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Walkable city needed

Deb Foskey, Greens MLA, today suggested that the death this weekend of a pedestrian on Commonwealth Avenue shows the urgent need for a walkability audit and follow-up action on Canberra's main thoroughfares.

"The tragic death of a pedestrian trying to cross Commonwealth Avenue indicates that the needs of walkers, both locals and tourists, have been neglected by Canberra's planners, especially in popular tourist areas such as the national triangle," said Dr Foskey today.

"Except during key events such as Floriade, there are no safe crossing facilities on Commonwealth Avenue between London Circuit and the Hyatt Hotel."

"Yet people do need to cross the road, and visitors to our city are often unaware of the speed at which cars travel there, as their drivers are used to a clearway."

"Car drivers' interests are well-catered for in this city, which was largely built during the era when the car was exalted as the main form of transport."

"The National Capital Authority is responsible for the area around the lake which is the prime destination of visitors. It needs to be made safe for walkers, as many tourists have no choice but to travel on Shank's pony, and besides, it's the best way to see a city."

"New suburbs are also an issue. The ACT Government needs to think more about making the new suburbs of Canberra safe and attractive to walk in. Every new suburb should have footpaths so that people can walk to accessible shops and schools. They also need safe pedestrian crossings at regular intervals on major roads."

"This is particularly important as an increasing proportion of our population ages, and needs safe road crossings for their slower pace. It is also important to fight the decreasing fitness and growing obesity problem in a society where it is easier to get into a car to buy the bread than to walk to local shops."

"It looks like we need to remind governments once again that there are many pedestrians on our roads, and that their needs and safety are as important as car drivers - perhaps more so in light of our climate change crisis and coming oil shortages," said Dr Foskey.

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