



EMAILED
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Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
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Dear Sir/Madam

INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF MS RIE VAN RIEL

I refer to your letter dated 11 September 2013, regarding a recommendation made by Coroner KMW Parkinson in relation to the death of Ms Rie van Riel from multiple injuries sustained in a motor vehicle collision as a pedestrian on 3 May 2012, on Beach Road, Sandringham, near the B11 foreshore car park access.

The Coroner's recommendation under the *Coroners Act 2008* in the supplied *Finding into the death without inquest* (Court Reference: 1571/12), requests "That VicRoads considers the installation of a designated pedestrian crossing allowing patrons of Sandybeach Centre to safely cross Beach Road from the B11 foreshore car park, opposite the Centre". This recommendation follows comments from the Coroner noting that many pedestrians use this location to cross Beach Road, upon exiting the B11 foreshore car park in order to access the Sandybeach Centre.

The Bayside City Council, the Kingston City Council and VicRoads have been involved in the development of the Beach Road Corridor Strategy, which had identified and prioritised a range of actions to improve the overall safety for all users of Beach Road with a particular emphasis on motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. The strategy was completed in August 2011, and one of its many key objectives was to identify actions required to improve safety and access across Beach Road.

The Beach Road Corridor Strategy involved an extensive community consultation process, as well as the establishment of a Stakeholder Reference Group to effectively provide input to the strategy. In the context of the community consultation and work undertaken by the Stakeholder Reference Group, I advise that Beach Road, near the B11 foreshore car park, was not identified as a location for the provision of a pedestrian facility across Beach Road.

VicRoads' own investigation into this fatality found that there is no provision for parking on-site at the Sandybeach Centre, with limited provision of on-street parking near the centre. This has resulted in pedestrians crossing Beach Road between the B11 foreshore car park and the Sandybeach Centre, where there are no pedestrian-operated signals. The black-on-yellow (fluorescent) warning signs referred to in the Coroner's comments were installed in June 2012, with the intention of alerting motorists on Beach Road of the possibility of elderly pedestrians crossing at this location.

In addition, the Bayside City Council is responsible for traffic control devices relating to parking (except Clearway signs) under Section 10(2) of the Victorian *Road Safety (Traffic Management) Regulations 2009*. As such, VicRoads recommended on 15 May 2012 that the Council review the parking on the eastern side of Beach Road, near the Sandybeach Centre, with a view to implementing some short-term parking in close proximity to the centre. To this end, the Council advised VicRoads on 4 November 2013, that additional short-term parking near the centre has been allocated along Beach Road and Sims Street.

In light of the Coroner's recommendation, VicRoads has reviewed this location and notes the following:

- There are traffic signals with pedestrian crossing facilities at the intersection of Beach Road and Bay Road, 118 metres northwest of the crash site. There are also pedestrian-operated signals on Beach Road, near Melrose Street, approximately 240 metres northwest of the crash site. If VicRoads were to install additional pedestrian-operated signals on Beach Road, near the B11 foreshore car park, there would be three sets of closely spaced traffic signals on Beach Road. This may cause a 'see through' effect for motorists and could result in the occurrence of rear-end crashes or motorists inadvertently running red lights;
- The need to synchronise these three sets of traffic signals due to their close spacing may create a scenario whereby motorists on Beach Road attempt to 'run the gauntlet' through this location. This may result in motorists speeding through the area or 'running' a red light, due to the absence of pedestrians at the crossings. Conversely, this arrangement may also result in pedestrians becoming impatient and crossing against the 'red man', due to the perception of unnecessary wait times when there are gaps in traffic; and
- Beach Road at Sims Street is listed as a 'Traffic Route' under the SmartRoads Network Operating Plan for the City of Bayside. As such, in the context of SmartRoads, the objective for Beach Road at this location is to promote through traffic along the route.

VicRoads has also considered the installation of a pedestrian refuge at this location and found that this treatment would not be appropriate for the following reasons:

- In order to maintain an adequate number of traffic lanes and sufficient lane widths on Beach Road, widening of the road reserve would be required. This would involve the relocation of above-ground utility services, shifting the alignment of the Bay Trail shared user path, and moving the footprint of the B11 foreshore car park further towards Port Phillip Bay. The car park relocation would not be feasible due to the topography of the foreshore, and the native foreshore vegetation that would need to be removed;
- The required shift in horizontal alignment of Beach Road due to the refuge, in proximity to the traffic signals at the intersection of Beach Road and Bay Road, would not be acceptable, as it would increase the likelihood of vehicular side-swipe or loss of control crashes occurring at this location; and
- The refuge would cause the loss of on-street parking on the east side of Beach Road.

The installation of pedestrian fencing on both sides of Beach Road, to encourage users of the B11 foreshore car park to cross at the signalised pedestrian facilities at Bay Road was also investigated, but was not considered further due to the following:

- Pedestrians would simply cross from the driveway of the foreshore car park to the east side of Beach Road into Sims Street and vice versa;
- Pedestrian fencing on the west side of Beach Road in the vicinity of the foreshore car park may block sight distance for motorists exiting the car park; and
- There is a drainage pit on the east side of Beach Road, approximately eight metres south east of Sims Street. As such, the erection of pedestrian fencing at this location would make access to this pit difficult.

Notwithstanding the above, VicRoads prioritises pedestrian safety project sites according to traffic volumes, pedestrian activity levels, nearby land uses, the historical safety record of the site, the effectiveness of proposed treatments to improve pedestrian safety and the implementation costs.

VicRoads has evaluated the strategic priority of installing either pedestrian-operated signals or a pedestrian refuge at this location, taking into account the above factors. When comparing the two treatment options at this location, a pedestrian refuge has a higher ranking when comparing the benefits derived from each treatment to their cost of implementation. However, there are many other locations in Victoria that are considered to have a higher strategic priority.

VicRoads has also assessed whether the installation of a pedestrian facility at this location could be considered under the Transport Accident Commission funded Safer Roads Infrastructure Program (intersection component). Candidate sites under this program are intersections with a pattern of casualty crashes resulting in serious or 'other' injury. To qualify for this program, eligible sites in Metropolitan Melbourne must have a minimum of two serious casualty crashes (i.e. crashes resulting in fatalities or serious injuries) and an overall minimum of three casualty crashes over the latest five-year period. Based on the aforementioned criteria for the latest five-year period (ending 30 June 2013), this location does not meet the eligibility criteria for further consideration for funding under the Safer Roads Infrastructure Program.

Should you require any further information, Mr Adam Maguire, VicRoads' Regional Director – Metropolitan South East (Tel: 9881 8800), would be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely



STEVE BROWN
ACTING CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

9 / 12 / 2013