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Summary

This Vehicle Crossing Policy guides the way applications for new vehicle crossings are managed at Darebin. Vehicle Crossings provide vehicle access between a private property and the road network, by crossing the nature strip, footpath and/or verge. They provide a formalised location for vehicles to enter and exit the road network, and vehicle access between public and private space.

Vehicle Crossings usually benefit a single property; however have the potential to affect utility and amenity for the broader community. Whilst vehicle access between private property and the roadway is important and potentially essential, the approval for the placement and specifications of Vehicle Crossings must be managed carefully to minimise impacts for other road users.

This Vehicle Crossing Policy is based on the following four principles:

- Protection of Public Assets,
- Road Safety,
- Urban Amenity, and
- Sustainability.

The management of vehicle crossings involves the responsibilities of many units of Council, including Statutory Planning, Strategic Planning, Building Services, Infrastructure Maintenance and Support, Local Laws, Transport Management and Planning, Public Realm and Parks and Vegetation. Council Strategies and Policies that apply to vehicle crossings include the Darebin Transport Strategy, the Safe Travel Strategy, the Darebin Heritage Study, the Neighbourhood Character Study, the GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy and the Tree Retention Policy.

Definitions

Vehicle Crossing – the term used in the *Local Government Act (VIC) 1989* to describe a facility, between the face of kerb and the private property boundary, used to provide vehicular access between the street and private property (also see Vehicle Crossover). Sometimes referred to as a driveway crossing. This document uses the term vehicle crossing to also mean vehicle crossover.

Vehicle Crossover – the term used in the *Planning and Environment Act (VIC) 1987* to describe a facility, between the face of kerb and the private property boundary, used to provide vehicular access between the street and private property (also see Vehicle Crossing). Sometimes referred to as a driveway crossing.

Introduction

Vehicle crossings have an impact on the safety and amenity of Darebin's streets. Transport mode and land use trends are placing increasing importance on the management of vehicle crossings. Whilst vehicle crossings provide access to areas adjacent land parcels, which may be a desirable outcome, new vehicle crossings often remove kerbside space

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otherwise used for public car parking spaces, and can also create dangerous conflict points for our most vulnerable road users (i.e. pedestrians and cyclists).

This policy sets out an approach for managing vehicle crossings in a way that delivers the greatest public benefit, protects vulnerable road users, and maintains environmental and amenity functions of the road environment.

A Darebin Vehicle Crossing Permit is required to construct a vehicle crossing or make changes to an existing crossing. Construction and maintenance of vehicle crossings is the sole responsibility of the property owner. (This includes the protection of any utility equipment that lies beneath or is affected by the permitted vehicle crossing.) All works must be completed to the satisfaction of Council at the applicant's expense and responsibility.

All requirements described in the Vehicle Crossing Permit Application Checklist must be met. Appendix A outlines the relationship between the Planning Permit process and the Vehicle Crossing Permit process.

Key Guidelines

This policy employs six key guidelines to govern the management of vehicle crossings in Darebin. These guidelines are:

1. New vehicle crossings must result in a net gain in the parking supply;
2. No more than one single-width vehicle crossing should be provided for each dwelling fronting a street (Planning Scheme Clause 55.03-9);
3. Relocation of an existing vehicle crossing should not result in loss of additional on-street car parking;
4. Vehicle access must be provided from a rear laneway if available and suitable (Darebin Urban Character Policy – General Requirement); and
5. Vehicle crossing placement must minimise impacts to existing Council assets including on-street car parking.
6. New vehicle crossings and the associated car parks accessed by the crossing must meet the necessary planning and design requirements.

These guidelines are employed to achieve the principles of protection of public assets; road safety, urban amenity, and sustainability. These principles are detailed in the next section.

An application for two separate vehicle crossings on one property frontage to service a u-shaped driveway is subject to the second guideline above prohibiting more than one single-width driveway per frontage. The only exception to this rule will be sites where a u-shaped driveway may serve a critical access purpose for emergency vehicles.

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Vehicle crossing applications will be assessed according to the **Vehicle Crossing Permit Application Checklist**.

Principles

Vehicle crossings have an impact on the safety and amenity of Darebin's streets. New vehicle crossings often remove kerbside space otherwise used for public car parking spaces, and can create dangerous conflict points for our most vulnerable road and path users. As such, additional vehicle crossings can have a negative impact on environmental and neighbourhood character.

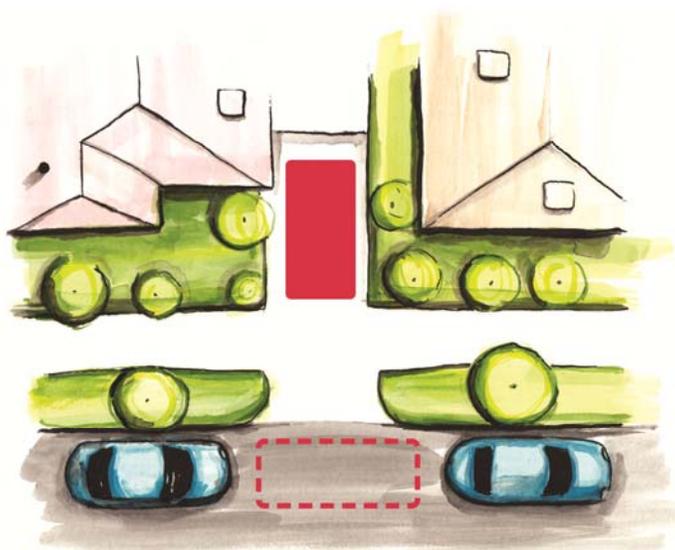
A number of principles underpin this policy, to ensure the policy results in safe, fair and just outcomes for our community. These principles are: Protection of Public Space, Road Safety, Urban Amenity and Sustainability. These principles are discussed in the following sections.

Principle 1 - Protection of Public Space

The road reserve, including the road carriageway, is public land for public use, and will be managed to maximise the utility and amenity for the broader community. Vehicle crossings effectively serve a single or private property, thus unofficially privatises this public space, and results in the loss of at least one on-street car parking space.

Victorian Road Rule 198(2) states that: "A driver must not stop on or across a driveway or other way of access for vehicles travelling to or from adjacent land..." (*Road Rules – Victoria 2009*)

As such, if Council grants a permit for a vehicle crossing, they are also accepting the loss of at least one on-street parking space (dependent on the width of the vehicle crossing and proximity to other parking obstructions/restrictions).



On-street parking, particularly in the vicinity of activity centres, community amenities, and other activity nodes is a valuable public asset which contributes to the character and vitality of local areas through the provision of parking for a variety of users, including residents, visitors, employees and shoppers.

The construction of a new vehicle crossing must create access to a greater total number (on- and off- street, public and private) of car parking spaces than previously existed. If the crossing only allows access to one car space on a property, and removes one on-street space, there is no net benefit to the community. In fact there is a net loss for the community, because where the on-street space is available to the public, the off-street space is only available for the landowner. In the case of an existing crossing being relocated, the relocation should not result in loss of additional on-street car parking spaces.

A vehicle crossing will only be allowed where it reduces on-street parking demand pressures by providing a greater number of off-street car spaces than the number of on-street spaces removed by the construction of the crossing. As such, vehicle crossings should not be permitted where there is no net gain in parking supply.

Principle 2 - Road Safety

Vehicle crossings will be managed in a manner that maximises the safety of vulnerable road users as the highest priority, as well as minimising traffic safety issues. The proliferation of vehicle crossings in a street can reduce safety for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers in that street.

Traffic Safety

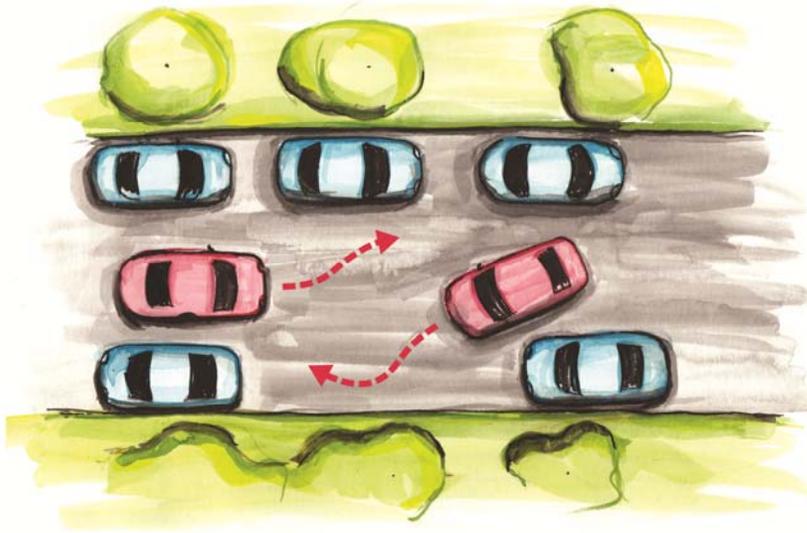
The retention of on-street parking through the minimisation of vehicle crossings promotes reduced vehicle speeds and traffic volumes by creating “side-friction”. This means that drivers are forced to slow down to facilitate manoeuvring around parked vehicles and to

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give way to oncoming vehicles. As a result, traffic on the street is slower and safer, and drivers passing through to another destination choose alternative, higher order roads, where higher speeds are more appropriate. Reducing vehicle speeds and traffic volumes leads to increased amenity for residents and road users.

Austrroads Guide to Traffic Management Part 5 states “Minimisation of driveway numbers and control of their locations reduces conflicts between the traffic mobility and access functions”. Austrroads indicates that on-street parking effectively narrows traffic lanes, and encourages speed reduction. Furthermore, Austrroads Guide to Traffic Management Part 11 states “On-street parking can also be used as an environmental and amenity tool to discourage aggressive driving.”

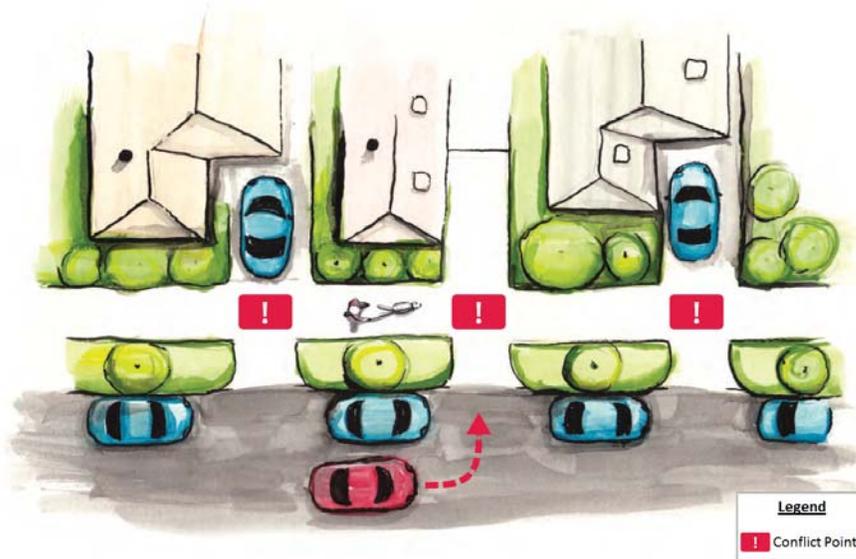
Minimising the frequency of vehicle crossovers will therefore lead to increased opportunities for public parking, and resultant traffic safety benefits of reduced vehicle speeds and reduced conflict points.



Vulnerable Road User Safety

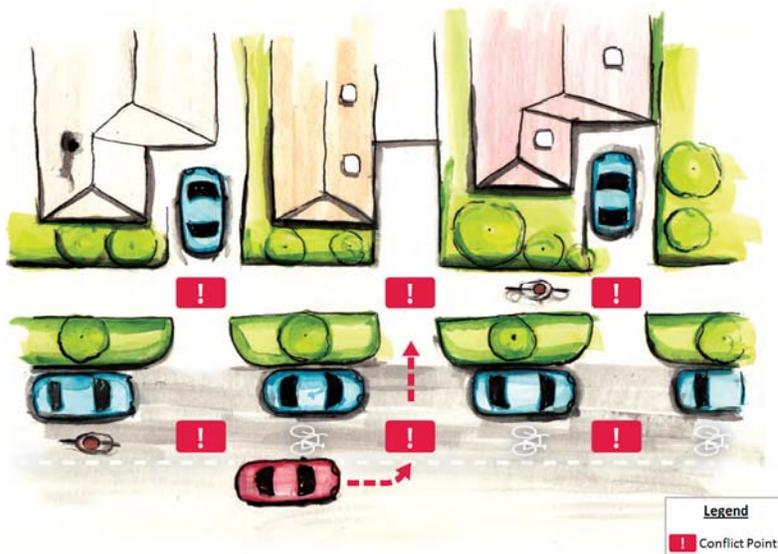
Vehicle crossings can be a potentially dangerous conflict point for vulnerable road users, including children on foot and on bikes, aged and other pedestrians. Minimising the number and width of vehicle crossings in the municipality means that the risk of conflict between pedestrians and cars is reduced. This is especially important in areas of high pedestrian activity such as in activity centres, near schools, or on bus or tram routes.

Minimising the number of conflict points will help create a municipality where the most vulnerable in our transport system can use a footpath without fear or danger of being struck by a car.



Cyclist Safety

Vehicle crossings also create inherent conflict between cyclists and cars. Cyclists travelling to the left of a trafficable lane or in a dedicated cycle lane are at risk when cars pull across their paths into or out of vehicular crossings. There is also an increased risk of conflict for young cyclists (12 and under) cycling on the footpath. Minimising the number and width of vehicle crossings in the municipality means that the risk of conflict between cyclists and cars is reduced.



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Principle 3 - Urban Amenity

Maintenance and enhancement of urban character is critical to urban amenity, liveability and attractiveness. As such, vehicle crossings must be managed in a way that reduces their impact on urban amenity.

Urban Character and Heritage

The number of vehicle crossings on a street can have an impact upon the distinctiveness of a street and the character of a locality. This in turn, impacts on the overall pedestrian experience and the choice to walk to local destinations or to public transport.

Darebin's Neighbourhood Character Study (2007) generally requires design responses where:

- garages and carports are located behind the line of the dwelling;
- paving in front garden areas, including driveways and crossovers, is minimised;
- permeable driveway materials are used;
- vehicular access is provided from a rear laneway, if available;
- where laneway access is not available and crossovers are common, a maximum of one crossover per site may be provided;

and that avoid;

- car parking structures that dominate the façade or view of the dwelling;
- the creation of new crossovers in streets that do not have crossovers;
- the creation of wide driveways or crossovers;
- front setbacks dominated by impervious surfaces.

Darebin's Vehicle Crossing Policy should be used in parallel with Darebin's Neighbourhood Character Study and heritage provisions in the assessment of applications for vehicle crossings.

GreenStreets Strategy

The public streetscape, inclusive of nature strips and street trees, represents Council's smallest individual public open spaces. GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy 2012-2020 outlines a vision and set of principles to guide City of Darebin's approach to streetscape design and street tree planting.

High level priorities for street tree planting and streetscape design by 2020 are to:

- increase the overall number of trees in Darebin's streetscape
- increase the overall percentage tree canopy cover

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- improve the overall community satisfaction with Council's implementation and management of streetscapes
- increase the quality of streetscapes through considered, creative design outcomes
- increase the amount of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD), passive irrigation and permeable surface applications throughout the municipality
- implement streetscape outcomes giving precedence to and benefiting the larger community
- provide safe, accessible and uncluttered streetscapes.

In application, this means that GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy 2012-2020 supports increasing the amount of permeable nature strip on residential, industrial and commercial streets.

This is accomplished by:

- retaining existing street trees
- limiting the number of permitted vehicle crossings
- removing redundant or disused vehicle crossings
- planting additional street trees in the streetscape.

Opportunities to Improve Streetscapes

Managing the number of vehicle crossings in Darebin will result in:

- protection of valued existing street trees,
- avoiding impact on existing street tree root systems, and
- increased opportunities for, and retention of, street furniture.

Minimising paved areas provides more attractive streetscapes and greater opportunities for planting. This in turn impacts on the overall pedestrian experience and the choice to walk to local destinations or to public transport. The retention of street trees is a high priority for Darebin communities as they soften streetscapes, provide habitat and shade, and calm traffic. (see Darebin's Tree Retention Policy, 2008, and GreenStreets, 2013)

The role of street trees in providing amenity and shade will also become increasingly important as an adaptation measure to the warming climate (see Darebin Climate Change and Peak Oil Adaptation Plan 2009).

New vehicle crossings should not impact on existing trees, or be placed within the tree protection zone. Where a proposed crossover will affect an existing tree, Darebin's Tree Retention Policy should be consulted, and a tree removal permit may be required in accordance with the policy prior to provision of a Vehicle Crossing Permit.

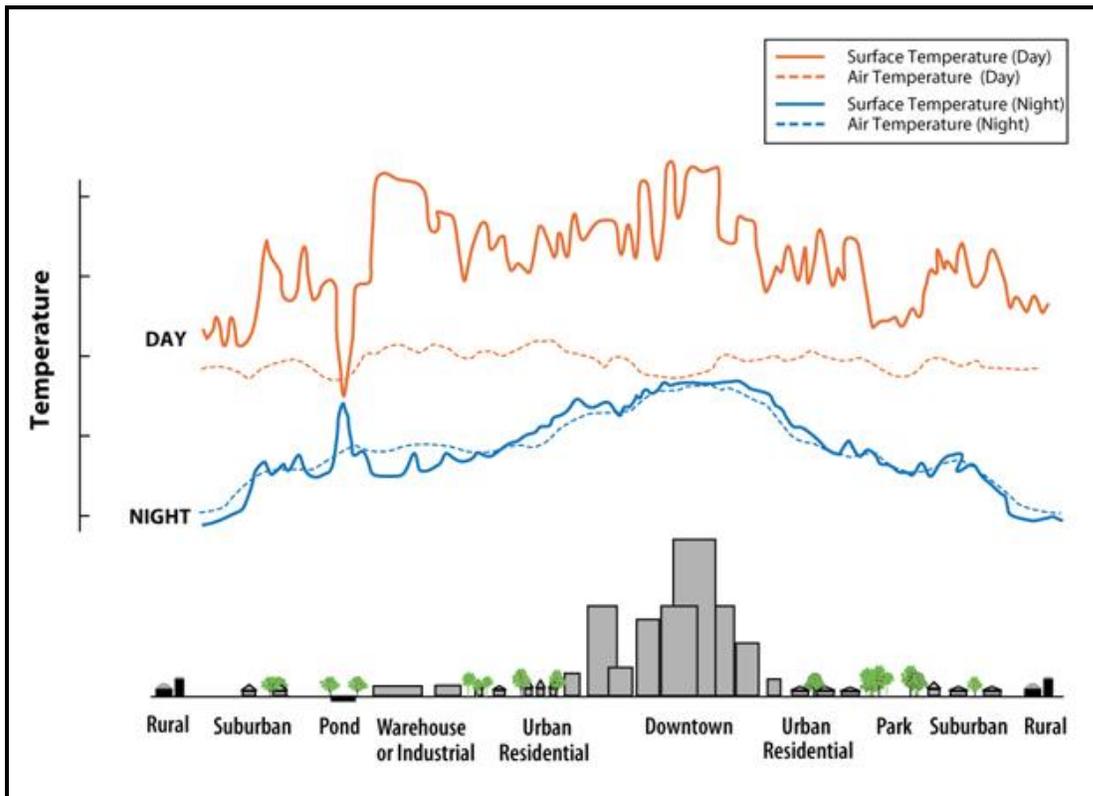
The role of street trees in Urban Amenity is supported by private landscape areas in front yards. Opportunities for front yard landscaping are increased by minimising vehicle crossings and maximising use of ROW access where available.

Principle 4 - Sustainability

The protection and improvement of the environmental sustainability of our city and streets is an overarching requirement of all activities of Council. Minimising hard surfacing has the dual benefits of minimising reflective surfacing and promoting water sensitive urban design and managing stormwater runoff.

Minimise Reflective Surfacing

Surfaces that absorb and then radiate heat (hard surfaces including buildings, concrete and particularly dark surfaces such as asphalt and bitumen) contribute to the heat island effect. Due to the heat island effect, cities are often hotter than surrounding undeveloped land. The heat island effect can also result in localised increases in temperature. These temperature increases exacerbate the impacts of climate change and decrease amenity for residents. Increasing tree and vegetation cover is one of the best ways to reduce the impacts of the heat island effect.



Promote Water Sensitive Urban Design

An increase in vehicle crossings reduces nature strip area, thus reducing the amount of storm-water that can be absorbed locally before running-off in to drainage systems and

waterways. Without appropriate pollutant traps/filters, increased levels of storm-water run-off will result in more pollutants being carried in to Darebin's waterways. Additionally, where drainage systems are already nearing capacity, increased levels of storm-water run-off will increase the likelihood of localised flash-flooding.



Multiple vehicle crossings in close proximity removes on street parking, reduces tree planting opportunities, and reduces permeable areas that absorb storm water, as well as impacting negatively on the character of the street.

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Appeals Process

An applicant can choose to appeal a council decision to reject an application for a vehicle crossing.

If the applicant submitted a standalone vehicle crossing application that was refused by the assessing officer, the applicant can appeal by requesting the decision to be reviewed. The appeal must be in writing and demonstrate how the vehicle crossing will address the guidelines and principles in this policy, and how the vehicle crossing complies with the assessment criteria.

The review will be undertaken by the Transport Management and Planning Business Unit. The decision of this review will be final and no further appeals are possible.

Appendices

Appendix A - Vehicle Crossing Process Flow Chart

