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Northern Beaches Council  
PO Box 82  
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[council@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Northern Beaches Council,

**Re: Northern Beaches Safer Neighbourhoods Program**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the first three Safer Neighbourhoods projects.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-eight years, and has more than 35 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups. Our mission is to *'create a better environment for all bicycle riders'*, and we support improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. We advocate for new cycling routes to provide connections to jobs, schools and services for daily transport and recreation trips. Bike riding provides a healthy, congestion-reducing, low-carbon form of travel that is quiet, efficient and attractive for all ages with the correct infrastructure design.

**Bicycle NSW strongly supports Northern Beaches Council's efforts to introduce lower speed limits in neighbourhoods across the LGA to make local streets safer, quieter and more inviting for people walking and cycling.**

The evidence is very clear that lower vehicle speeds result in fewer injuries, less severe injuries and fewer people killed. As an example, new data from Wales shows that the first year of default 20mph speed limits has been [hugely impactful](#). Reducing speeds with signage, some modest physical interventions and enforcement requires a relatively limited investment. There is no cheaper way to save lives on neighbourhood streets and encourage active transport.

**However, Bicycle NSW is very concerned that the current approach to engaging with the community about the program will not achieve the best possible outcomes from the investment – or the consensus needed to progress the projects.**

Bicycle NSW will not comment on the details of the proposals for the first three neighbourhoods in the program – North Balgowlah, Avalon Beach to Palm Beach, and Narrabeen to Mona Vale.

Instead, this submission outlines our **concerns** about engagement and design process, and makes several **recommendations** that Northern Beaches Council will hopefully consider going forward AMEND.

Bicycle NSW works closely with [Better Streets Northern Beaches](#), a local chapter of the national coalition of [Better Streets](#), which champions streets that are safer, healthier, greener, more prosperous and inclusive for all that use them. Bicycle NSW aligns with Better Streets Northern Beaches feedback on the Safer Neighbourhoods proposals.

## Concerns about the first three projects

- The proposals have been presented in an unclear way with too much jargon. The public does not understand what is meant by a continuous footpath, a raised blister or a modal filter. The pros and cons of each treatment have not been explained. The few images provided are very small and don't build any understanding what is proposed (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Extract from the plans for [Avalon Beach to Palm Beach](#) shows the tiny images used to explain what is meant by 'pavement flaps' and 'flat top speed humps'. (Source: Northern Beaches Council)

- The plans look too detailed for an early stage of consultation. Residents will assume the designs are a 'fait compli' and will feel frustrated that changes to the streets have been imposed on them.
- Local residents have not been asked where they currently find walking and cycling difficult. Perhaps some of the interventions respond to complaints and concerns raised by individuals in the past. However, as shown by these comments on the North Balgowlah Facebook group (Figure 2), the proposals do not appear to reflect the expertise of the broader community on speeding, safety and access issues.

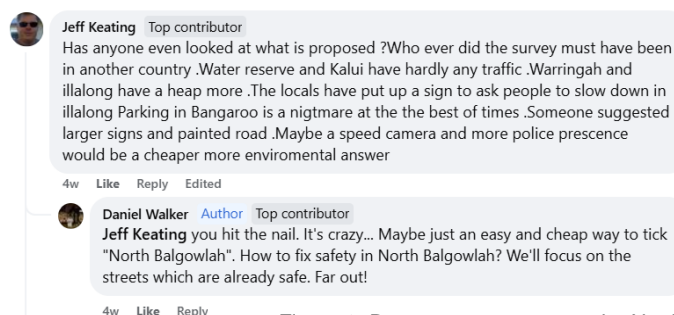


Figure 2: Recent commentary on the North Balgowlah community Facebook group

- It appears that traffic engineers have designed the interventions with the aim of reducing speed only. Huge opportunities to leverage better outcomes for walking, cycling and landscaping from the investment in traffic calming have been missed. Have walking desired lines and gaps in the walking network been considered? Will it be easier to access bus stops? Do the interventions contribute to the developing bike network outlined in the Northern Beaches Bike Plan?

Figure 3 (overleaf) highlights glaring examples of how the future bicycle network has been ignored in the North Balgowlah plans.

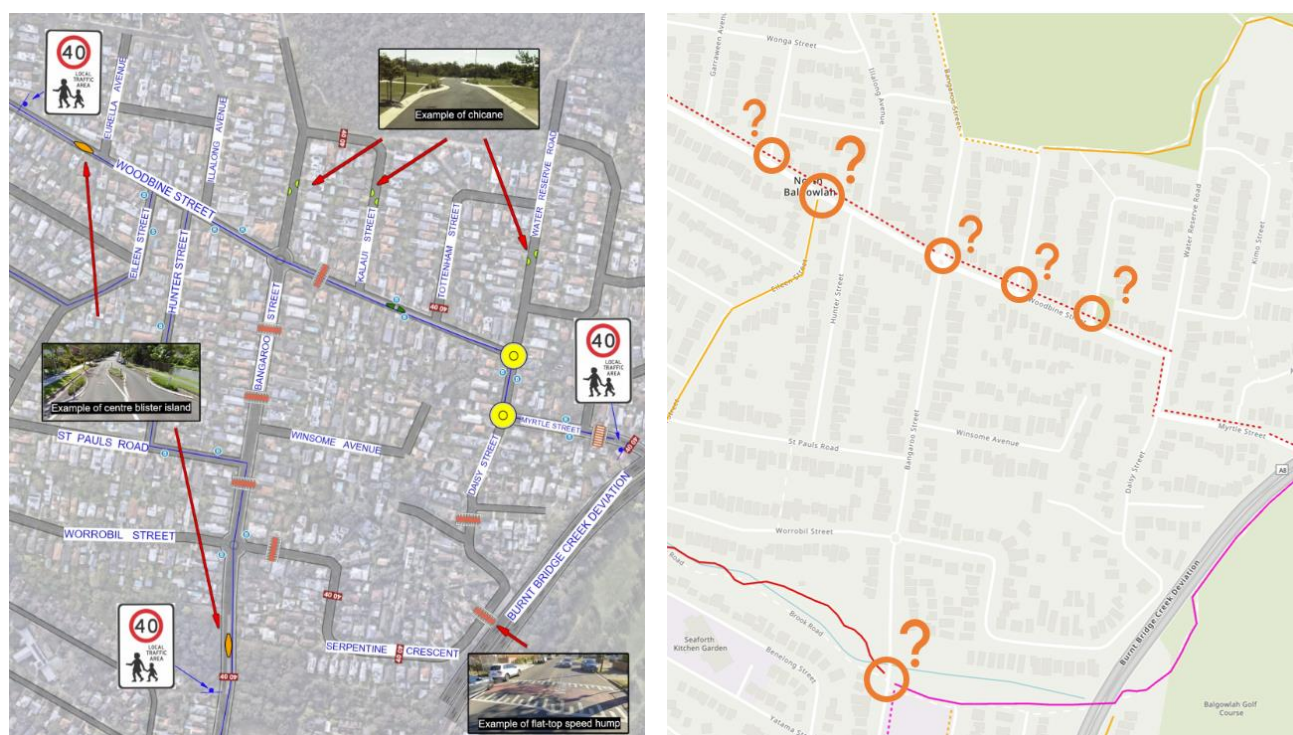


Figure 3: The plans for [North Balgowlah](#) compared with the [Safe Cycling Network](#) planned for the same area (Source: Northern Beaches Council)

The important regional route along the Burnt Creek is not shown on the Safer Neighbourhoods diagram. There is currently no safe crossing of Brook Street. Has the proposed blister island been located to ensure that crossing here is safer? Would a raised shared user crossing be preferred?

The bike plan indicates that a shared path will be built along the north side of Woodbine Street in the future. There may not be funding for this now, but surely the Safer Neighbourhood interventions should consider continuous footpaths across the side streets rather than spending money on chicanes?

And why wouldn't this program take the opportunity to reinforce the mixed traffic local bike route on Eileen Street, introducing 'Quietway' treatments such as a modal filter, road markings and a 30km/h speed limit, as well as a shared user crossing of Woodbine in a convenient location so bike riders can join the future Woodbine St shared path.

## Recommendations for the Safer Neighbourhoods program

- Start with an overarching comms piece to the community. Create a dedicated webpage. Explain why Council is planning to roll out 'safer neighbourhoods'. Clearly set out the evidence for lower speed limits. Move away from 'slower roads for cars' and towards 'safer streets for people' when choosing language and graphics. Brand the program - like [Inner West@40](#). Clarify what the budgets will be, which suburbs will be involved each year, the timeline for the roll out, the goals and limitations of the proposed changes.
- Develop a 'toolkit' of interventions that could be used as part of the program. This would include raised crossings, kerb extensions, continuous footpaths, modal filters, linemarkings and signs, trees in the parking lane, landscaped chicanes, speed bumps, medians, separated cycleways, shared paths and Quietways. Use photographs and dimensioned drawings to explain what each item looks like. Clearly set out the pros and cons for each intervention, what works best in different context and an approximate cost of each item.
- Run drop-in sessions at the schools, shops, ovals and community centres. Use maps to discuss issues with speeding, accessibility and safety. Ask people to add dots to the map to show where they find the local streets dangerous and destinations inaccessible. Figure 4 shows this process in action at an event in Fairlight in 2023. Online Social Pinpoint or CrowdSpot maps can also be used.

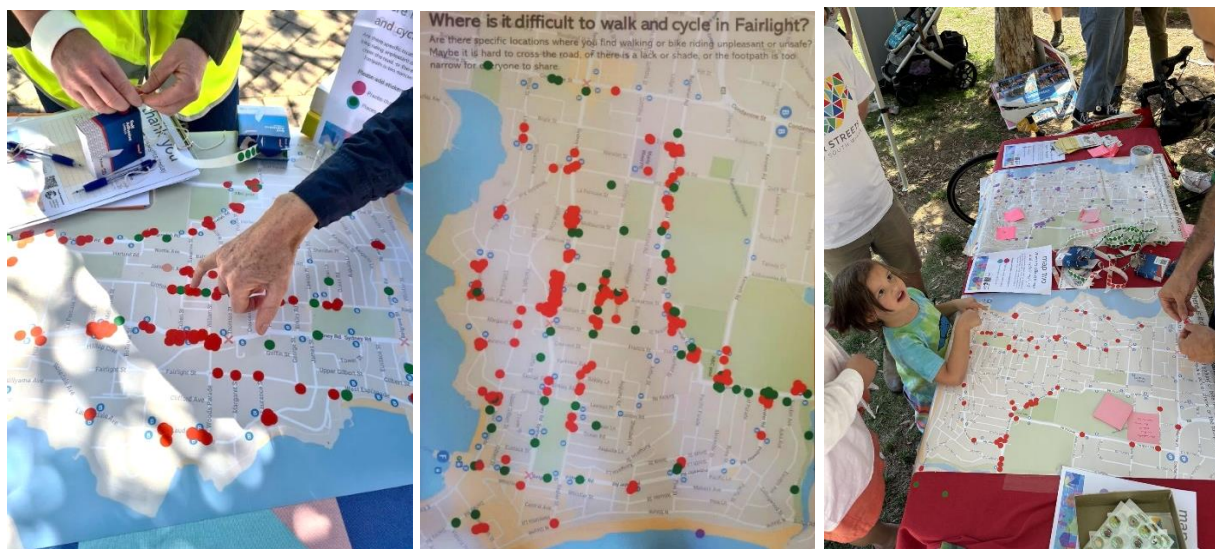


Figure 4: The community created this map at the Fairlight Spring Fling event, organised by Better Streets Northern Beaches in September 2023. Red dots indicate locations where safety is an issue. This spatial data provides an incredible evidence base for designing interventions (Source: Better Streets Northern Beaches)

- Form a key group of champions from different parts of the community. They will reflect on the insights gathered from their neighbours and work with council staff to decide what interventions could go where, and what can be achieved to best meet community needs within the budget. If the participants know that the money will only stretch to (for example) 2 crossings, 3 speed humps, 1 km of new footpath, 3 trees and 6 kerb extensions, the proposals can be developed within the constraints.
- Invite councillors and resident champions to walk and/or cycle around a filtered neighbourhood. This could be in Manly around Alexander St or perhaps expand everyone's horizons with a trip to Newtown or Alexandra. It is important that they understand the power of modal filters!
- Consider using temporary interventions to trial new crossings, kerb extensions, and refuges. Tactical materials can be installed quickly and more can be achieved within the available budget. This allows changes to the streets to be tried and tested by the community. Data and evidence can be collected before investing in permanent interventions.



Figure 5: Bolt-down concrete pads, posts and paint create simple kerb extensions to slow cars turning from Marine Parade, St Kilda (left, image: Bicycle NSW) Painted kerb extensions make streets safer by shortening the crossing distance for pedestrians and improving visibility for turning cars (centre, image: [Brian David Platt](#)). Thick coir rope can be used to form chicanes and blister islands (right, image: [Bike Walk Montana](#))

- When the plans then go out for consultation, they should sail through because they are based on real need and evidence, they are co-designed with the community, and they deliver tangible place improvements.
- And finally - start the Safer Neighbourhoods program with Fairlight, Freshwater and Frenchs Forest. So much work has already been done at Fairlight by community advocates. Cycleway projects are coming to Freshwater and Frenchs Forest that really need to be integrated with wider neighbourhood speed reduction projects.

## 30km/h is the most appropriate speed limit for local streets

As we discussed in many previous submissions to Northern Beaches Council, Bicycle NSW aligns with the Better Streets coalition campaign and advocates for speed limits of 30km/h on streets with a high concentration of pedestrian activity.

The Vision Zero goal of lowering speed limits to 30 km/h on residential streets and around schools and town centres is considered international best practice and is gaining momentum in Australia and New Zealand.

Northern Beaches Council has shown great leadership with the 30km/h trial in the centre of Manly. The lower vehicle speeds have significantly improved safety for everyone in the community, particularly people walking and cycling, children going to school and other vulnerable road users outside a car.

The [Cycleway Design Toolbox](#) sets 30km/h as the posted speed limit for a 'Quietway' mixed traffic cycleway – a low-cost treatment that can make '[every street a cycle street](#)'. Approaches to developing quietways in different jurisdictions are discussed in our article [Making Local Streets Safe for Bikes](#). Bicycle NSW would like to see a network of 30km/h routes linking town centres, schools and other daily destinations.

There is sufficient evidence that low speed environments improve safety. The [British Medical Journal](#) found that the use of 20mph (32km/h) over a twenty-year period from 1986–2006 significantly improved road safety for users of all transport modes and ages. The rate of children under 15 years old being killed and seriously injured dropped by 50% in areas where the speed limit is reduced to 20mph. The UN resolution of August 2020 urged all countries to adopt 30 km/h limits in areas where people are walking and playing. 30km/h limits are now very common [across the world](#) and cover most of Spain, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Japan and Germany.

The [NSW speed limit guidelines](#) have recently received a much-needed update. We now have official recommendations for 30km/h speed zones, and it is easier for councils to implement change. Another huge benefit of lower speed limits is that vehicle lanes can be narrowed, allowing more road space to be reallocated to wider footpaths and landscaping, improving amenity for residents and visitors.

## Conclusion

Bicycle NSW urges Northern Beaches Council to be ambitious with advocacy and actions to lower speeds on the LGA's road network. We look forward to supporting your work to make walking and cycling as safe and convenient as possible in every neighborhood on the Northern Beaches.

Please reach out with any questions or help needed.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Bickford

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Peter McLean

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