26 June 2009

Alexandra Douglas  
Executive Officer  
Parliament of Victoria Road Safety Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE  VIC  3002

Dear Ms Douglas

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE INQUIRY INTO PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN CAR PARKS

Thank you for your letter of 23 April 2009. I have referred your letter to the Manager Traffic and Parking for comment.

‘In regards to the individual points raised by the Committee the following comments are made:

- The type and number of car parks your Council has.

  There are 66 off-street car parks under the care and management of Council. All of these car parks are public, at grade (street level) car parks.

- The type and number of crashes that occur at each of these car parks.

  There is no database which Council is aware of for accidents within car parks. Typically if collisions occur between two vehicles these are reported to the insurance companies of those parties involved.

  If a pedestrian has been hit by a vehicle the incident may be reported to the Victoria Police. However due to privacy laws the information is unlikely to be passed on to Council.

  Concerns which have been raised with Council in regards to traffic management at off-street car parks typically relate to vehicles turning into or out of car parks at access points failing to give way to pedestrians.
Any measures that the Council has introduced to improve safety of pedestrians at car parks.

The issue with treating car parks for pedestrian access is that each car park is typically different and there are many different paths that pedestrians want to take within a car park. That is each pedestrian typically wants to take the shortest route between the car space they have parked in and their desired destination. Depending on the layout of the car park, how many access points there are or how many shops have entrances to the car park, etc, there may be numerous different desire lines by pedestrians.

Specific measures have not been introduced for all car parks. Each car park is treated individually based on any concerns raised by the community or if a car park is scheduled for maintenance/reconstruction the layout would be reviewed to improve safety if the current layout is considered to be an issue. Examples include:

- If a car park had three access points which required vehicles to exit the car park into an adjacent street to re-enter the car park two of the access points may be closed and the car park layout re-arranged to limit the circulation to within the car park. This eliminates the need for vehicles to have to drive in and out of the car park across the footpath reducing the number of conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians at the footpath adjacent to the car park.

- Removal of car spaces to provide a dedicated pedestrian access point to the footpath network from a supermarket entrance which is located within the car park (i.e. the supermarket entrance is not located at the frontage of the site therefore customers need to walk through the car park to get to it. This has improved pedestrian access by eliminating the need for pedestrians to push a trolley through the car park to the vehicle access point to exit the site with a trolley.

- Where two car parks are located on opposite side of a street and the entrances to these car parks were directly opposite vehicles were found to drive straight across the street often failing to give way to pedestrians and some times vehicles on the street. One or more of the access points has been removed or relocated to stagger the access to the car parks to convert them into T-intersections to highlight to motorists that they have to give-way to pedestrians and traffic on the street adjacent to the car park they are entering/exiting.

Another measure that has been introduced in the past is the installation of speed humps in long car park aisles to control vehicle speeds which improves pedestrian safety in car parks. Yet another technique is a change of materials to emphasise pedestrian domain.
Any suggestions the Council would like to make with the aim of improving safety at car parks.

As indicated above traffic management treatments for improving pedestrian safety within or near car parks is assessed on a case by case basis. It is difficult to provide a single ideal solution to all car parks due to the varying nature of each car park, particularly in regards to the numerous paths pedestrians can take through car parks.

There are many different types of car parks with regards to size and duration of stay.

The size of the car park needs to be taken into consideration. A car park within only 20 car spaces is unlikely to have the same issues as a car park with 250 cars.

In regards to duration of stay there are car parks with short term restrictions where the turn over of spaces and therefore pedestrian movements in the car parks are high and therefore possibly higher interaction between cars and pedestrians. However there are also unrestricted parking areas where typically vehicles park once in the morning and leave once in the afternoon therefore the number of pedestrians leaving these car spaces is lower compared to a short term car park.

The main issues that we have come across typically relate to:

- Pedestrian and vehicle conflict at the entrances to off-street car parks. This could be managed by limiting the number of access points to off-street car parks.
- Pedestrian access between the footpath network adjacent to off-street car parks and buildings with a main entrance located within the car park. This could be managed by ensuring that an adequate pedestrian accessway is provided within the car park between the footpath network and the building entrance.

I trust the above is of assistance and it would be appreciated if a copy of the Road Safety Committee’s findings/recommendations into this matter could be forwarded to Council.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Akehurst
Director City Development