



## Trying out Council's new Bike Lanes

*Back in July 2020 the City of Melbourne approved an accelerated budget to fast-track delivery of more safe bike lanes in the CBD.*

About a month ago I decided that perhaps it might now be safe to try riding a bicycle in the city. The bike, which came with me from Noosa back 13 years ago, was a sorry sight, covered in dust, tied up in the building's garage. At the time, a few attempts to bike in the city resulted in extreme fear at the thought of being "mowed down by all that traffic!".

After a visit to the bike shop, a bike service and refurbishment, loading batteries in the odometer, installing a mounting bracket for the phone and a practice ride in the car park, I was ready to go. The building's Body Corporate now allows bikes to be stored in apartments meaning that I could keep my bike at home and in good condition.

Council policy is to protect bikers from traffic with barriers defining dedicated lanes along key routes. First adventure was a ride along the river – simple and enjoyable. The next was a journey to Brunswick, setting out along Exhibition Street. In the context of being a novice rider, I have to admit that I felt safe in the new bike lanes. Coming back via Royal Parade, in a secure bike lane admiring the adjacent park was delightful. What was important to me was having physical separation from traffic and not just paint on the road.

Where possible council policy is to provide (in order) separate lanes for pedestrians then bikers then parking, followed by moving vehicles and then trams, if applicable. What impressed me was the idea that bikers' lanes should be next to the curb instead of being on the driver's side of parked cars. The latter being so dangerous when someone opens their car door and the cyclist has to swerve into the traffic.

With the new COVID normal now being a factor, more people are opting to ride their bikes instead of taking the tram or train. In fact, studies have shown that more people are walking and riding to get around as they know it is much safer, both from the self-distancing perspective and actual riding perspective, thanks to all the bike lanes improvements.

Residents 3000 members heard from the City of Melbourne at our recent event that the council has opted to adopt a new design of low cost, locally produced prefabricated barriers made of recycled material. They are fast to install using a spiked type anchor compared to traditional concrete curbing that requires digging up the roadway.

The council is evidently committed to new CBD cycling lanes along Flinders and Elizabeth Streets in the 20/21 financial year. My Google guide recommended a route along Elizabeth Street. I would not go there, as for any bike rider let alone this novice, the so called bicycle lane is virtually non-existent due to vehicles parking in the poorly marked lane. However, the problem of creating protected lanes for all users - walkers, bikes, vehicles, trams in a relatively small roadway width is considerable.

Apart from safety considerations, the benefits of the creating dedicated lanes means that when bikes move out of the main traffic flow, traffic is free to move more fluently along the road, easing congestion. Gradually and steadily, the city traffic management is becoming more tuned to peoples' needs for the benefit of the community as a whole.