

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

June 2021

e-Petition – Footpath construction Ballarat Street, Fisher

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

As a local member for Murrumbidgee, I am pleased to support this petition from residents of Fisher and elsewhere in Weston Creek.

This is a petition calling on the ACT Government to construct a footpath along Ballarat Street in the suburb of Fisher, Weston Creek in the electorate of Murrumbidgee.

The petition has 156 signatures, with signatories noting that ‘Ballarat Street in Fisher does not have adequate footpaths, given the amount of vehicle traffic and the frequent areas of poor visibility for drivers’.

The petitioners request the Assembly to ‘Direct the relevant ACT Government Directorate to construct a footpath along the length of Ballarat Street, so that residents of Fisher can safely walk the length of the street without walking on the road’.

I note many streets in the ACT do not have footpaths, particularly in older suburbs and neighbourhoods. For some quiet streets, where there are low levels of vehicle and foot traffic, this may not be of concern.

In some instances, this can even have advantageous outcomes through the notion of ‘shared streets’ or ‘safe, active streets’. These are concepts that are being promoted and encouraged, to create street environments in suburban areas which favour active modes of travel, such as walking; combined with traffic calming measures for motorised vehicles. Benefits include a sense of community and social activity, passive surveillance, and the myriad health and environmental benefits of active travel.

However, other streets, such as Ballarat Street in Fisher, receive relatively high volumes of vehicular and foot traffic, and require separation between the different modes of travel to ensure safety for all.

Ballarat Street is a connector and transit street which runs through Fisher, and has many streets originating off it. The street is on a hill and has many bends or curves.

To walk along Ballarat Street requires a person to walk on the sloped verge, of varying quality, or on the road itself. Either options poses safety concerns, including trip hazards and car accidents.

This is exacerbated for those in our community who are elderly, pregnant, disabled, or have any form of mobility impairment.

In line with the ACT Government's commitment to active forms of travel, including walking and cycling, I support this petition of the residents of Fisher, to request a footpath be constructed along Ballarat Street to provide safety for all users.

Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure contributes to several national and ACT government policy directions, including the Healthy Weight Initiative, the ACT Climate Change Strategy, the ACT Planning Strategy and the Active Travel Framework.

I understand that Roads ACT manages over 3,000 kilometres of community paths across the ACT, with capital funding allocated to path asset upgrades on a site-by-site basis in line with the Active Travel strategic path network.

I commend the ACT Government on its program to progressively upgrade and enhance the community path network on a prioritised basis, to fulfil the government policies to encourage active travel, reduce carbon emissions and improve health in the community.

I hope that this petition will be considered and prioritised accordingly, to meet the needs of Weston Creek residents and contribute to ACT Government policy and ambition.

Thank you.