

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 fourth workshop, held in Blackheath.

Workshop details

Date	Monday 18 February 2013
Time	6.30 – 8.30 pm
Venue	Redleaf Resort, Blackheath
Attendees	About 160 community members attended



Community meeting, Blackheath

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.

Blackheath meeting notes February 2013

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
1	Is tonight the only chance we'll have to make our comments?	No, you'll have until 8 March 2013 to make your comments using our online collaborative map, by email or by calling the project hotline.
2	Can something be done at the Blackheath traffic lights – turning right onto the highway from Govetts Leap Road, almost get wiped out by a truck. Trucks put their foot down when the lights are orange. A camera on these lights would make a fortune.	Thank you for your comment. We have captured this issue and will certainly look into it.
3	Surfaces are important. The statistics show that surface upgrades between Explorers Tree and Medlow Bath have saved lives, so why not do this for the whole stretch?	In normal circumstances and weather conditions the existing standard road surface is not dangerous. The high friction surface is of a higher cost and labour intensive to install. RMS want to hear about sections of road where people think surface upgrades could be beneficial for safety.
4	Speed is the predominant cause of crashes, and often combined with wet surfaces. The simplest way to improve safety is driver education. We can keep chasing our tail improving road infrastructure but that will never account for bad driving.	Both RMS and the police have ongoing driver education and enforcement programs. RMS recently released the Top 10 misunderstood road rules campaign. There is an increased police presence along this stretch of road recently.
5	Are truck drivers being educated too? What were the terms of reference for the independent review? Unless the reviewers drove the stretch of road in all conditions how can the results be valid? The safest roads are where the police are. Would the best option be to divert these funds to the police instead? Add speed cameras at each end of Blackheath. Trucks never do 60 km/h – they can't stop at the lights in time at the speeds they travel.	NSW police are now using an operational model whereby resources are pooled from across the region. On a regular and daily basis, resources are posted to the Blackheath area. This approach has increased police coverage from 8-12 hours a day to 18-24 hours a day. The police resources in the Blackheath area are well budgeted, well focused and in a good position to increase police presence on the highway. New technology, such as number plate vehicle recognition, is also being used. Crash analysis is undertaken to decide where to put safety and speed cameras. Cameras get installed in areas with the worst safety record. If there is not a camera there, then the safety record is not as bad as other locations on the network.

Blackheath meeting notes February 2013

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
6	I recently took an advanced driving course with the police in Queensland, and learnt the most fatal type of crashes are rear end. The most recent crash in Blackheath was a rear ender and the woman was lucky to be alive. The speed limit is 50 km/h in much of NSW, why can't it be 50 here?	All townships within the Blue Mountains are signposted consistently at the same speed limit. When it was recently reviewed it was found to be appropriate.
7	Statistics did not include data on when the highway was closed. RMS should think outside the box and consider alternative routes that parallel the highway. A bike route running parallel to the highway could double as a route for emergency vehicles or for traffic to bypass an accident. Cyclist use of the highway is dangerous.	Warning signs and local detours are typically used to control traffic flow in a crash situation by NSW Police. RMS will investigate traffic management around crashes.
8	When travelling west on the highway trying to turn into Abbotts Road, you have to keep driving for fear of getting hit from behind. Need a slip lane there, particularly when cars are parked, leaving you nowhere to go. Speed is an issue – every day and night vehicles speed over the hill from Katoomba. They don't do 60 – it should be a 50 zone with cameras to enforce. The proposed aerodrome will increase traffic at Blackheath on intersections.	Your comments have been noted. These are the safety issues we want to capture from you. Tell us exactly where you don't feel safe to turn right and RMS will consider these comments.
9	'Freight corridor' is the elephant in the room. The lights patterns are set to green so the trucks know they can zoom through – at least before they didn't know what the lights would be on. Every time you do a safety upgrade to straighten a bend or widen a section of road, you're making it easier for trucks. We all know its all about trucks. They are our biggest concern.	The Great Western Highway is a highway and will always be used by trucks. But RMS has no plans to allow full size B-doubles across the Blue Mountains.

Blackheath meeting notes February 2013

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
10	Aren't speed cameras cost positive over their life span? How can cost be a factor for deciding on implementation of safety cameras?	Crash analysis is used to determine where speed cameras are implemented – they go to the most dangerous sections of road. Cameras are not the only way of enforcing the speed limit. Police presence, mobile speed camera vans and reengineering the road environment are all options that are used successfully.
11	The argument about keeping speed limits consistent in the Blue Mountains, across towns and villages of different sizes and with different conditions, is a very inconsistent approach. If they must all be the same you should use the lowest common denominator to maintain consistency and improve safety. The speed limit should not be the same on a two lane congested road in Blackheath as it is for a four lane upgraded section of highway.	Your comment has been noted.
12	Irrespective about what happens on this stretch, decisions have already been made about upstream and downstream sections of the highway. Have you done five year projections of increased traffic movements of all vehicle types, as a result of these improvements? We are already suffering at current levels; can the changes deal with the increased movements?	The Central West Transport Needs Study provides traffic flow data and projections. It predicts a 1.5 per cent growth in the number of light vehicles and 2 per cent growth for heavy vehicles per annum. The road in its current geometry and curvature presents constraints for certain vehicles – Victoria Pass and River Lett Hill don't allow vehicles of a certain size.

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
13	A great forum and the safety improvements are a great initiative, but why are we receiving the dregs of the funding? High friction pavements are required to correct the poor geometric design of roads and the poor alignment in the first place. This money is dedicated to safety works within the existing corridor but you need to look outside of this for the best solutions. The 70 km/h speed limit is really wrong.	Your comments have been noted.
14	Trucks and cars speed up behind my car – I see them everyday and there is no police. 99 per cent of cars travel at the speed limit past speed cameras.	Your comment has been noted.
15	If wet weather and speed contribute to 50 per cent of crashes, why isn't the whole road resurfaced in open-graded asphalt? When resurfacing works were done in the past it seemed to be done as patchy repairs, not strategic locations for safety purposes.	When the safety issue was discovered, the friction of the surface was tested. Any sections that failed were upgraded to a high friction surface. It is not viable to resurface the whole stretch of road in high friction asphalt.
16	Open-graded asphalt is not the same as high friction surfacing – it drains water. The decisions have been made purely on cost.	Expert engineers have provided advice on the most suitable type of surfacing to be used in this location.
17	At an engineering conference in 2011, an RMS director stated that 75 per cent of the country's freight passes through NSW. 25 per cent of the current traffic stream is heavy vehicles – are these upgrades just about facilitating more heavy vehicles?	The funding that will be allocated to this area is for safety improvements only, not significant geometric improvements. There is no hidden agenda to improve the road geometry to attract heavy vehicles.

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
18	Lots of money has been spent on the rest of the Great Western Highway. What are your intentions for the road? Do you want to put a tunnel in, or a bypass? Or just a handful of safety improvements? It is deceitful to say that you have no intention to widen the highway.	This money is being spent on safety improvements within the existing road corridor. There are no plans to build new roads at this time. The current commitment is for four lanes to Katoomba, and mostly three lanes to the west of Katoomba – this could mean two lanes or four lanes.
19	<i>(In relation to question 18)</i> Does this seem sensible to you?	Yes, that is the current commitment. RMS is trying to balance two things – providing a safe and efficient highway, and sustaining a village atmosphere.
20	The community update mentioned that these improvements would bring benefits for freight transport – what are these benefits?	The original focus of the works was for the grades and curves on River Lett Hill and Victoria Pass to be improved. But the government review changed the focus of the works to best value for money, which is why the focus has shifted towards minor safety improvements. Safer roads benefit all road users regardless of vehicle type.
21	In Austria, containers are put on flat beds and loaded onto trains. Why is that not done between Katoomba and here?	We are sure this has been considered but it is outside the scope of this project.
22	There are dangerous drop offs at the side of the carriageway.	Your comment has been noted.
23	People always blame truck drivers, but why aren't we using average speed cameras (instead of fixed speed cameras) for cars as well as trucks?	Point-to-point cameras can technically detect number plates on any vehicle, but legislation only allows us to apply it to heavy vehicles and not cars at this time.

Meeting Notes



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

APRIL 2013

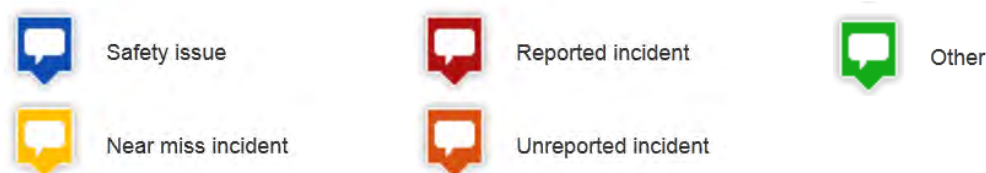
Written submissions

The following pre-prepared comments were submitted at the workshop.

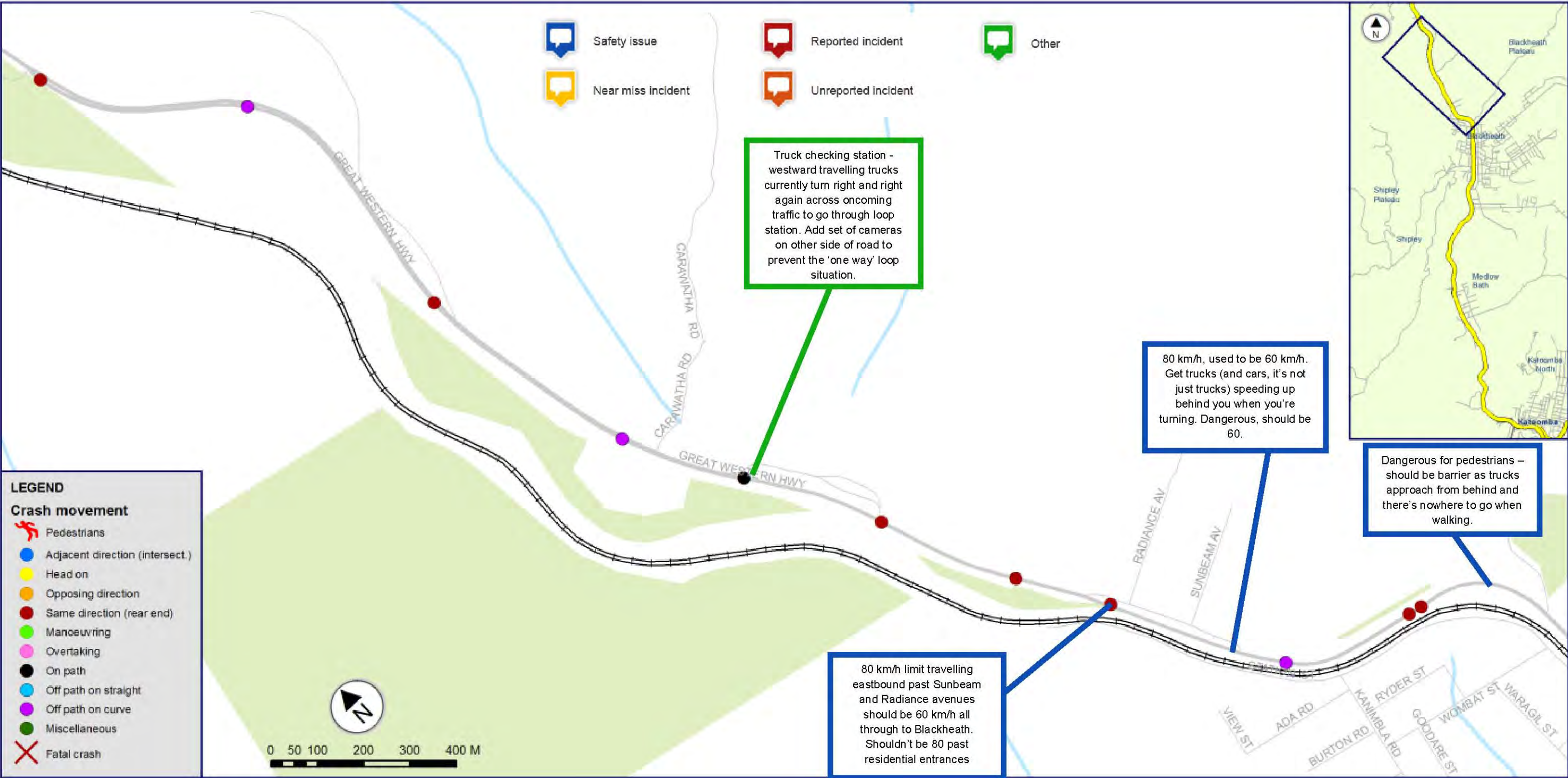
Item	Comments / questions	RMS response
1	When a funeral procession is turning right into the Blackheath Cemetery from the Great Western Highway – there is no turning lane. I have witnessed many near accidents by drivers unaware of stationary cars waiting to turn into the cemetery.	Thank you for your comments, they have been noted.
2	A turning lane is badly needed on the corner of Hat Hill Road and the Great Western Highway coming from the west into Blackheath. In the Autumn many coaches turn here to proceed down Wentworth Street so their passengers can view the golden leaves of the plane trees. At present many vehicles turn down Gardiner Crescent at the Community Centre where traffic can be unsafe by vehicles turning into the garage; when they hold the Growers Market in the Community Centre and the Neighbourhood Centre. It has helped with the safety of traffic on this corner when the pine tree was removed after the storm on 4 July 2011.	
3	Blackheath experiences very bad mists and a bad spot is the lack of lighting along the Great Western Highway from the cemetery to the overhead rail bridge. Orange lights along this section would definitely improve the safety on this section of the highway.	
4	Install a green turning light on the corner of the highway and Govetts Leap Road before a bad accident occurs on this spot.	

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).



Blackheath meeting notes February 2013

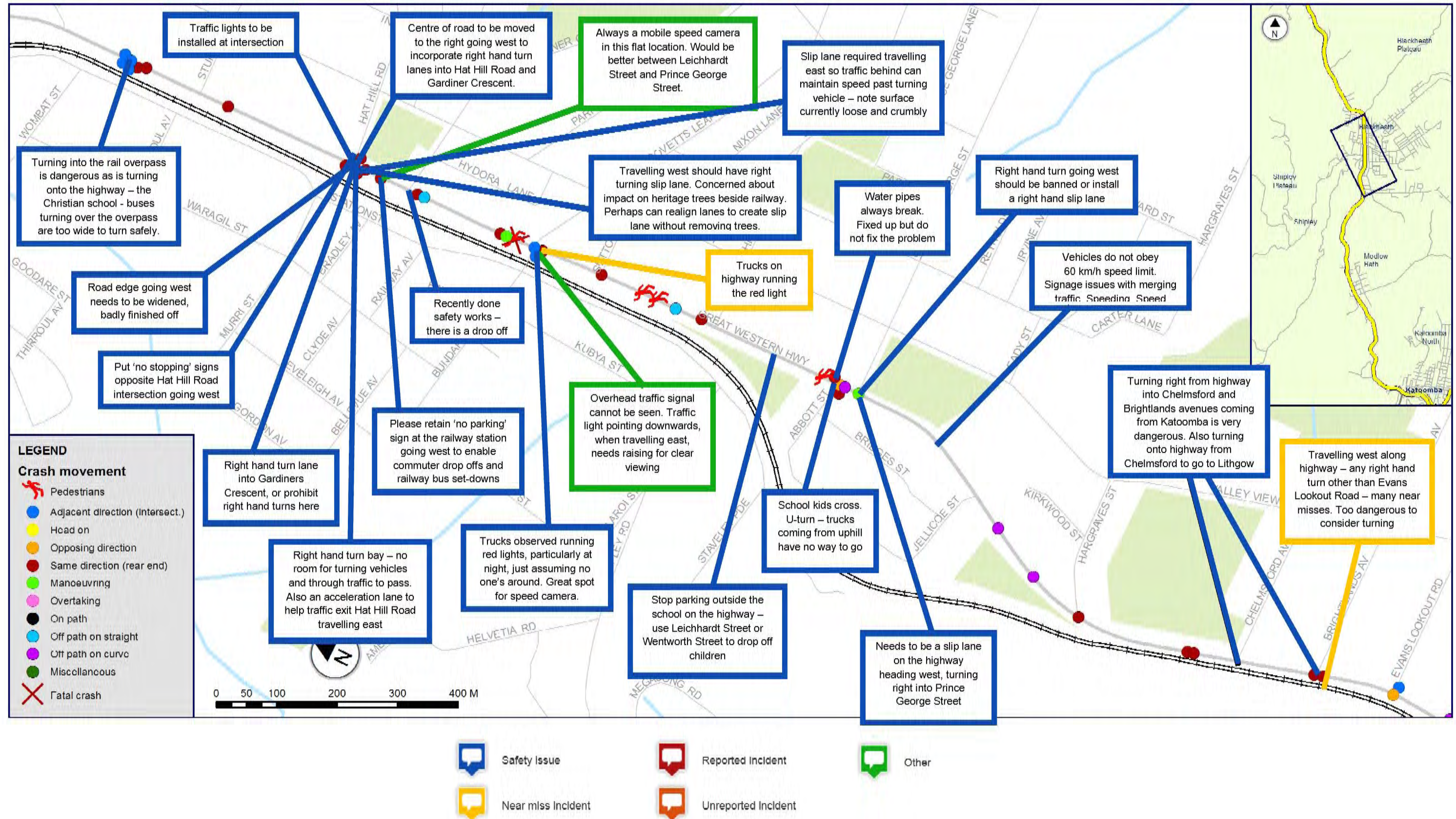


Section 2 Blackheath township

(24 comments)

General comments for this section:

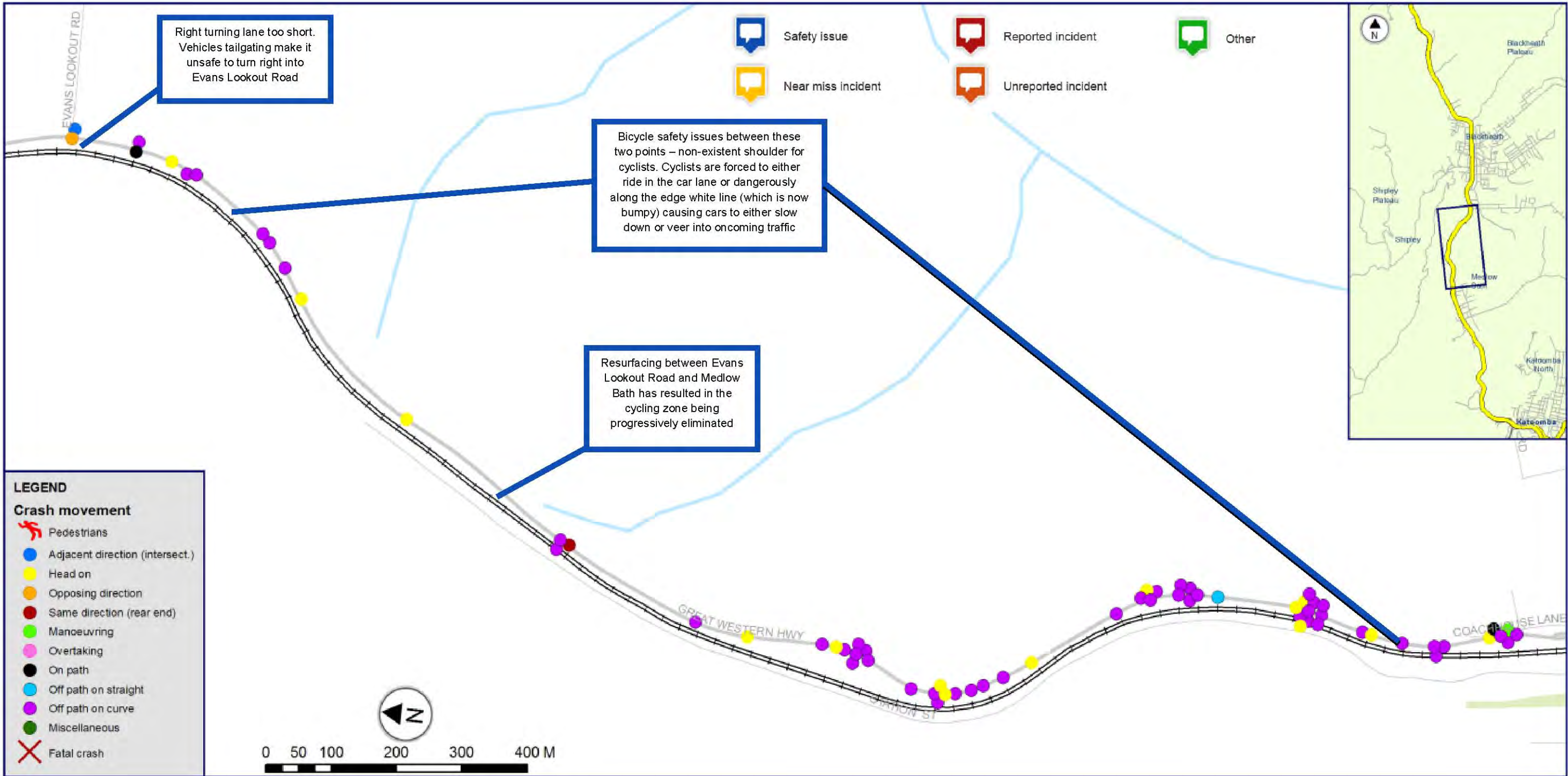
- Truck drivers drive at ridiculous speeds – any measures to slow them down will make our roads safer places. More police in mornings and evenings in peak time. No highway widening at Blackheath – use railway for freight
- Venue – disappointed no disability access. Going upstairs is difficult for me, too bad for anyone in wheelchairs! (I've just been told it was a last minute change of venue, however...)
- What about all the visitors or newcomers who don't understand how dangerous these road conditions are, especially on the often misty and/or rainy days or nights. Speed cameras, more signage and/or flashing lights may assist.
- Often as I drive from Katoomba to Mount Victoria on the overpass at Medlow Bath, people overtake on the left as I've been in the right lane travelling just under the speed limit.



Section 3 Blackheath to Medlow Bath

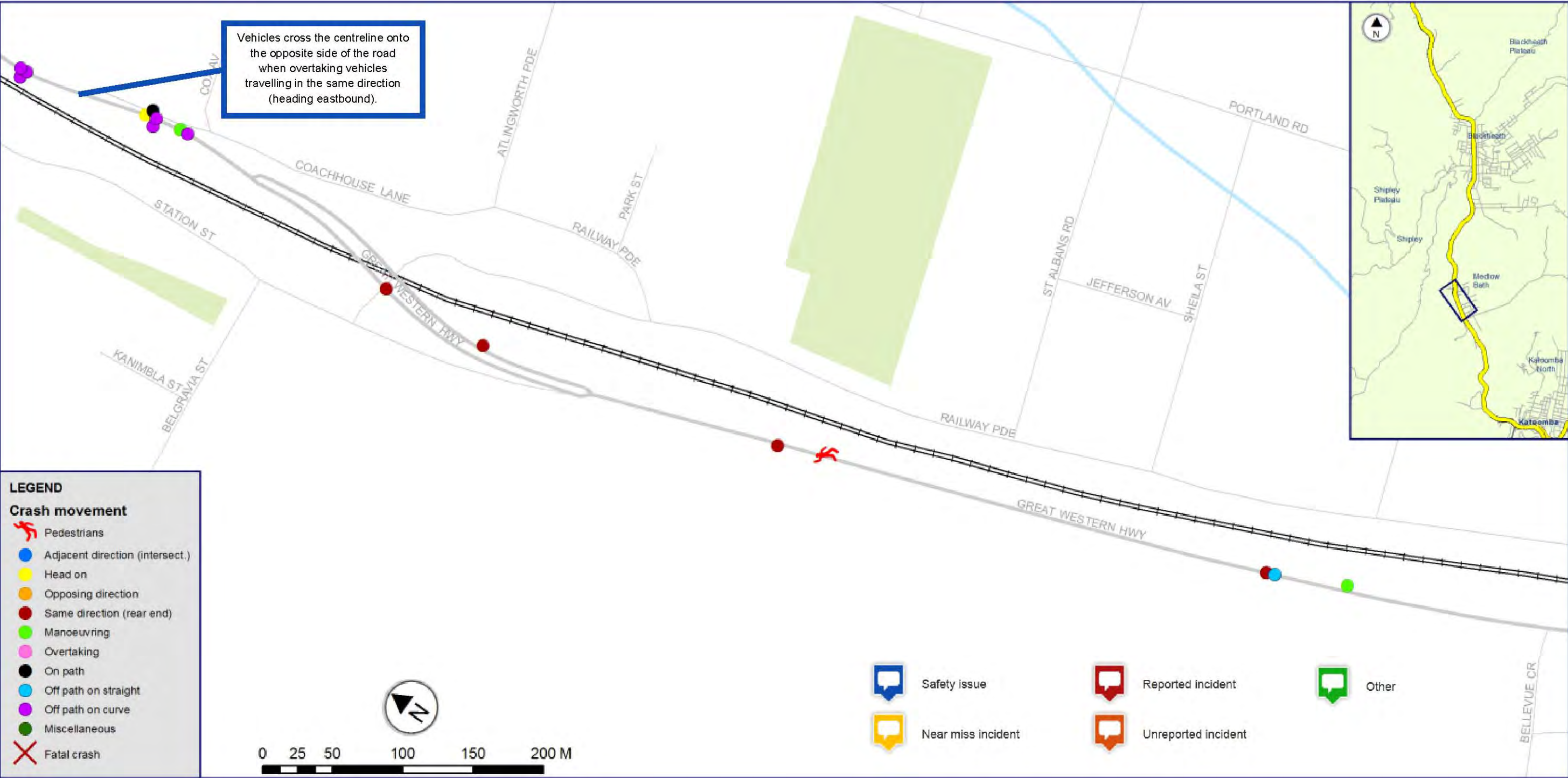
(5 comments)

- General comments for this section:
- Drainage on the bends is not adequate. Drainage on west side blocked forcing water to flow across the road.
 - Cameras at bends.



Section 4 Medlow Bath township

(1 comment)



Section 5 Medlow Bath to Katoomba

(2 comments)

