworths or any other commercial property developer, we're always challenged with trying to reduce costs but not at the expense of some of the key things which are health and safety and risk factors and getting trucks and those sort of things in and out safely

**Mr TILLEY**—Of course. Thank you.

**The CHAIR**—Any further questions? Thank you very much.

**Witness withdrew.**