

CAR-FREE KINGS

PEDESTRIANIZATION PROPOSAL TO THE JOINT-COMMITTEE OF CITY OF SYDNEY, INNER WEST COUNCIL, AND TRANSPORT FOR NSW

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Authored by LevelX Consulting on behalf of the City of Sydney and Inner West councils

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PICTURE 1: KING ST VIEWED FROM ENMORE RD. SOURCE: J BAR, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Executive Summary

Key information

King Street and Enmore Road in the Newtown/Enmore area of Sydney's inner-west are both part of the city's transport infrastructure that serve to connect locations together, but are also destinations for socializing, entertainment, retail and dining. This dual-identity and lack of clear purpose for these streets poses challenges for the safe, efficient movement of people and goods, and reduces the quality of these destinations as recreational civic spaces.

This report proposes the pedestrianization of King Street and Enmore Road through a 2-stage roll-out plan. The desired end-state of this proposal is a redesigned, human-focused entertainment, retail and dining zone that reduces the risk of accidents and injury, reduces noise and air pollution and promotes economic activity for businesses within the precinct.

1. Phase 1 of this plan eliminates most private vehicle traffic along King Street between Newtown Station and Carillon Avenue, a distance of 1.2 kilometers.
2. Phase 2 of the proposal extends the pedestrianized zone along Enmore Road to Stanmore Road, extending the zone by 700 meters to a total of 2.5 kilometers.

Financial Implications

The proposal has an estimated cost of 3 million AUD for the first phase and an additional 1 million AUD for the second phase. This includes the cost of community engagement, communication, and permanent works. This budget estimate is based on the budget for the George Street pedestrianization project in the Sydney CBD, which is very similar in scale and scope as this proposal. Although there may be a period of reduced foot traffic to businesses during the construction phase, this can be mitigated through the design and rollout of construction works, and once construction work is completed businesses can expect to see an increase in profit through improved foot traffic.¹

Key Recommendations^a

1. Construction to change the paving surface and to relocate the curb to the current inner lane of traffic,
2. Exclusion of vehicle traffic (except buses, emergency vehicles and delivery vehicles) through traffic redirection measures including signage, curbs and painted bus-only lanes at intersections with the pedestrian zone.
 - a. Installation of street trees and street furniture as part of this construction.
 - b. Installation of speed/registration cameras to enforce vehicle exclusion
3. Registration of delivery vehicles, restricting delivery vehicles to only operate during specific windows of time.

^a Note: the full list of recommendations can be found in the *Recommendations* section of this proposal.

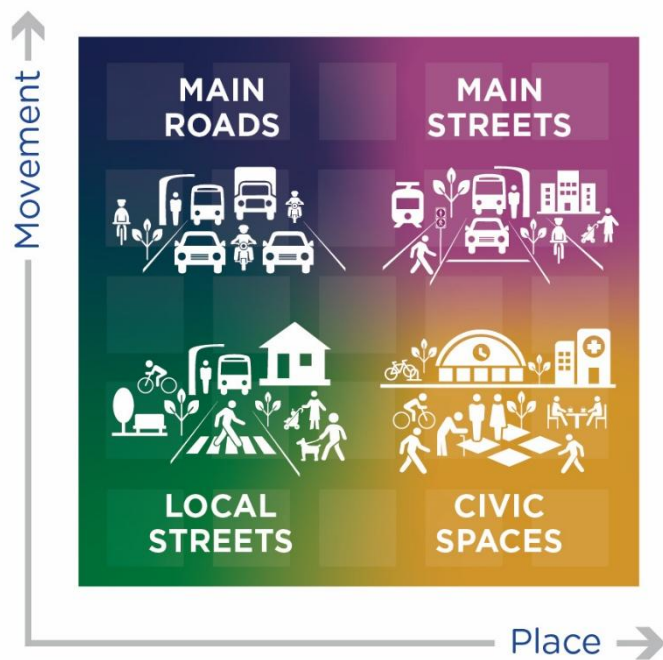
Rationale

As our understanding of the relationship between urban planning and human wellbeing has evolved, it has become apparent that car-centric cities have significant and harmful impacts on their residents. Good-practice urban design principles (such as the NSW Design of Roads and Streets guidelines²) make a clear distinction between roads, which move people and connect places, and streets, which are themselves places.³ King Street and Enmore Road in the Newtown/Enmore area of Sydney are clear examples of places, and both are well-known destinations for entertainment, dining and retail. However, these streets have a design legacy as ‘roads’ – high traffic volumes, dual carriageways, and (as recently as 2023) speed limits in excess of 50kph.⁴ This lack of clarity of purpose has turned King Street and Enmore Road into ‘stroads’ – a type of transport infrastructure that fails in its purpose as either a street or a road.⁵

Stroads are ineffective at moving people and cargo between places due to their street-like elements – the presence of shops and roadside parking, multiple cross-streets which slow down traffic with intersections and vehicles entering and exiting the road, which all create congestion and danger of collision. Stroads are also ineffective and unpleasant as places due to their road-like

elements – the high vehicle traffic and frequent congestion creates air and noise pollution for residents and pedestrians, and high-velocity movement of vehicles in a space intended as a destination for people creates a dangerous risk of harm.⁶

Redesigning King Street and Enmore Road in a way that the street design reflects their purpose as a street and not a road has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors, while improving economic and safety outcomes.

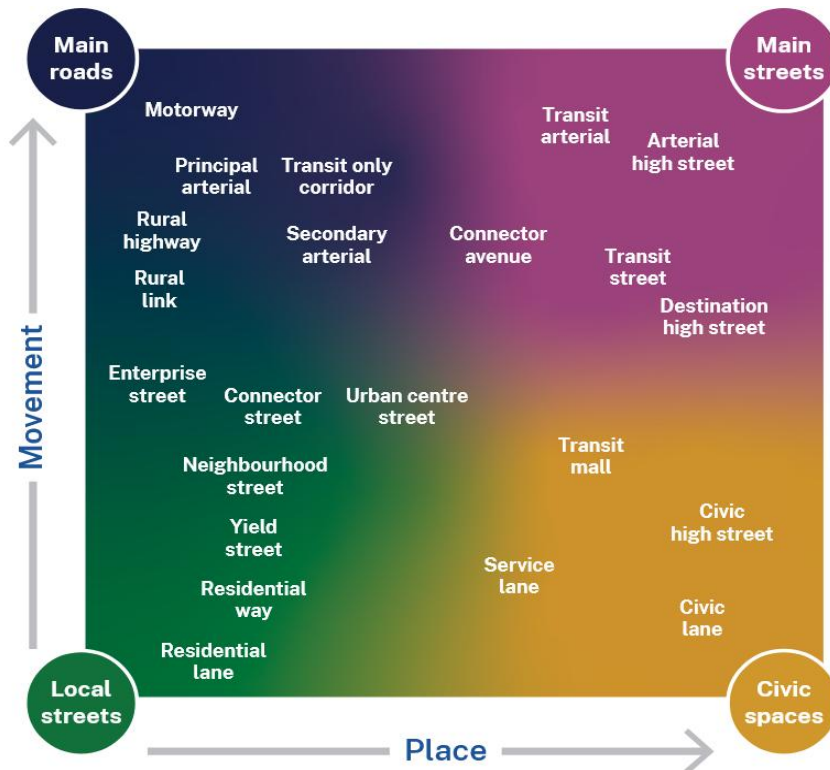


PICTURE 2: NSW DORAS GUIDELINE MATRIX

Context

Current and Desired Design Typologies

Utilizing the NSW Design of Roads and Streets (DORAS) guidelines as a framework, it is possible to identify the current design typology of the targeted streets, and to identify the desired end-state design typology.



PICTURE 3: DORAS MATRIX WITH TYPOLOGIES MAPPED. SOURCE: TRANSPORT NSW

Fortunately, the DORAS guide specifically identifies King Street as an example of one of its typologies – 8.3.5 “Arterial High Streets”.² This is identified in the matrix as an area of both high movement and high place, which (as explained above) poses challenges for businesses, quality of life, safety and transit efficiency. This design typology does not align with the purpose and character of King Street

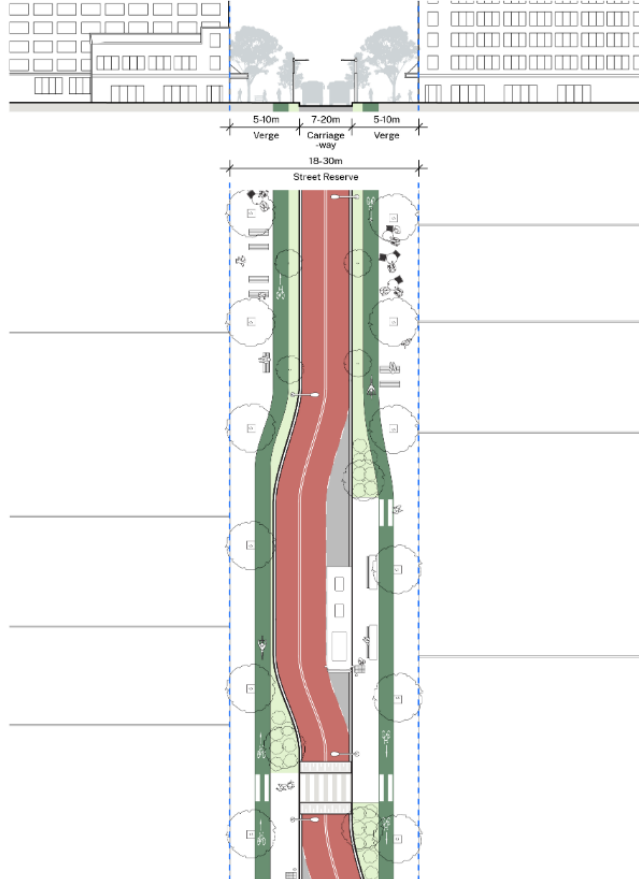
and Enmore road.

The desired end-state of this redesign proposal is similar to a previous example also found within Sydney, the pedestrianization of George Street within the Sydney CBD. This case study acts as a successful proof-of-concept for this proposal, and is also specifically cited as an example within the DORAS guidelines, under the typology 8.5.5. ‘Transit Malls’.² This design typology more closely aligns with the nature of King Street as a ‘place’, while still allowing for the movement of buses, limited delivery vehicles and emergency vehicles. This is distinct from the typology of the ‘Civic High Streets’, which by design exclude all vehicle traffic except emergency vehicles.

It is from this ‘Transit Malls’ design typology (and the example of George Street) that the specifics of this proposal take shape. From the DORAS guidelines:

“Transit malls are significant civic places in city centers for walking, business and city life while also moving substantial numbers of people using buses or trams.” (DORAS p.226)

8.5.5.1 Transit mall section and plan



PICTURE 4: TRANSIT MALL SECTION PLAN. SOURCE: DORAS GUIDELINES

Design of Roads and Streets

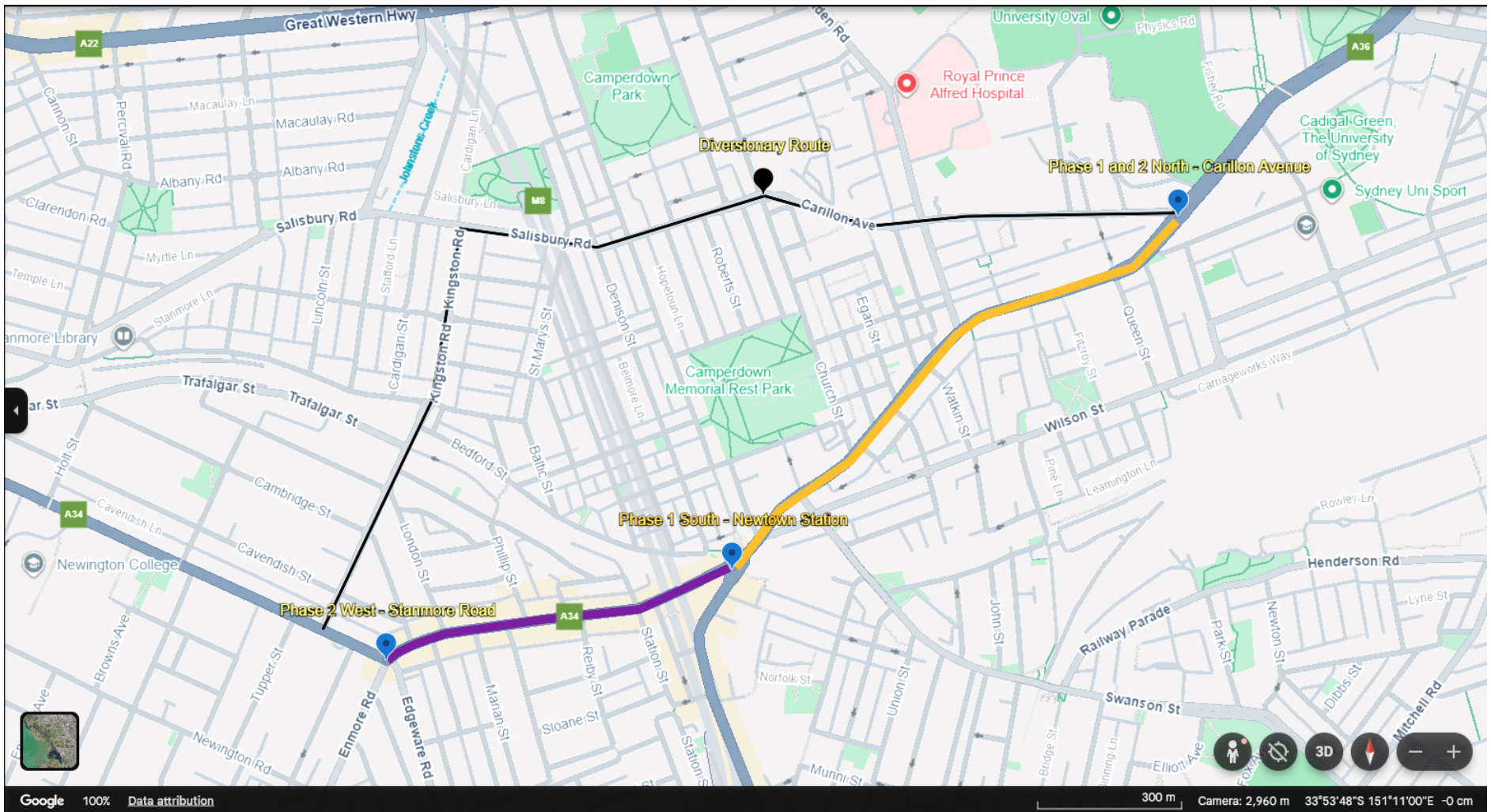
These streets within the proposed zone also feature almost exclusively shopfronts and venues. Due to their legacy as arterial high streets, most of these businesses have delivery access through the rear or side of the building via lanes or cross-streets. However, to mitigate the impact on businesses, the design guide for 'Transit Malls' allows for the use of registered delivery vehicles within a specific time frame. While the details of this time frame are flexible, a preliminary suggestion would permit delivery vehicles between 0400-0800.

Eliminating private vehicles on these roads significantly reduces congestion, which is an impediment during peak hours for buses and emergency vehicles. This is especially important on King Street and Enmore road, which are critical arteries for bus traffic. Retaining access for bus traffic is therefore critically important to encourage use of alternative modes of transport, allowing for commutes that pass through these

streets onto further destinations, and support the night-time economy by providing alternative means of transportation. Reducing congestion is also a boon to emergency vehicles, which is key for this proposal as King Street intersects Missenden Road, the principal access route to RPA hospital.

Project Phases

This proposal is staged across two phases, in order to minimize disruption as well as to operate the first phase as an informal pilot program for the second, optional extension. The second phase of this project, would build on the efficiencies and experiences of the first program if it proves successful. Below is a map of the extent and location of the proposed project phases.



Picture 5: Proposed pedestrian zones in phases. Source: Google Earth

Phase 1: Newtown Station to Carillon Avenue

The first phase of the project extends along King Street from Newtown Station to its intersection with Carillon Avenue, for a total length of 1.2 kilometers. It includes several key intersections and places of interest, including:

- Newtown train station, a key mode of transport
- Missenden Road, which is the principal connection to RPA Hospital
- Critical service providers such as a fire station, police station and local courthouse
- Community spaces such as a Town Hall and a Pride Centre
- Portions of student housing buildings and colleges for the University of Sydney.

The northern terminus for the pedestrian zone was chosen to allow road traffic travelling west along Stanmore Road to divert north onto Liberty Street, continuing along Salisbury Road/Carillon Avenue and then onto the CBD. If the redirection of traffic along this diversion becomes an issue of itself, a secondary project could examine redesigning the street characteristics of the diversion route, however it is the goal of this project that enough private vehicle users would switch transit modes so as to not cause unnecessary congestion elsewhere (see Braess's Paradox.⁷)

Phase 2: Enmore Road Extension

If the first phase of the project is successfully received by the community, the pedestrianized zone can be extended an additional 700 meters along Enmore Road to fully encompass the extent of the retail, dining and entertainment precinct. The economic and entertainment value of Enmore Road has already been recognized by the local government through the creation of Special Entertainment Precinct (SEP) in the same zone as the proposed pedestrianization.⁸ This proposal would align the design, character and pedestrian experience of Enmore Road with the goals outlined by the government in gazetting the SEP.

This phase would have a substantially lower cost than the first phase due to its reduced length, but also due to the compounding efficiencies of the communication and engagement work undertaken during the first phase. Importantly, this extension would not eliminate any critical intersections or require further diversions, as eastbound traffic would already divert at Liberty Street due to the first phase of construction.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Purpose
1.1- Construction to change the paving surface and to relocate the curb to the current inner lane of traffic	To reclaim space for pedestrians, outdoor dining, street furniture and street trees To narrow the flow of traffic to create a encourage a lower driving speed ⁹
1.2- Traffic redirection measures including signage, curbs and painted bus only lanes at intersections with the pedestrian zone.	To limit vehicular access to only specified vehicle types
2.1- Registration of delivery vehicles, restricting of delivery vehicles to only operate during specific windows of time	To limit vehicular access to only specified vehicle types
2.2- Installation of speed/registration cameras	To limit vehicular access to only specified vehicle types To enforce speed limits for vehicles within the zone
3.1- Planting of street trees in reclaimed space	To provide shade and aesthetic quality to the street To create soft barriers to protect pedestrians from vehicle traffic
3.2- Installation of street furniture	To create places for rest and enjoyment for the public To create soft barriers to protect pedestrians from vehicle traffic
4.1- Removing traffic lights and replacing with protected pedestrian crossings	To create natural breaks where people can cross safely

References

- ¹ <https://sydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/The-business-case-for-walking-and-cycling.pdf>
- ² <https://www.movementandplace.nsw.gov.au/design-principles/design-roads-and-streets>
- ³ <https://www.movementandplace.nsw.gov.au/place-and-network/understanding-movement>
- ⁴ <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/newtown-speed-zone>
- ⁵ <https://theconversation.com/not-quite-a-street-not-quite-a-road-why-stroads-are-disasters-of-urban-planning-and-how-to-fix-them-232485>
- ⁶ <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/3/1/whats-a-stroad-and-why-does-it-matter>
- ⁷ <https://resources.mpi-inf.mpg.de/departments/d1/teaching/ws12/ct/Braess-paradox.pdf>
- ⁸ https://hdp-au-prod-app-innerwest-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/4516/8316/1482/DCP_Section_2.26_Special_Entertainment_Precincts_-_Enmore_Road_SEP.pdf
- ⁹ <https://www.movementandplace.nsw.gov.au/standards/design-solutions/narrowed-lanes>