



Requesting a new zebra crossing advocacy guide



**BETTER
STREETS**

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Better Streets

Better Streets is a coalition of community groups, businesses and individuals, advocating for better streets in Australia. Find more information about us at betterstreets.org.au.

Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this guide is to help you advocate to your council to install a 'pedestrian (zebra) crossing' (referred to in this guide as zebra crossings). Some of the documents referenced in this guide are specific to NSW, however, the principles for dealing with councils are universally applicable.



Introduction

Zebra crossings are essential safety treatments. They allow people to walk around their neighbourhoods safely and easily; in particular children, their parents, the elderly and people with some disabilities. Without zebra crossings many people cannot safely cross streets to access important services and facilities that support daily life like bus stops, shops and parks. Zebra crossings also calm traffic and make streets quieter and more enjoyable for everyone.

Zebra crossings and signalised crossings

There are 2 main types of crossings that give people who are walking priority to cross:

- zebra crossings with white stripes - drivers must always give way to people crossing including people approaching the crossing. Zebra crossings can be raised to footpath level to slow traffic. These are often called wombat crossings and are the preferred type of zebra crossing but are more expensive
- signalised crossings with traffic lights - people have priority to cross when the signals (the lights) indicate it is their turn.

This guide is about zebra crossings. A separate guide will address signalised crossings which require state government approval and are more difficult to secure.

Descriptions of pelican crossings and children's crossings are on page 11.

Council processes

Councils have processes that they have to go through to investigate, design, consider and approve the installation of a new zebra crossing. Usually the Council's traffic engineers investigate the proposed site and determine the design of the zebra crossing, including whether a raised crossing or kerb extensions are required. They then make a recommendation to the councillors for approval.

You can contribute in a range of ways to the Council process:

- gather key information / materials that are likely to make the request more successful
- meet with your local councillor(s) at the proposed zebra crossing location
- gather evidence of support from as many people as you can, for example from parents of children of a local daycare centre, people walking dogs or families of residents of a local aged care facility
- attend the relevant Council Traffic Committee meeting or Council Committee meeting to speak to decision-makers about your request.

Guide steps and actions

This guide covers the first two important points of the Council process and outlines other ways you can contribute. This guide includes eight steps each with one or two actions, a template letter to support you in your advocacy efforts and a table of common issues used to block requests with possible responses.

Read through the steps and take the actions. If you have questions or need support get in touch with Better Streets.

Step 1 - confirm the street or road is controlled by council

On local streets the Council decides when a zebra crossing can be installed. On state roads the decisions about zebra crossings are made by Transport for NSW (TfNSW).

Action:

Check if the road is a local or state road here: <https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/classification/map/>

Delegations

Recently the NSW Government created a rule called a “delegation” that allows councils to bypass their “Traffic Committee” to decide whether or not to install a zebra crossing. The rules are here: <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/operations/roads-and-waterways/committees-communities-and-groups/committees-and-groups-0>. If the location doesn't meet these rules then the decision must first be approved by the Council's Traffic Committee which has representatives from state government agencies like TfNSW and the NSW Police, some of whom can veto an application.

Step 2 - confirm two essential requirements are met

Two essential requirements must be met to install a new zebra crossing:

- the speed limit must be 50 km/h or less
- there cannot be more than one lane of moving traffic on each side of the road approaching the crossing; bike lanes and extra lanes with parked cars are ok but remember to check if any parking operates as a traffic lane at any time (i.e. the parking lane becomes a clearway or busway).

Action:

Take a photo of the proposed location that shows that the essential criteria above are met. When you include this photo in your letter, you will note the criteria in the caption. If you can, also take videos showing the volume of cars (and the speed of cars if relevant to the situation) and the number of people walking and crossing. Finally, look at the proposed crossing location and note whether people driving will be able to see people who are approaching the proposed zebra crossing and have time to stop and give way.



Example photo (from Google street view) of a proposed zebra crossing location showing that there is only one lane of moving traffic on either side of the street (in this case there are additional parking lanes on both sides and a dangerous pedestrian refuge to be replaced. Take another photo showing the speed limit sign.

Step 3 - count how many people are crossing; more people is more likely to lead to success

The number of people using a crossing is called a “warrant.”

TfNSW recently confirmed that their requirements of a specific number of people crossing do not have to be met on local streets for installing a new zebra crossing.

However, these warrants are useful to know, as they provide an indication of situations that many council staff consider more appropriate for a new zebra crossing and some councils still refer to them:

- In each of two separate one-hour periods in a typical day, the pedestrian flow per hour crossing the road is, or is expected to be, equal to or greater than 20.
- Children and elderly or mobility impaired pedestrians count as two pedestrians.

The warrant prior to September 2022 was more difficult to meet and you may need to advise your local traffic engineers of the new best practice warrant released by TfNSW in 2023: <https://standards.transport.nsw.gov.au/search-standard-specific/?id=AST%20-%200005059:2023>.

Action:

If you have time, count the number of people crossing near the proposed location or walking nearby who might cross if they could. Preferably count when the number of pedestrians and cars are likely to be high e.g. on a weekday morning between 8am and 9am or in the afternoon between 4pm and 5pm (unless the main use is specific to the weekend or another time of day). If it is not intrusive, take videos of people crossing but don't photograph or video children walking alone. You can also gather examples of near-hits or crashes that happened at or near the proposed zebra crossing location.

Step 4 - check for features that assist the case for a zebra crossing

There are a range of situations where zebra crossings are more likely to be supported, when:

- Council's policies say that they should support people walking.
- near a school, childcare centre or other facility for children (e.g. playgrounds or sports fields)
- near a library or community centre
- near an aged care facility, medical centre or hospital
- near a bus stop or train station
- a long way (more than 200m) to the nearest pedestrian crossings (international best practice is that crossings are no more than 100m apart and closer is better)
- busy road with a continuous flow of traffic that makes it hard for people to cross safely (breaks in traffic generally more than 45 seconds apart)
- fast moving vehicles (>40km/h).

Action:

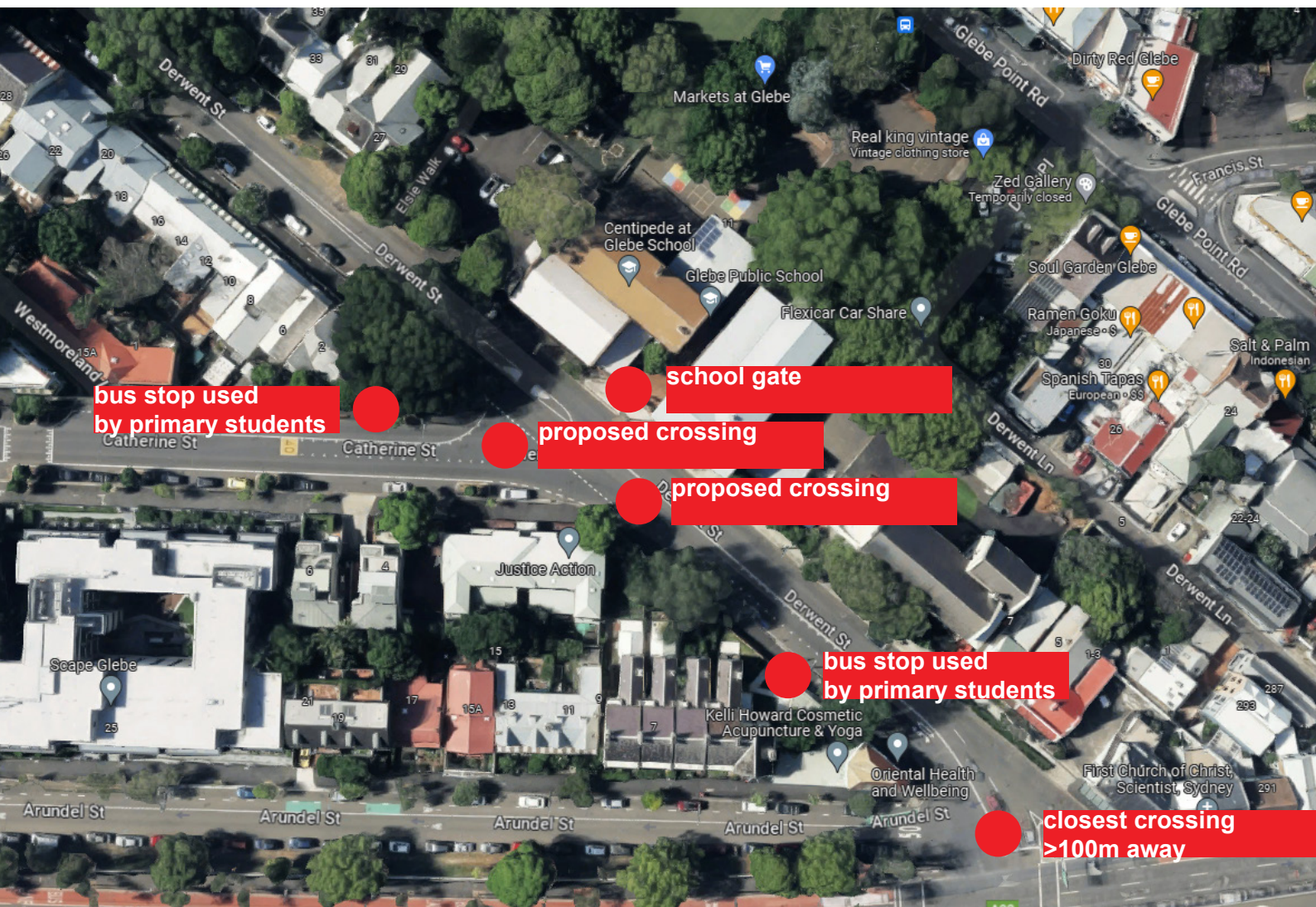
If you have time, check your Council's policies including the Community Strategic Plan, Local Strategic Planning Statement and/or walking or transport strategy and copy any directions, objectives or actions related to making streets safe for walking, encouraging active transport, encouraging kids to walk to school, etc. Refer to these in your letter to Council.

See the next page for the second action for this step.

Action:

Make a simple map.

You could take a screenshot of the relevant area on google maps, and measure distances with a 'right click'. Add a dot showing the proposed location for the zebra crossing and other dots and text to locate and describe the features that attract people to cross and the other reasons justifying why a new zebra crossing is needed (e.g. show that it is a long way to the nearest safe crossings). You can use Microsoft Word - it doesn't need to look fancy.



Example map from Google maps showing dots at the proposed crossing locations (there are two in this case, one for children to cross Derwent Street and the other to cross Catherine Street). Other dots and text describe features that attract people and help explain why the zebra crossings are needed - in this case the school entry gate and the bus stops used by students to get to and from school. The closest crossing point is also shown and a distance from the proposed zebra crossings noted.

Step 5 - write to council

See the handy template letter at the back of this guide.

Action:

Find the name and contact details of your local councillors and the General Manager/CEO (this information will be on your Council's website).

Action:

Send an email with a clear summary of the reasons why a new zebra crossing is required. You can use the templates provided at the end of this guide, and attach the information and materials that you have gathered.

Step 6 - gather evidence of community support

There are multiple ways of gathering local community support, from speaking to local residents about the issue and consolidating their feedback to organising online petitions for larger scale issues. We will soon develop a separate guide and will recommend tools on this topic.

Action:

Speak to any possible supporters from local schools, childcare centres, shops, and other areas of activity along the street and put their contact details in a simple table.

Step 7 - meet at the proposed zebra crossing location

Getting decision makers on board will increase the chance that the Council will support your request. The best way to get people on board is for them to see the issue for themselves. If you can get other supporters to be present when councillors and/or staff visit the site that will also help them feel that there is general community support for the zebra crossing.

Action:

Ask for a meeting with the relevant councillor(s) and staff at the crossing point. Preferably do this at a busy time in the morning or in the afternoon, or at a time relevant to the specific situation of the crossing point. Write talking points based on your letter and have them ready to make the case to the councillor(s) and staff.

Step 8 - attend the council or committee meeting

If your request gets the attention of your local Council and if solutions are explored, the matter will be addressed at one of your local Council's committees (generally either Traffic Committee or Council Committee), in which case you should be able to join the committee at the right time to speak about your concerns and your opinion about the proposed solution. Be brief and clear about the issue, what you are requesting, and how many people support you. Usually members of the community addressing committees are asked to speak for no more than 3 minutes.

Action:

Ask staff to notify you when your request is scheduled to be discussed at a committee meeting. Attend the meeting and speak in support of your request. Take other supporters with you who can also ask to speak to the same issue, thus building your case.

Template letter

Dear Councillors,

As a resident of [name of council / ward], I would like to draw the Council's attention to the need for a new pedestrian crossing (zebra crossing) at [address / location of the crossing point]. This is an important safety matter for local residents given the [large number of children crossing / the proximity of an aged care centre / the absence of other pedestrian crossing within 200m / the continuous flow of cars that makes it hard to cross / the lack of visibility - add all situations that apply]

Council's strategies include the following actions to support people walking: [list any you know or remove this point]

Please find attached, photos / videos of the crossing point. Below are some of the key reasons why Council should take immediate action on this matter:

- the crossing point meets the essential requirements for a zebra crossing: [name of the street] is a [one-way / two-way] street with one lane of traffic in each direction and the speed limit is [50km/h or below]
- there is a large volume of cars driving through (XXX cars counted over 1h) and a large volume of pedestrians trying to cross around the crossing point (XXX pedestrians counted over 1h) [or there is a strong walking route between x location and y location].

- several factors make the crossing point dangerous for people to cross and in particular for vulnerable people - the crossing point is [select applicable factors]:
 - near a school, childcare centre or other facility for children
 - near a library or community centre
 - near an aged care facility, medical centre or hospital
 - near a bus stop or train station
 - a long way from the nearest pedestrian crossings
 - on a busy road with a continuous flow of traffic
 - in an area with a lot of fast traffic.

I hope that the Council will appreciate the urgent need to deal with the safety problem, and I would like to offer a meeting at the crossing point with the relevant councillors to assess the situation and discuss the proposed zebra crossing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

[Add your signature and contact details]

Potential objections and responses

There are a range of situations that may be seen by local Councils as barriers to installing a new zebra crossing. It is useful to be aware of them and to know how to respond.

Potential objection	Potential response or way to address
A pedestrian refuge is sufficient (drivers do not have to give way at a refuge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian refuges are a protected area in the middle of the road where people crossing can wait with reasonable safety before making the second part of their crossing. Refuges are relatively low cost but do not provide any form of priority for people walking and are not suitable for people who cannot select safe gaps in traffic to cross. They are not preferred because they are not safe for all ages and abilities.
Not enough evidence of demand to cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many people would cross if the situation was not so dangerous.• Count people showing an intent to cross (even if they don't actually cross)• Count or research the number of workers, school children, shoppers or others at institutions nearby• Show the walking routes between activity areas on a map (school, shops, park, etc)
Too costly or not enough budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zebra crossings can vary widely in cost from around \$100K to \$500K (2023 dollars) each excluding design work which can add \$10K to \$40K depending on complexity. Costs will tend to be higher if the council uses contractors for the design and construction.• Design features that can significantly increase cost include: stormwater and underground services works, providing new flood-lighting, raising the crossing (making it a wombat crossing) and making large or complex extensions of the kerb or footpath (sometimes called blisters).• Some Councils will use simple details to reduce cost but others adopt higher more costly design standards.• Encourage your Council to use cheaper options like paint and precast concrete kerbs bolted in place.

Potential objection	Potential response or way to address
Loss of on-street parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess parking situation in the street and the amount of free parking space / options for local businesses/residents with off street parking • Explain the importance of safety for people vs. the convenience of on-street parking • Check if people are parking close to the intersection where the zebra crossing is proposed (as it is not legal to park within 10m of an intersection)
Very close (less than 80m) to another crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show (with a map) that the crossings serve different walking routes • NACTO Global Street Design Guide which is international best practice sets a maximum 100m separation between pedestrian crossings https://globaldesigningcities.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/designing-streets-people/designing-for-pedestrians/pedestrian-crossings/
Poor sight lines relative to vehicle speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose that Council install speed humps/ cushions to slow vehicles down
Too many crossings give drivers “crossing fatigue” or people walking a “false sense of security”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no evidence for the former • Refer to national Austroads guidance that debunks the “false sense of security” idea: https://austroads.com.au/webinars-and-events/webinar-zebras-and-wombats-factchecking-false-sense-of-security
If a zebra crossing is installed it will be illegal for people to cross nearby and they will be forced to walk a long way to the crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can cross informally anywhere as long as they are more than 20 metres from a zebra or signalised crossing. 20 metres is not very far so it will be legal for most people to cross where they want or to walk to the zebra crossing if they prefer.

Other crossing types not dealt with in this guide

Pelican crossings

A pelican crossing is a crossing with traffic lights. People push the button when they want to cross.

Most pelican crossings have the same lights and signals as normal traffic lights. Drivers must stop at a red light and give way to people crossing the road.

Some pelican crossings have a different colour sequence for the traffic lights. After the red light, a yellow (amber) light flashes for vehicles and a red crossing signal flashes for people walking.

When the yellow light starts flashing, drivers can drive through the crossing if there are no people crossing.

Children's crossings

Children's crossings are part-time crossings. They usually operate during school zone hours, and at other approved times and locations.

When a children's crossing is operating, it is marked by red-orange flags at both sides. When drivers see the flags, they must slow down and stop before the white stripes or 'stop line' to give way to people crossing. Drivers must remain at a complete stop until everyone has left the crossing.

If the flags are not displayed, it is not operating as a children's crossing.

Some children's crossings are combined with a zebra crossing. When the flags are displayed, children's crossing rules apply. When the flags are removed, zebra crossing rules apply.

