

KEEPING OUR FOOTPATHS IN TOP SHAPE

Landowners and residents in the Eurobodalla Shire have been asked to join a campaign to keep local footpaths and walkways pedestrian friendly.

Council's Works Manager, Warren Sharpe, says while many of the shire's residential streets don't have paved footpaths, the grassed area fronting the road is still a public walkway area which needs to remain accessible to all.

"We are currently endeavouring to provide formed concrete pathways in our busy pedestrian areas on a priority basis and new subdivisions are now required to have a formed concrete footpath." Mr Sharpe said.

"However, residents in many existing streets will continue to rely on the grassed footway to allow them to walk through their neighbourhood without actually walking on the road."

"Unfortunately, in an effort to beautify their homes, some landowners/residents have undertaken work that restricts or hinders access along the footway."

Some of the major problems include unsuitable and poorly placed vegetation planted on the footpath area and slippery and uneven surfaces.

In the case of plants, they need to:

- be planted so as to leave at least 1.5m clear area for pedestrians to walk along;
- have branches that overhang this clear path at least 2.2m or more above the path so as not to restrict movement along the path;
- be planted in a relatively straight line so pedestrians do not have to zig-zag through them;
- be planted so as not to restrict lines of sight allowing drivers to see and be seen when going into and out of their driveways;
- be planted so they don't limit lines of sight to pedestrians, particularly at spots such as intersections where people frequently cross the road;
- be pedestrian friendly. For instance, plants with large thorns are not considered acceptable as they can easily scratch someone as they pass by; and
- be of a species that does not have a large root system that may develop above ground and lead to a tripping hazard.

Slippery surfaces can generally be averted by avoiding the use of loose stones or gravel on driveways across the footpath area.

Uneven surfaces are most commonly caused by the construction of a driveway at a different level to the footpath. If this has occurred, residents need to provide a smooth transition along the footpath area so pedestrians are not faced with steps or sharp inclines. In some cases people have constructed low retaining walls across the public footpath area leaving a potential spot for people to fall down.

"In many instances people aren't really aware of the problems they have created." Mr Sharpe said.

"It is particularly important to consider the whole of the community, particularly young children, the elderly, and people with a disability who may have restricted vision and can't easily spot differences in height as they walk along the path."

For more information including technical advice on developing acceptable footpath solutions, contact a Council works officer on 4474 1000.