



Welcome to the August 2025 e-Bulletin from Living Streets Aotearoa

We want more people walking and enjoying public spaces be they young or old, fast or slow, whether walking, sitting, commuting, shopping, between appointments, or out on the streets for exercise, for leisure or for pleasure.

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Walking Summit 2025 registration open

We're thrilled to announce that [early bird registration is now OPEN](#) for our highly anticipated Walking Summit 2025, a one-day virtual conference taking place on Thursday, 6 November 2025!



And if you are a Living Streets Aotearoa member, you get a discount on tickets. [Sign up to be an LSA member](#) before the Walking Summit to get the member rate.

At the 2025 Walking Summit, walkability for wellbeing takes centre stage. This event will share best practice for working with communities and prioritising pedestrians, describe guidance and policy for making our streets safer for walking, and showcase innovations and explore the health benefits of creating walkable streets.

Our Summit will highlight changemakers for walking, featuring impactful campaigns and the tireless work of community advocates striving for healthier, walkable spaces. Whether you're a planner, engineer, designer, researcher, advocate, or enthusiast, this event promises to inspire and connect. Join us for a day of inspiring keynotes, interactive sessions, and valuable networking opportunities—all from the comfort of your own space.

Keynote Speaker Announcement

We're excited to announce our first keynote speaker for the Walking Summit: Dr Alice Miller. Alice is a medical doctor and PhD student in public health at the University of Otago. She will be presenting about [her research on the "Road Lobby"](#), a group of trade associations across the road transport sector that work to influence transport policy to lobby for road transport and make the case against public transport and active transport. [Read this interview with Alice on LSA's website to learn more about her research.](#)



[Check out the full draft programme on our website.](#)

Why register early?

- Exclusive early bird pricing – Save your spot at the best rate!
- You'll get a first look at the full programme and speaker lineup

[Register Now](#) to lock in the early bird rate! [Or visit our website for more information.](#)

Christchurch Conversations: Steps to a Walkable Ōtautahi

By Molly Magid, Communications and Campaigns Assistant for Living Streets Aotearoa



The following is an excerpt from [the full article on LSA's website.](#)

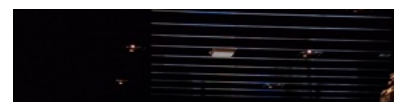
When Dr. Jessica Halliday, director of [Te Pūtahi Centre for Architecture and City-making](#), walked into the recent Christchurch Conversations event “Steps to a more walkable Ōtautahi”, she was audibly surprised at the turnout, saying: “Wow, the room is full!”

It was a very pleasant surprise indeed to see an in-person audience of about 200 plus 276 viewers online tuning in to learn about making Ōtatutahi more walkable. The audience had come to hear more from three panelists: [Carina Duke](#), LSA Executive Council member, [Jeanette Ward](#), Technical Director of Transportation Engineering at Abley, and [Dr Anna Stevenson](#), a public health physician in the National Public Health Service Te Whatu Ora. All speakers shared their perspectives and ideas for how making changes to improve walkability could make for a more accessible, safe, healthy, vibrant, sustainable and liveable Ōtautahi.

Here are three key changes the panelists suggested to make Ōtautahi more walkable:

1. Denser, more connected suburbs. In low to medium density suburbs there is a lack of proximity to amenities like supermarkets and secondary schools. [Only 40% of Christchurch residents live within a 15 minute walking distance of key amenities.](#) Plus, there are often missing path links where footpaths end or where there are minimal pedestrian crossings. This means that while the centre of the city is relatively walkable, getting from suburbs on the outskirts to the central city can be difficult. Changing density restrictions in outer suburbs and improving footpath networks could help address this issue.

2. Accessible, separated footpaths. Footpaths should be wide enough to allow pedestrians to easily pass one another, which includes people



using mobility devices and pushing prams. Accessible footpaths should have curb cuts and smooth pavement without trip hazards. They also shouldn't have obstacles like e-scooters, restaurant signs, parked cars, and overhanging vegetation.



Footpaths should also be separated, not shared paths that put foot traffic and cyclists in the same space. Since these two modes of transport have very different speeds, [making cyclists and pedestrians use the same shared path can lead to safety issues for both groups](#). The best design for everyone is to have both a separated cycleway/lane and a footpath. If footpaths are accessible, separated, and safe, then more people will use them.

Carina Duke shows photo examples of poorly designed and maintained footpaths

3. More signalised and raised pedestrian crossings. Pedestrians also need to be safe and should be given priority when crossing roads. The gold standard for crossings are signalised and raised crossings that prompt drivers to stop and make them slow down on the approach to crossings. Having better and more frequent crossings will help pedestrians to cross busy roads and get around easier.

Christchurch is already making some changes to become more walkable. For example, the panelists brought up the [redesign of a roundabout in Cashmere](#) where raised platforms, speed humps, and zebra crossings were installed to improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians. Making these kinds of changes gives more people the opportunity to walk. As panelist Jeanette Ward said [in an interview about the event](#): "It's not about forcing people to walk, but giving people the choice."

You can watch the full [recording of the event on Te Putahi's Youtube channel](#).

Response to LSA's Berm Planting Position

In April, an enquiry was received from an Auckland member about a section of footpath on a walking route which was so overgrown that she and her daughters avoided it because "it is very creepy" particularly in the evening on the way home from the bus stop. As you can see in the image below, the planting is so dense that the footpath and any people behind the planting cannot easily be seen from the street or houses on the opposite side of the road.



In response to the member's concern, Living Streets Aotearoa Executive prepared a [position statement on berm gardens](#). This position statement acknowledges the benefits of berm gardens, and points out that there can also be negative effects for pedestrians.

Another member recently contacted us to say that our position statement does not take sufficient account of the wider benefits of berm plantings, and the letter is included below to promote further discussion.

Berms are the grassed areas between the formed area of road and property boundaries. Berms often have many functions including being a space for public services including pipes and wires, and providing an overflow area for pedestrians when the width of the footpath is insufficient for easy movement for the number of people walking at high use times. The overflow from undersized footpaths can be seen as muddy areas next to the footpath, or where people choose to walk on the road rather than be slowed down by other walkers.

Perceptions of safety in public environments form a wide spectrum, and as a young woman involved in the design of public places I assumed my perception of safety was adequate to inform my work, only to realise that others including younger people and migrants did not necessarily feel safe where I did. If people do not feel safe they will not go out, or will choose to travel by car for even short journeys that could otherwise be walked.

People who rarely walk or never walk at night may not have a good understanding of how a pedestrian route is perceived by those who are using it. If you are designing street plantings that do not comply with generally accepted guidelines for clear visibility between waist height (0.5m) and head height (2.0m) or that narrow the area surrounding the footpath, think about who this will affect. Does the planting leave room for times of highest use of the footpath or for 2 wheelchairs to pass? Will younger and older people, including those on their own, feel safe in an area that does not have passive surveillance from people in the wider area including drivers? Having a clear understanding of the services underneath the berm and how they may be affected by planting may save you later grief.

A medium height boundary hedge and specimen tree within your boundary can be designed to have a strong positive effect on the amenity of the street, stormwater uptake and biodiversity while retaining passive surveillance and not deterring walkers. Your experience as a pedestrian is valid, and if you think street planting feels unsafe or 'creepy' and is stopping you from getting around by foot, let the adjoining owners know using [Living Streets' vegetation flier](#).

If you get no response to this request, contact your local Council and ask them to seek changes. A section of the planting shown in the image above has recently been given 'protected status' by Auckland Council, despite Auckland Transport saying it doesn't support such planting. The person who planted that berm states that this 'will also set a precedent for the future of berms in Auckland and potentially elsewhere around what is possible'. The benefits of soil development and planting on natural systems are well demonstrated. However, this planting has taken away a walking route for some local residents by making them feel unsafe using it, so it should not be claimed to be a good precedent for well-planned urban environments.

We welcome your comments of support or concern about berm plantings, ideally brief and to the point, and will compile these for a later newsletter. Please send your comments to comms@livingstreets.org.nz.

Letter received from member about Living Streets Aotearoa's berm planting position statement:

"My husband and I are both supporters and members of Living Streets, community gardeners and berm planters. We read with interest the article on the LSA's position on street planting.

I have worked as a parks planner and understand the recommendation to follow CPTD guidelines. We feel the article is heavily weighted toward health and safety/risk management over support for/enhancement of the environment. These should not be mutually exclusive or pitted against each other.

We find it quite incredible that the list of 'Benefits of Berm Planting' does not mention;

- mitigation of the effects of climate change,
 - carbon capture,
 - habitat creation,
 - support for biodiversity, or
 - benefits to mental and physical health of exposure to nature in an urban environment.
- These are all well-researched, highly topical and important issues in A/NZ. They are also among the reasons why we choose to plant and maintain our berm *and* walk and promote safe and healthy pedestrian environments through our membership of LSA.”

Speed limit news

It has been over a month since a raft of speed limit reversals was carried out on 1 July, as delineated in the [2024 Setting of Speed Limits Rule](#). Communities in areas where speed limits were increased continue to be concerned about the road safety consequences of changing safer speeds as well as the cost incurred to put up new speed limit signs. And some residents have started organising to try and reverse these speed reversals.

For example, [two marae along SH1 between Ōhau and Manakau are calling for the return of safer speed limits](#). Since 1 July when the speed limit on this stretch of road increased from 80 to 100 km/h, there have already been two crashes, both resulting in fatalities.

The unpredictability of the road and vehicles travelling at high speeds make it dangerous to walk to the Marae: "We have our kaumātua that no longer walk to the Marae it is just too unsafe for them, we don't allow our tamariki to walk home from the Marae it is not for them. But the biggest fear we have for Ngāti Wehiwehi is that we have a Kōhanga Reo on our Marae."

In June, the iwi, whānua and local residents organised [a protest against the speed limit increase](#) with the aim of getting NZTA and local authorities to prevent the speed limit reversal and to “engage in genuine consultation with mana whenua and local residents.”

Ngāti Tukorehe Tribal Committee chairperson Pikitia Heke said their requests had “fallen on deaf ears” and is now concerned about the consequences of a higher speed limit. “When the speed limit went down to 80 we didn't have any fatalities on our road. There wasn't any significant crashes on our road and then - as soon as it went up - there's been two crashes today that I know of.”

As discussed in a recent [Greater Auckland roundup](#): “Usually it takes a while for the impacts of new policies to become clear. In the case of road crashes, it also takes time to discern the multiple contributing factors. That said, the evidence is clear: as speeds increase, so do the risks and the consequences of any crash.” Then, they go on to list several road-safety incidents that led to fatalities just this month.

In other cases, higher speed limits that were in place before speed limit reversals continue to be an

issue. For example, [Temuka residents are concerned about the stretch of SH1](#) which runs through town and has a speed limit of 70 km/h in some areas and up to 100 km/h in others. Resident Craig Johnson says: "It's a health and safety hazard because of the speed of the vehicle...On one side there's a footpath and on the other that is right alongside a gutter and the trucks going at 70 kph can blow someone over."

And in Whangarei, [a driver hit Kara Shortland when he was walking across a pedestrian crossing on SH1](#). While Kara survived, he had serious injuries including three broken ribs and a concussion and is still recovering physically and mentally. Now he's calling for more safety measures at the crossing, like safety signals and speed humps. Since the crossing is across a State Highway, the NZTA is responsible and "the agency acknowledged that historical projects planned for the crossing had not been delivered because of changes in the Government Policy Statement."

Just in the past year, two pedestrians were hit crossing the highway in this area. In response, [residents gathered to call for action from NZTA](#). "Raumanga community rōpū chairwoman Chanelle Armstrong said that yesterday's protest was a last resort. 'How many people does it take getting hit until something's done about this?'" Hopefully actions like this gathering will show how important improving pedestrian safety is for residents, and NZTA will act sooner rather than later.

Meanwhile, the city of Helsinki, Finland has recently gone an entire year without a single traffic-related death. This amazing milestone was the result of hard work and a combination of several changes, including lowering the speed limits outside of schools to 30 km/h so that now more than half of the city's roads have that safer speed limit.

[This article raises the question of whether New Zealand could achieve the same standard](#): "Helsinki's example offers a quietly powerful reminder: the combination of safer speeds, better design, active policing and behavioural shift can work - not overnight, but steadily. The blueprint exists. The question is whether we're willing to follow it."

Given the goal to have zero road deaths or serious incidents by 2050 as part of the [Road to Zero](#) campaign, New Zealand would do well to take note of what worked in Helsinki. Unfortunately, when it comes to the recent speed limit blanket increases across New Zealand is the opposite of what research and examples like that of Helsinki demonstrate save lives.

Walking through winter



While the longer nights are slowly starting to wane here in Aotearoa, there's still another month of winter and more cold and wet weather to get through. But you shouldn't let the weather or longer evenings stop you from getting out and walking.

As [this article](#) says, cold weather may even provide some benefits like helping you build up stores of healthy brown fat. Plus [walking in the rain](#) is healthier for your lungs because the rain clears away pollutants and allergens. Not to mention the sound and smell of rain can help you to relax and calm your mind. Of course, making sure you have sturdy, waterproof shoes and warm, wind and rainproof layers will help you be prepared for all kinds of winter weather.

Even walking in the dark winter evening can have its own unique "magic", [according to author Annabel Lees](#). For example, walking in the evening when there are fewer people outside could help you connect

with the environment or city in a different way.

And if you're looking for some great nature walks to go on during the winter, here is [a list from Stuff](#) and [another from NZ Herald](#) with winter walk ideas from across the motu.

One last thing— if you're looking for a fun example of people-friendly design, check out [this video about the urban design of Sesame Street](#).

Please keep footpaths clear for pedestrians



ABOUT LIVING STREETS AOTEAROA

Living Streets Aotearoa is the national organization promoting walking-friendly communities. You can find out more about us at www.livingstreets.org.nz.

We send these occasional e-bulletins to keep you informed because we understand you have an interest in walking. You can opt out of this and ALL future emails from us: [Please don't mail me again](#)

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