

Living Streets Aotearoa



Media release for immediate distribution, 30 October 2016

This week, Parliament's Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee will hear submissions on a petition asking for children up to 14, and many adults, to be allowed to cycle on footpaths.

Currently footpaths are intended primarily for pedestrians, who include wheelchair users, the young and old, and all of us. There are some exceptions for mobility device users, small wheel recreational vehicles (eg skateboards) and posties, and children riding small-wheeled bikes.

Footpaths are a sanctuary for the people who walk, children skipping, the elderly, pram pushers, wheelchair users, the physically disabled, the blind and those with hearing loss. It is a safe place to walk, stop, sojourn, run and skip. For some people it is the only way they can get around and participate in society.

Living Streets Aotearoa, New Zealand's pedestrian advocacy group, will be asking the Select Committee to consider the safety of people who currently walk on those footpaths and asking the committee to recommend the law remain unchanged.

And many of the 480 submissions agree the law should remain unchanged. Blind and sight-reduced citizens, Grey Power, Disabled associations, Councils, Road Controlling Authorities, lots of Nelson people (who are experiencing too narrow shared-paths) even bike groups like Spokes in Christchurch, all agree. Some of the submissions include harrowing incidents as a result of conflict with bikes riding on footpaths, even though this is illegal.

Living Streets Aotearoa President, Andy Smith say "It is really important that Parliament doesn't compromise the safety of one group for the perceived benefit of another, especially as solutions exist to make our roads better for all."

"The problem, as many submitters have said, is that they feel the roads are too dangerous because there is too much traffic travelling too fast. So let us address the cause of the problem rather than creating new problems by mixing cyclists and pedestrians. Calming traffic will help us all, and cater for the needs of less confident cyclists - young and old."

"Living Streets agree with the multitude of transport planners who say we need to slow traffic in urban areas to reduce injury rates for all. Together with separated cycleways on busy arterials this will create a more liveable city" he says. "This is what has happened in places like Germany and Denmark where walking and cycling rates are higher than in NZ. Japan is trying to get cyclists off its footpaths because of the increasing incidents it causes, especially with older people. NZ is facing the same aging of our population."

For those rushing past in cars, footpaths may appear like no one uses them but they are filled with a constantly changing mix of people at different times of the day. Starting early with runners, walking commuters, and school children, then shoppers and the elderly, lunchtime

strollers, afternoon walking groups, school children returning home, commuters again, then the after dinner strollers or runners and night time revellers. This piece of our public road - the footpath - is used all day long. Walking remains the number one recreation in New Zealand for all adults.

Ellen Blake, Vice President from Living Streets Aotearoa will appear 10.45am – 11.05am
Thursday 3 November 2016
Select Committee Room 1 Bowen House Parliament Buildings Wellington.

About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking-friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz

Contact

Andy Smith, President Living Streets Aotearoa
021 474 740

Link to petition:

https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/petitions/document/51DBHOH_PET68936_1/petition-of-joanne-clendon-that-the-house-recommend-a