



## **Australian Road Rules 9<sup>th</sup> amendment package - submission by the Canberra Pedestrian Forum**

### **Summary**

This submission applies to the proposed changes to **Rule 232: Crossing a road at traffic lights**. It may have implications for proposed changes to other Rules including Rule 262: *Proceeding when bicycle crossing lights change to yellow or red*.

- We support the intentions of the proposed changes to this Rule.
- We support deletion of duplicate references to "Offence provision."
- We do not support replacing "nearest" with "far."
- We recommend that the National Transport Commission review Rule 232 in the context of its poor road safety and traffic congestion outcomes.

### **Explanation**

**We support the intentions of the proposed changes to this Rule.**

We support the intentions to "[clarify]that a pedestrian is able to walk to the far side of the road (as intended) if the lights change while the pedestrian is crossing the road rather than [return to] the nearest side of the road," and to "remove unnecessary offence provisions."

**We support deletion of the duplicate references to "Offence provision."**

Subrule 1 of Rule 232 makes it an offence to fail to comply with that Rule. Additional *Offence Provisions* in other Subrules of Rule 232 are unnecessary.

**We do not support replacing "nearest" with "far."**

The proposed wording of Rule 232 (3) will be:

<p>(3) If, while the pedestrian is crossing the road, the traffic lights change to yellow or red, the pedestrian must not stay on the road for longer than necessary to cross safely to the nearer (in the direction of travel of the pedestrian) of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) a dividing strip, safety zone, or traffic island, forming part of the area set aside or used by pedestrians to cross the road at the intersection or place (the <b>safety area</b>);</li><li>(b) the far side of the road.</li></ul>
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The meaning of "near" and "far" depends on the location from which they are measured. For a pedestrian stepping onto the south side of a road and walking towards the north side, the south side of the road is "near" and the north side is "far." After the pedestrian is half way across the road, the south side becomes "far" and the north side becomes "near."

If there is no safety area, or if the pedestrian has passed the last safety area, then there is no safety area in the direction of travel of the pedestrian and Subrule (a) does not apply. In either of those cases, if the pedestrian is more than half way across the road, then:

- The “far” side of the road is the side from whence the pedestrian commenced crossing, and is not in the direction of travel of the pedestrian.
- Therefore Subrule (b) does not apply, and so Rule 232 (3) does not apply.

We agree that the current wording is potentially confusing, and note that is inconsistent in its use of both “nearer” and “nearest” to describe the same thing. The following wording may be clearer:

(3) If, while the pedestrian is crossing the road, the traffic lights change to yellow or red, the pedestrian must not stay on the road for longer than necessary to cross safely to the nearer of the following:

- (a) a dividing strip, safety zone, or traffic island, towards which the pedestrian is travelling, forming part of the area set aside or used by pedestrians to cross the road at the intersection or place (the **safety area**);  
or
- (b) the side of the road towards which the pedestrian is travelling.

**We recommend that the National Transport Commission review Rule 232 in the context of its poor road safety and traffic congestion outcomes.**

We believe that the two most important functions of Road Rules are to **maximise real-world road safety** and to **minimise real-world traffic congestion**.

**Rule 232 currently results in poor outcomes both for road safety and for traffic congestion.** Our preliminary investigation indicates that some pedestrian traffic lights:

- incorrectly indicate that it is unsafe to cross, for a quarter of their red cycle;
- show green on only half the occasions when it is safe to cross;
- cause significant traffic congestion; and
- have Rule 232 compliance rates as low as 45%, resulting in a large number of uncontrolled and potentially unsafe crossings.

A review of Rule 232 would address:

- What factors lead to non-compliance – e.g. unreliability of traffic lights as indicators of whether it is safe or unsafe to cross?
- What changes to Rule 232 (and related Rules) would increase compliance, improve safety and reduce traffic congestion? For example:
  - rules providing for the pedestrian equivalent of a slip lane (Rule 330);
  - pedestrian rules similar to Rule 56 (1A): *left turn on red after stopping*.
- What changes to intersection design and traffic light sequencing would increase compliance, improve safety and reduce traffic congestion?

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