

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

Great Western Highway upgrade, Katoomba to Mount Victoria

A series of four community workshops were held in February to identify and discuss safety issues and concerns on the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Mount Victoria as part of the \$250 million revised investment package for the highway.

These meeting notes consolidate the question and answer discussions and present the feedback received from the second workshop, held in Katoomba.

Workshop details

Date	Thursday 14 February 2013
Time	12 noon – 2.00 pm
Venue	Mountain Heritage Motel and Spa, Katoomba
Attendees	20 community members attended



Community meeting, Katoomba

Purpose of the meeting

- Provide background and update of the upgrade of the Great Western Highway between Mount Victoria and Lithgow
- Explain the revised investment package and why the project has been extended to Katoomba
- Provide existing information on safety and crash statistics from police reports
- Find out what the community's safety issues are.

Summary of discussion

Following short presentations by Peter Dearden Regional Manager, Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and Hilary Johnson, Road Safety Manager, RMS, questions were taken from the room. The following table provides a summary of the discussion, including questions and answers, held at the workshop. Please contact the project team on 1800 035 733 if the matters you raised at the workshop have not been included below.

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Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
1	The failure to maintain adequate vehicle separation is a significant factor in crashes, but is not policed in the same way as speed. People don't leave a safe distance between vehicles when driving, and this not taken seriously enough.	Unsafe driver behaviour occurs on all roads, not just this stretch of highway, and has been the subject of education and information campaigns. It is covered in our recent campaign – Top 10 Misunderstood Road Rules.
2	Could you use insurance records as well as police reports to get a more accurate picture of the safety issues in the area?	Our aim is to make roads safer – this is why we use police crash reports to identify our priorities in terms of safety upgrades. Property damage and community inconvenience caused by smaller or unreported incidents are not necessarily linked to making roadusers safer. RMS talks to the community and gathers local knowledge to fill in the gaps.
3	Is vehicle type being looked at too?	The breakdown of vehicle type is provided in the police crash reports and that is something that RMS is looking at and will be taking into account when planning for the future safety upgrades.
4	When roads are resurfaced, the height difference between the main road surface and edges is increased, leaving an often dangerous gap of 15-20 mm. Is this something that is considered when resurfacing and surface maintenance is carried out?	The edges of the highway are usually picked up in our audits, but if there are specific locations where this is currently an issue we would love to hear them, please note them on the maps.
5	There is a clustering of crashes occurring on the bends approaching Medlow Bath, despite the recent resurfacing friction issues being addressed. This suggests that other factors remain (i.e. the fact the road at that point is bendy) even after work has taken place.	Your comment has been noted.
6	We know the vehicle movement figures for the highway between Lithgow and Mount Victoria, but do we have similar data for Mount Victoria to Katoomba?	The Great Western Highway is a through route therefore we would expect vehicle movement data to show the same or similar figures as traffic generally would continue through.

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7	The statistics list fatigue as a factor in crashes but I would have expected that number to be higher, and suspect that fatigue is actually the cause of many of the accidents on the highway. Anywhere two hours travel time out of Sydney is in the 'danger zone' for fatigue. More rest areas should be provided.	Rest areas are certainly something that can be looked at as part of these safety upgrades.
8	The traffic lights at Albion Street just out of Katoomba have a lights warning sign on the approach, but you still always see cars and trucks slamming on their brakes to stop. None of the non-local traffic sees the lights soon enough despite the signage. The lights are at the bottom of a downhill stretch and round a corner so trucks often going at too great a speed to notice them and stop in time. Speed needs to be reduced.	Your comment has been noted.
9	Elimination and isolation of accidents and community impacts are obviously the best approaches, so why don't you move the road in Blackheath to the other side of the railway? This would make it safer for residents and through traffic. It is short-sighted not to consider this now due to funding constraints, if this truly is the best option for improving safety.	This \$250 million project is for safety upgrades within the existing road corridor. There are no plans to investigate this as part of this project.
10	Driver behaviour is a massive factor. Travelling from Medlow Bath into Blackheath, people drive at 70 in the 80 zone but then speed up to 75 in the 60 zone, and you can't overtake without breaking the speed limit. Monitoring equipment should be used more often.	Your comment has been noted.
11	It is very useful to have safety upgrades at this time and I'm very grateful for RMS' work on this project. We want safer roads but we don't want lots of extra traffic through our villages – there should be other plans made for this.	Your comment has been noted.

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Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
12	What is the status of the tree replanting work through Medlow Bath?	RMS has spoken with Blue Mountains City Council and has been advised that the council is planning to start replanting the trees in Autumn.
13	Do we have data on the accidents that have occurred since the work on the Victoria Pass has been finished?	Yes, this has been looked at. RMS has been looking at further trials in this area to improve safety including reflective arrows.
14	Roads don't cause accidents, drivers do. So many drivers drive around in low cloud and fog without lights on – this is horrifying behaviour. I have noticed the increased police patrols, which is good because this behaviour needs to be stopped. The excuses used at magistrates courts (and the excuses that are accepted by the authorities for bad driver behaviour) are unacceptable.	Your comment has been noted.
15	The Explorers Tree still hasn't been repaired since the accident – it's covered in plastic and is a dangerous distraction to drivers. This is a replica anyway and should be removed from the roadside for safety purposes.	Your comment has been noted.

Community feedback

The 13.5 kilometre section of highway from Katoomba to Mount Victoria was split into five sections for the purposes of the workshop. Attendees were asked to tell us their safety issues on the highway for each of the five sections. The following maps present the community comments received under the following categories (as used on the RMS online collaborative map).



Safety issue



Reported incident



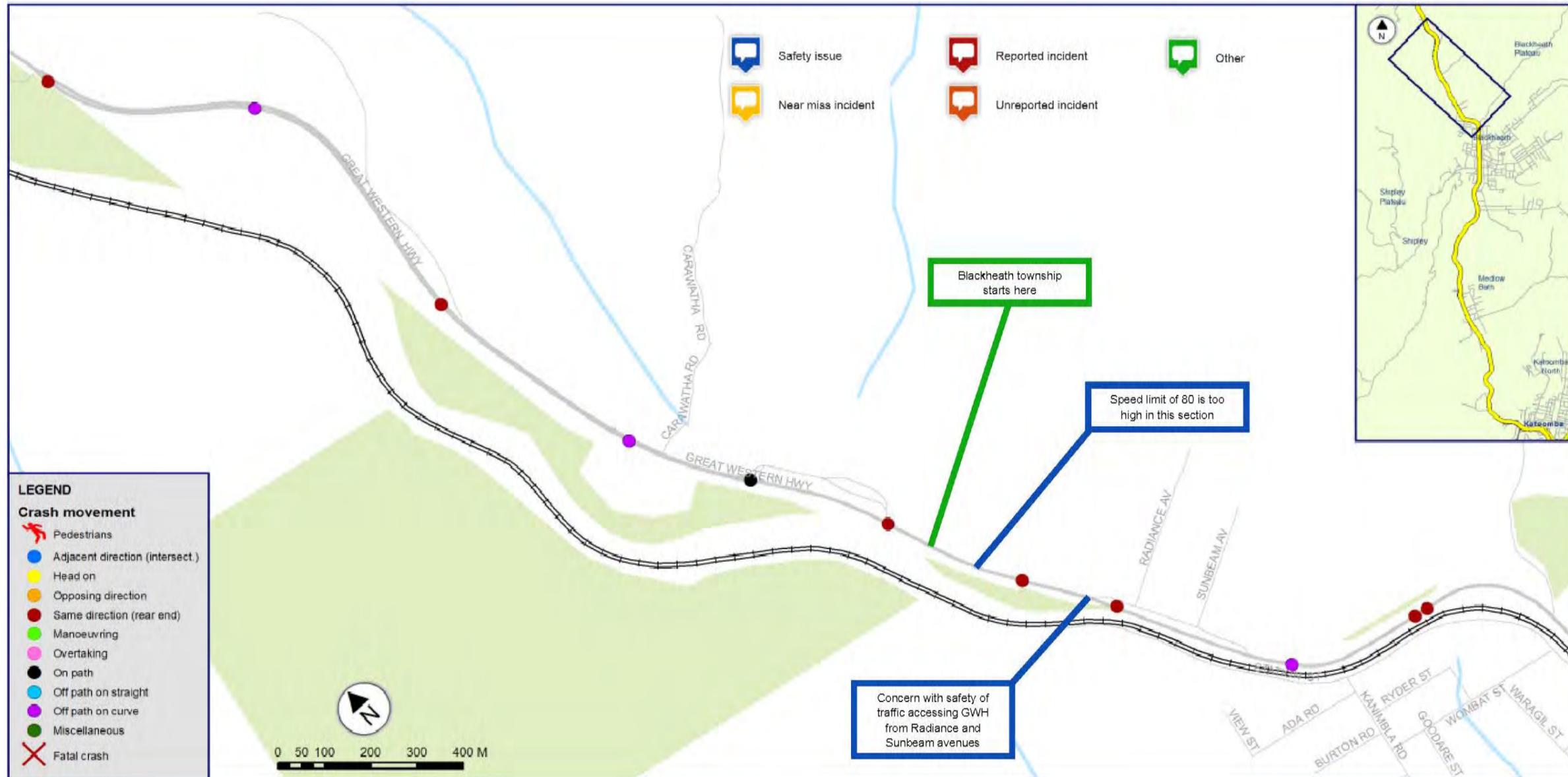
Other



Near miss incident



Unreported incident

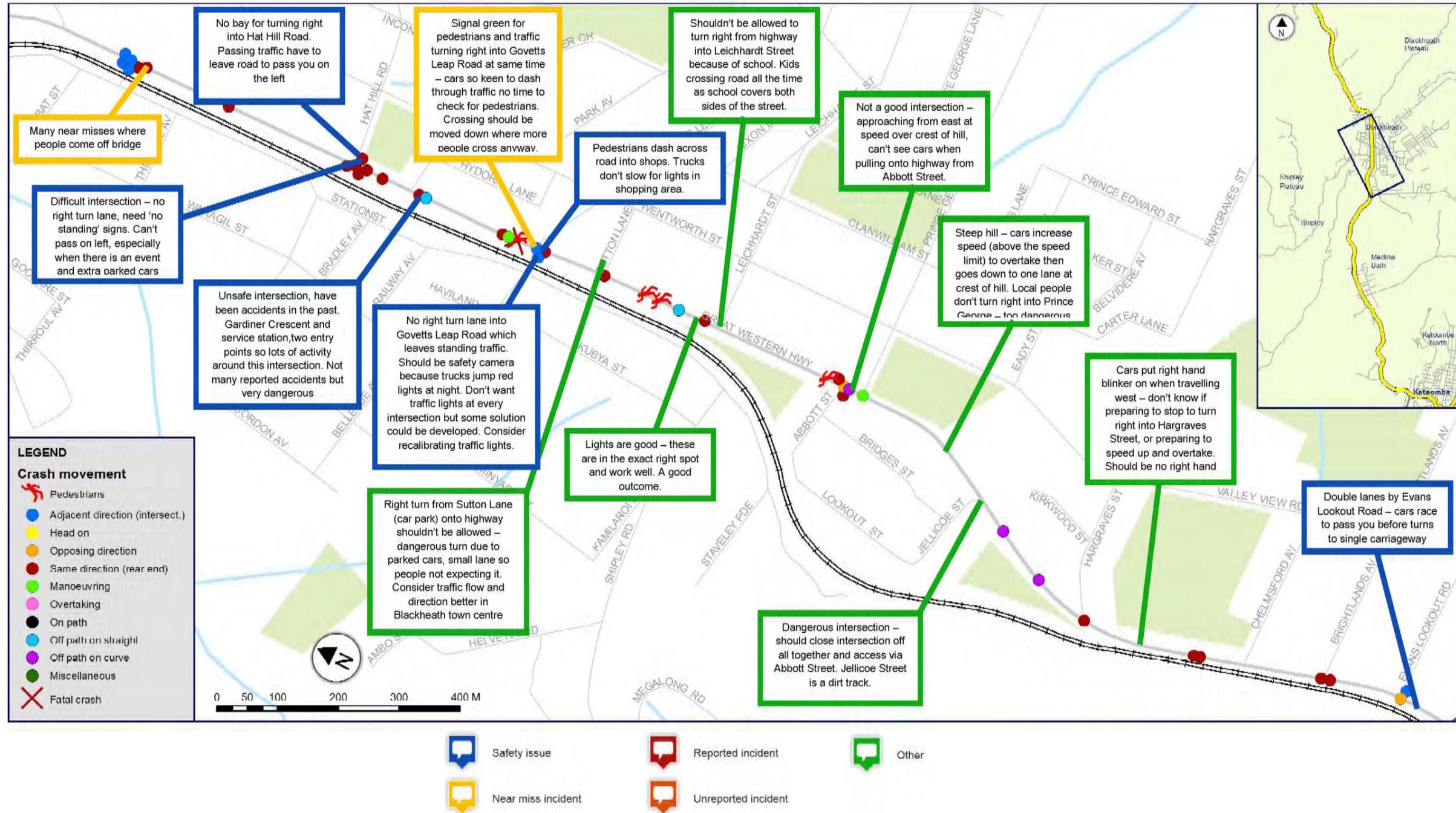


Section 2 Blackheath township

(18 comments)

General comments for this section:

- Blackheath township actually extends past Radiance Avenue in section 1. Section 2 cuts some of the Blackheath township off.
- Protect the trees in Blackheath – this must happen regardless of what safety improvements are made.
- General concern about speed through Blackheath, not just for safety reasons but also noise and atmosphere. Would like to see a speed camera at Govetts Leap.

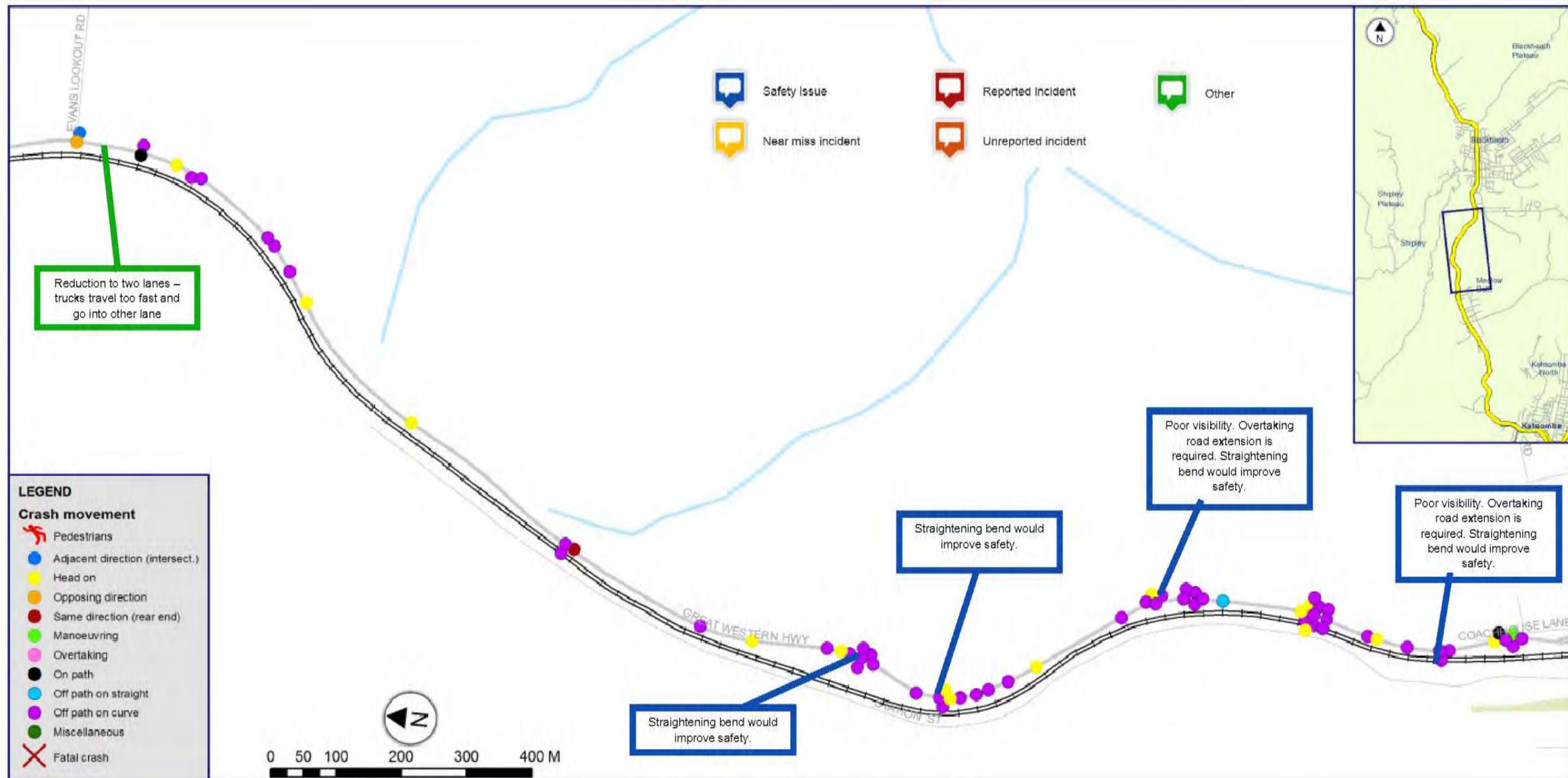


Section 3 Blackheath to Medlow Bath

(7 comments)

General comments for this section:

- Drivers not driving to the road conditions
- Drop speed limit to 60 km/h from 80 km/h



Section 4 Medlow Bath township

(No comments)



Section 5 Medlow Bath to Katoomba

(7 comments)

General comments for this section:

- People driving without chains in the snow have accidents and block/close highway. Why not stop people without chains from driving in these conditions?

