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New Zealand Transport Agency
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17th September 2015

RE: Exemption from the requirement to display the standard green walking human symbol on pedestrian traffic signals.

In a letter dated 1 September 2014, NZTA granted Wellington City Council an exemption from the requirements of the rules related to pedestrian crossing signals at eight intersections in central Wellington, subject to a number of conditions.

The exemption was to enable Wellington City Council to replace the standard green walking human symbol pedestrian traffic signal display at the agreed locations, with an image resembling Kate Sheppard, to commemorate 121 years since women were given the right to vote in New Zealand and Wellington City's 150th anniversary celebrations until the end of 2015.

The Council would now like to apply for a permanent exemption for the above pedestrian traffic signal displays. In that regard we refer to the requirements of the Land Transport Act 1998 Section 166 (2) and comment as follows:

1. The Council believes that the risk to safety will not be increased by making the exemption permanent and on that basis the requirements for the temporary exemption have been effective and further compliance measures are unnecessary.
2. To support the Council's case we have reviewed the NZTA crash records from 2014 to the current date to ascertain whether the replacement of the standard green 'walking human' symbol pedestrian display at the eight signalised intersections has had any impact on pedestrian safety.
3. According to records, there was one pedestrian accident on Tuesday 13 January 2015, at the intersection of Whitmore Street and Featherston Street which involved a left turning SUV on Featherston Street colliding with a pedestrian crossing Whitmore Street, (based on the Police Traffic Crash Report). The SUV was deemed to fail to give-way to the pedestrian on the crossing. This accident could not be attributed to the changeover of the green 'walking human' symbol as a factor in the crash.
4. There were no other accidents involving pedestrians at the other 7 intersections after the changeover of the green 'walking human' symbol.
5. We have also reviewed before (Wednesday 10-9-2014) and after (Wednesday 25-3-2015) CCTV footage at two high profile signalised pedestrian crossings (Lambton/Whitmore & Featherston/Bunny) where Kate Sheppard displays were installed and observed no behavioural changes of pedestrians using these crossings. To date we have also not fielded any public complaints regarding pedestrian confusion or safety at any of the eight sites that had the Kate Sheppard displays installed.

In summary, we believe there is no evidence that pedestrian safety is at risk with the image resembling Kate Sheppard replacing the green 'walking human' symbol specified in Schedule 3-2 of the Traffic Control Devices Rule 2004.

As the red Pedestrian 'standing human' symbol was not changed, the message for pedestrians has been consistent which is not to start crossing when the red standing human symbol is flashing.

To further support the Council's request for a permanent exemption, we believe the publicity associated with the Kate Sheppard pedestrian displays which were reported as far afield as Vienna, can only be seen as positive and that the public's attention is likely to be drawn to the pedestrian displays to a greater degree than would be the case with the standard green walking human symbol.


We also believe that any non-conformity with the standard display is not of an order which would be likely confuse a pedestrian but provides a point of difference to highlight the permanent linkage between Kate Sheppard and the proximity of the seat of government in New Zealand.

On the matter of costs, we can confirm that the Council does not seek any financial assistance towards the provision or upkeep of the exempted displays.

We therefore submit that the Agency can reasonably approve the request for a permanent exemption.

On the matter of the potential for other types of pedestrian traffic signal displays, it is likely that the Council will be further developing its ideas and will bring these forward in due course as a separate matter for discussion with the Agency.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Swainson
Manager – Transport & Waste Operations
Wellington City Council