



---

## Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

### CBD BUG

GPO Box 2104, Brisbane 4001

[convenors@cbdbug.org.au](mailto:convenors@cbdbug.org.au)

[www.cbdbug.org.au](http://www.cbdbug.org.au)

---

Ms Wendy Evans  
President  
Planning Institute of Australia (Queensland)  
PO Box 295  
Lowood Qld 4311

Via email to: [qld@planning.org.au](mailto:qld@planning.org.au)

Dear Ms Evans

I write to you on behalf of Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group members to question the Howard Smith Wharves (HSW) redevelopment receiving 2020 Planning Institute of Australia awards in the categories of "Great Place Award" and "Hard Won Victory".

As background for you, the Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group (CBD BUG) is a grass roots volunteer organization of more than 700 members, representing the interests of the very large number of Brisbane residents who ride bicycles to, from and within the Brisbane CBD. The CBD BUG actively seeks policy decisions at all levels of government that support cycling. In particular, the CBD BUG seeks improved infrastructure, end-of-trip facilities, integration of cycling with other transport modes and a cyclist-friendly regulatory environment.

In the two years since opening, HSW has caused, and continues to cause, numerous issues which have detracted from the quality of the space for both patrons and the general public simply walking or cycling through the site. The poorly designed corridor is currently subject to continuing reports of user conflict between people walking/running and people riding bicycles.

The HSW site forms a critical part of Brisbane's active transport network, including a path that is the main link between the Brisbane CBD and the \$72 million New Farm Riverwalk, and as such the quality and safety of the active transport corridor cannot be treated as a side-issue. CBD BUG peak period traffic counts show a decline in New Farm Riverwalk commuter bicycle traffic, pointing to the negative impact this development is having on active transport patronage through this corridor. An especially disappointing outcome considering the substantial investment in the Brisbane Riverwalk now appears to be undermined due to a substandard development that has been poorly integrated with the pre-existing transport corridor.

At their heart, these issues are the result of either a contemptuous disregard for the public benefit, or simple incompetence from the designers and engineers involved, and certainly does not represent a project "of the highest quality," or "best practice".

These issues have been well documented, both in submissions made during the planning approval processes, as well as in local news media. So far:

1. HSW constructed the main public easement (connecting to the New Farm Riverwalk) as an off-camber, loose gravel, shared path, which proved both hazardous to path users, and impossible to maintain (Figures 1,2,3). This path was finally replaced with a properly sealed surface in August 2019, after intense lobbying from active transport groups (Figure 4).

2. The loose, shared path surface was chosen against Council officer objections, with the developer asserting that this critical component of the City's active transport network should "not have an overt through function", pleading their case using a bizarre reference to Birrarung Marr River Promenade, which features a sealed cycle path along its northern edge.
3. The CBD BUG understands that path failed to meet multiple aspects of the "AustRoads guide" and DDA legislation:
  - a. in relation to its selection as a shared, rather than separated path (Figure 5)
  - b. in relation to the degree of curvature 3 (Figure 6)
  - c. in relation to DDA legislation as defined by the Australian Human Rights commission. (Figure 8), and
  - d. even the re-constructed (sealed) path appears not comply with DDA legislation with the installation of a speed control platform on a 1 in 21 walkway. (Figure 9).
4. HSW, in modifying the originally approved landscape plans (Dec 2015) to move the lift door location and expand the beer garden, created a queueing and sight-line issue between the shared path, the cliffs lift, and the exit from the beer garden. This has created an unpleasant and hazardous situation for both patrons and path-users, which was acknowledged by Urbis soon after opening (Figure 10). It is noted that the mitigations proposed in that Urbis report were either not implemented (cutting back the foliage), or implemented poorly (adding signage), and as such the issue remains unresolved to this day.
5. In September 2019, HSW installed small, low-height bollards at this conflict location (Figure 11), presumably as a means of "slowing" path users. However, this type of treatment is known to be hazardous to cyclists, even at relatively low speeds, and is not recommended as a means of slowing cyclists in the AustRoads guidelines. Such a band-aid fix is a clear indication that the design at this location is fundamentally flawed, despite the developer having abundant space in which to design a safe and pleasant crossing.
6. HSW has constructed extra drinking and dining areas in close proximity to this conflict location, this not only added to the traffic and hazards at this location but failed to seek Council planning approval for the works (Figure 12).
7. The shared driveway/active transport corridor has proven to be a failure in design with motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists traveling in every direction and the recent reconstruction of the central traffic island. This area requires a dedicated traffic controller on busy evenings, and temporary orange bollards have become a frequent feature.
8. HSW has allowed the northern-most tenancy to fence-off and construct a dining area over the top of the designated pedestrian pathway, which was to provide the main access between the development and the CBD. Despite bold pavement markings directing pedestrians to the riveredge boardwalk, the clear desire line results in the majority of path users crowding the already-narrow dedicated bicycle path and walking directly into traffic on the main driveway, while restaurant patrons queue across the dedicated bicycle path (Figure 13). It is clear the restaurant was constructed without consideration or forethought for path users & is evidenced by the relocation of decorative buoy previously blocking access to the riveredge boardwalk path, (Figure 14).
9. HSW has planted toxic shrubs along the active transport corridor that poses a hazard to children (Figure 15).

In addition to these issues impacting negatively on active transport users, other undesirable aspects from the community's perspective include the development not providing the amount of public open green space required by Council's approval, and the obstructing of public access to the heritage register-listed bomb shelters located at the rear of this site (contrary to the developers claims, these bunkers have simply been hidden out of the way, and out of sight, near unsightly equipment and machinery, Figure 16).

For the above reasons the CBD BUG was very surprised to read the following statement attributed to you in the Brisbane Times dated 24 September 2020 -

**"In confirming the awards judges praised Howard Smith Wharves for its clear planning vision, the investment in quality design and the commitment to embracing community values, all of which has produced a truly great place that will be celebrated for generations to come".**

In view of these numerous, serious defects in this development, the CBD BUG would welcome your insight as to if the judges were aware these issues and whether they factored them into their decisions.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Campbell', written in a cursive style.

Donald Campbell  
Co-convenor  
Brisbane CBD BUG  
23 November 2020

Cc:

Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner - Brisbane City

Cr Ryan Murphy – Chairperson of Public and Active Transport Committee

Cr Jared Cassidy - Leader of the Opposition in Council and Opposition Spokesperson on Council's Public and Active Transport Committee

Cr Jonathan Sri, Councillor for The Gabba Ward and member of the Public and Active Transport Committee

Hon Grace Grace MP – McConnel

Cr Vicki Howard - Brisbane Central

# State of Howard Smith Wharves path 'not acceptable', Quirk says

By [Lucy Stone](#)  
March 5, 2019 – 6.19pm



A shared pedestrian and cyclist pathway through the Howard Smith Wharves that cyclists say is a dangerous hazard will see “action” taken in coming weeks, Brisbane lord mayor Graham Quirk says.

Share [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

## TODAY'S TOP STORIES

### MISSING PERSON

Search under way for judge missing near Brisbane bushland

42 minutes ago



Since the major entertainment precinct opened late last year, cyclists and pedestrians have raised concerns about the safety of the pebble path running behind the Wharves to connect the city with New Farm riverwalk.



Figure 1: news article regarding hazardous pebble path



Figure 2 - Potholes in active transport corridor surface



Figure 3 – Loose gravel surface of active transport corridor

## Howard Smith Wharves bike path to be covered like a 'suburban street'

By **Tony Moore**  
August 10, 2019 – 9:32pm



Howard Smith Wharves management has bowed to pressure from cycling groups and agreed to resurface a pathway cyclists claim is unsafe for riders.

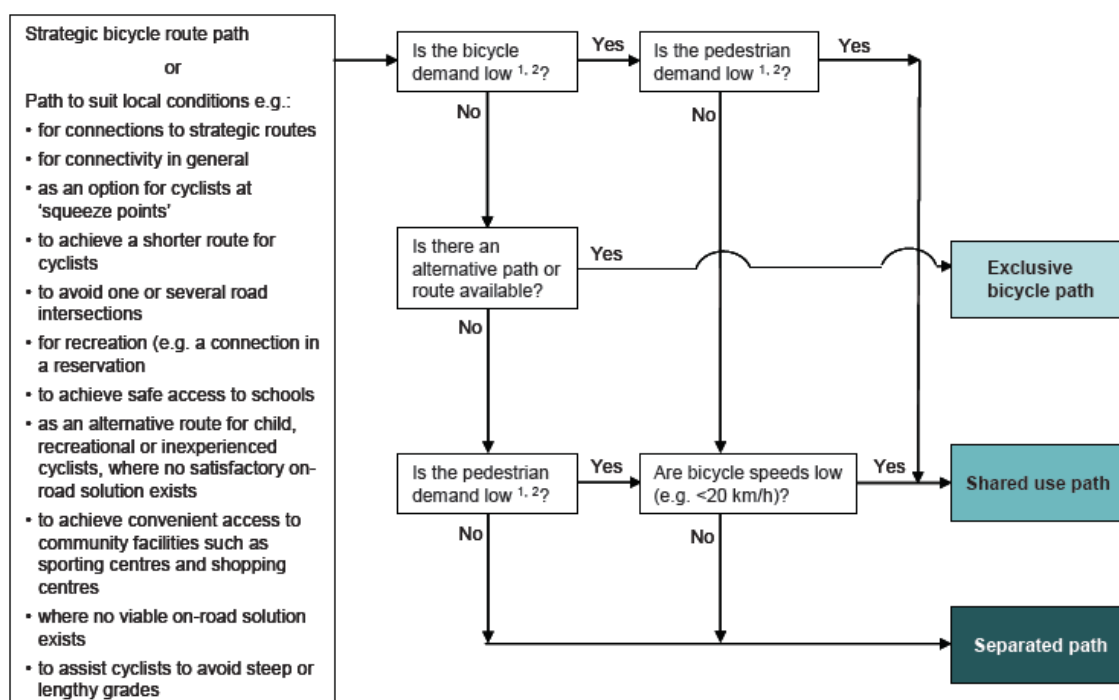
Save Share [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

28 View all comments

Brisbane cyclists had urged operators of the popular eatery precinct to pave or concrete over the cycling and pedestrian walk rather than simply resurfacing the compressed granite.



Figure 4: news article regarding reconstruction of hazardous pebble path



Notes:

1. The level of demand can be assessed generally on the basis of the peak periods of a typical day as follows:

- Low demand: Infrequent use of path (say less than 10 users per hour)
- High demand: Regular use in both directions of travel (say more than 50 users per hour).

2. These path volumes are suggested in order to limit the incidence of conflict between users, and are significantly lower than the capacity of the principal path types.

Source: Austroads (1999)

Figure 2.1: Guide to the choice of path treatment for cyclists

Figure 5 – AustRoads Guidance on active transport corridor selection

### 7.3 Horizontal Curvature

Where a path location or alignment is not constrained by topography or other physical features, a generous alignment consisting of straights and large radius curves is desirable. Such an alignment will provide good sight lines that are essential for safety as well as a pleasant riding experience for cyclists.

Figure 6 – AustRoads Guidance on active transport alignment

#### *Smooth surface*

Surface quality and trip length are of equal importance, and both are twice as important to cyclists as traffic volumes and the availability of bicycle facilities, in cyclists' route choice (Bovy and Bradley 1985).

Many bicycles have narrow tyres inflated to high pressure to reduce drag and have no suspension system. A smooth (albeit skid resistant) surface is therefore desirable for bicycles to be used effectively, comfortably and safely. Surfaces used for cycling should desirably be smoother than those acceptable for motor vehicles and persons responsible for path construction and maintenance should be made aware of this requirement. Some guidance on surface tolerances is provided in Section 4.2.3.

It is also important that the design restricts debris from accumulating on paths. Surface water should not be shed across the path in situations where soil, mulch or other debris could be carried onto the path. It is generally preferable that water is collected and piped under the path. Similarly, a maintenance regime should be in place to enable the removal of any debris that could inconvenience cyclists or create hazardous conditions by placing a solid object in the path of cyclists or causing the surface to become slippery (e.g. broken glass, rocks, mud after inundation, loose leaves or berries etc.).

Figure 7 – AustRoads Guidance on active transport corridor surfaces

A footpath should, as far as possible, allow for a continuous accessible path of travel so that people with a range of disabilities are able to use it without encountering barriers.

While a footpath necessarily follows the natural topography of the area, in the best possible circumstances a continuous accessible path of travel along a footpath should:

- Have a gradient of no steeper than 1 in 20
- Have a cross fall of no steeper than 1 in 40
- Have kerb cuts with appropriate kerb ramps
- Incorporate appropriate Tactile Ground Surface Indicators where necessary to ensure adequate safety and orientation at street crossings
- Have a pedestrian zone with a minimum clear width of 1.8 metres at the narrowest point and a minimum clear height of 2 metres with nothing encroaching into that envelope
- Be as smooth as possible without raised or cracked paving or tree root damage
- Have a slip resistant surface during dry and wet conditions

In addition the Commission is of the view that the continuous accessible path of travel should extend from the property line with no obstructions or projections in order to provide the best possible guidance line for all users including people with a vision impairment.

Figure 8 – Human Rights Commission Instruction on Access to Premises

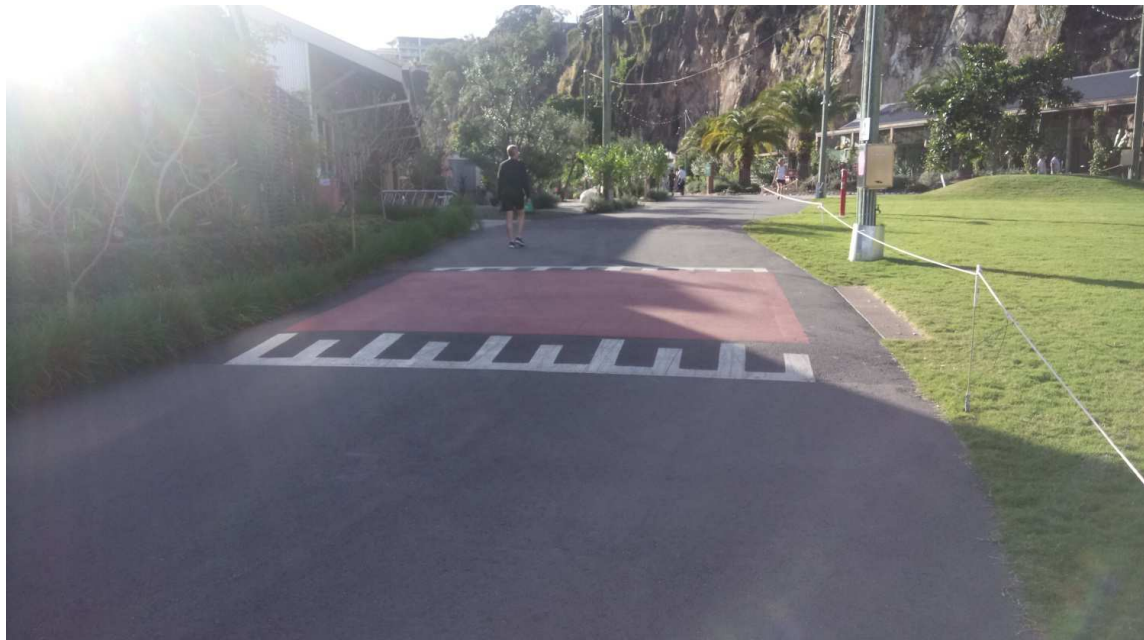


Figure 9 – installation of speed control platform on a 1 in 21 “walkway” of the active transport corridor

Figure 1 – Area of conflict



Picture 1 – View looking east

Source: Urbis, 2019



Picture 2 – View exiting the 'beer garden' looking west

Source: Urbis, 2019

Figure 10 – Documentation of poor sight lines at critical junction (190214\_BCC Response to Further Issues, Urbis 2019)





Figure 11 –The crowded lift access, with hazardous low bollards and unapproved structures in background

## Howard Smith Wharves told to 'rectify' unapproved buildings

By **Tony Moore**  
November 23, 2019 – 9.55pm



Businesses at Brisbane's popular Howard Smith Wharves under the Story Bridge have been constructing buildings without council approval.

Share [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

10 View all comments

Brisbane City Council confirmed several complaints had been made over the construction of bars and pop-up food venues in areas designated as drop-off and loading zones.



Some of the building work at Howard Smith Wharves that's being questioned by Brisbane City Council. This space is zoned as a set-down area, according to planners. TONY MOORE

Figure 12: news article regarding unapproved buildings and extensions on site



Figure 13: main pedestrian path blocked by restaurant, with many pedestrians choosing to mix with heavy traffic rather than take detour to the right



Figure 14: main pedestrian path completely blocked by restaurant to the left and buoy to the right



## Pink oleander (Nerium oleander)

An ornamental shrub to 4m, often with many slender stems from the ground. Dwarf, double-flowered and variegated varieties are now popular.

The perfumed flowers are pink, red, white or apricot, 4–5cm across with five spreading petals, and are usually clustered at the end of the branches.

The leaves are lance-shaped, leathery and stiffly pointed, 7.5–20cm long and 1.3–2cm wide, arranged in groups of two or three along the branch.

Toxicity category: 1, 2, 3, 4



Warning: For all ingestions seek urgent medical assistance.

Figure 15: Queensland Health advice on Pink Oleander currently planted along HSW Active Transport Corridor

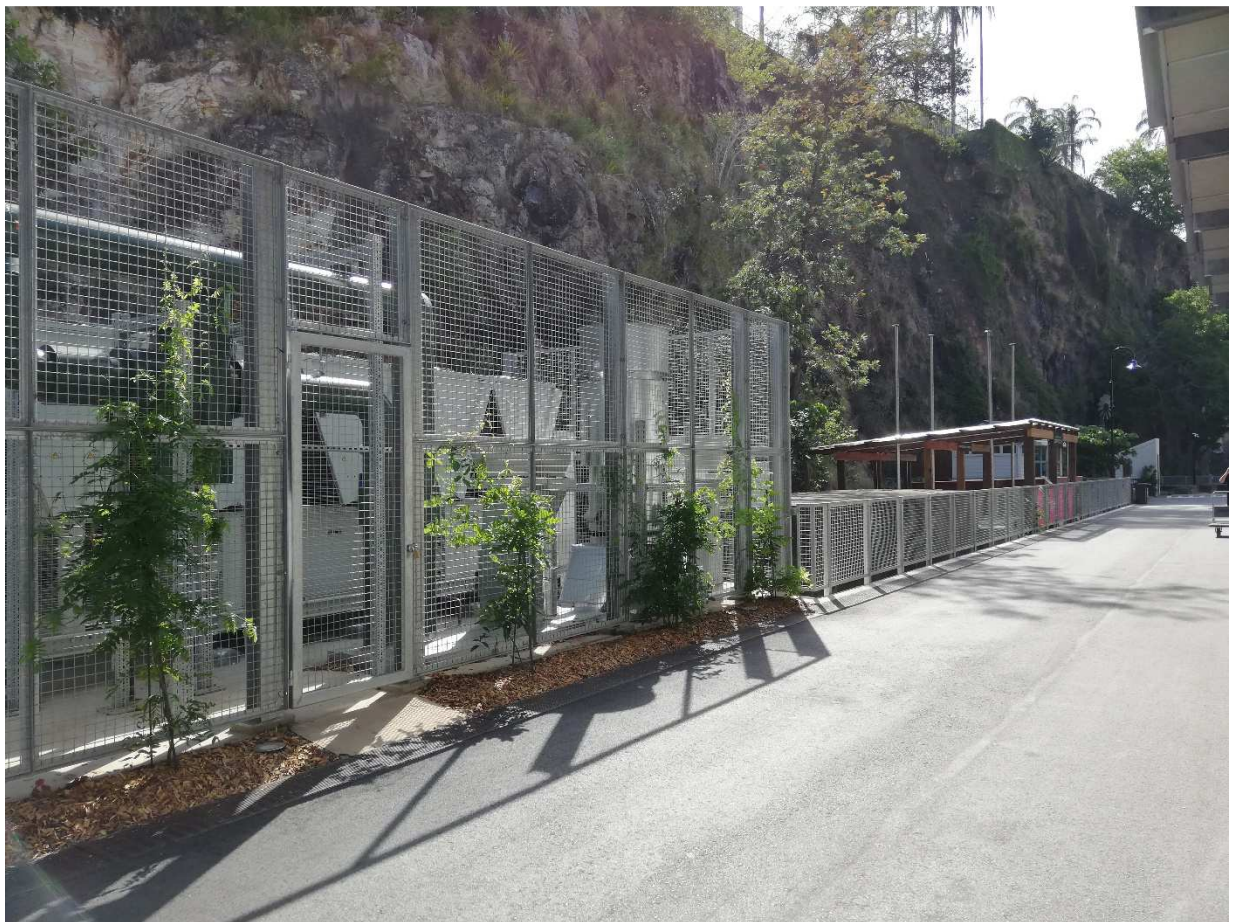


Figure 15: Heritage listed bunkers are hidden away near unsightly equipment