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Bright spots on the highways of doom!

By Simon Wilson
May 11, 2017

Finally, some good news about traffic in Auckland. Simon Wilson sings the praises of the new spots in Shortland St.

Credit where it's due. The council has put big beige spots on Shortland St at the intersections with High St and O'Connell St and it's all kinds of wonderful.

Some people are going, what does it mean? Why not regular pedestrian crossings? What if someone gets run over? It's just too confusing!

A few things about all that.

1. What do the spots mean? They mean slow down, take care, this is a tricky road with lots of pedestrians and lots of cars, so negotiate your way with care. Even if nobody knows that, what do you think when you see an unknown set of signs on the road? It's an instinctive reaction, isn't it?
2. They can't be regular pedestrian crossings because there's already one at the bottom of the street and adding two more would make three within about 50 metres.
3. Do they make it more likely someone will get run over? Why would they? Actually, it's interesting to watch the traffic on that part of Shortland St. Most of it proceeds slowly and carefully. I watched for a while this afternoon and it's *common* for cars to stop for pedestrians.

Most of the traffic – yes, over half, on my count – is taxis and Ubers. They tend to go very slowly and carefully.

Most of the rest is private vehicles, usually heading into High St to find a park that, chances are, they will not find. If or when High St becomes less welcome to private vehicles and loses its car parks, traffic on Shortland St could thin dramatically. Almost all the rest of the cars cut into Jean Batten Place, using it and Fort St (both of them shared with pedestrians) as a rat run out to Customs St. Which should not be possible anyway.



THE SPOTS AT THE INTERSECTION OF SHORTLAND ST AND O'CONNELL ST. PHOTO: SIMON WILSON



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inner city streets of Auckland are no longer prioritised for drivers.

That's the key to it. You can still drive there, but please don't just assume you have right of way. (Also, they're an invitation to everyone, maybe on a festival day, to get out there and play Giants' Twister.)

Of course, if all this is wrong, and some drivers ignore the spots while some pedestrians feel overly safe and are put at greater risk, then the answer is not to get rid of the spots. It's for the council to have the courage to turn the shared spaces into pedestrian malls, and add more spots on the other inner-city streets, and back them up with other traffic calming measures too.

For now, though, the spots are a great leap forward. Thank you, Auckland Design Office and design champion Ludo Campbell-Reid, for putting them there. And hey, Auckland Transport, you could join in! More spots, please!

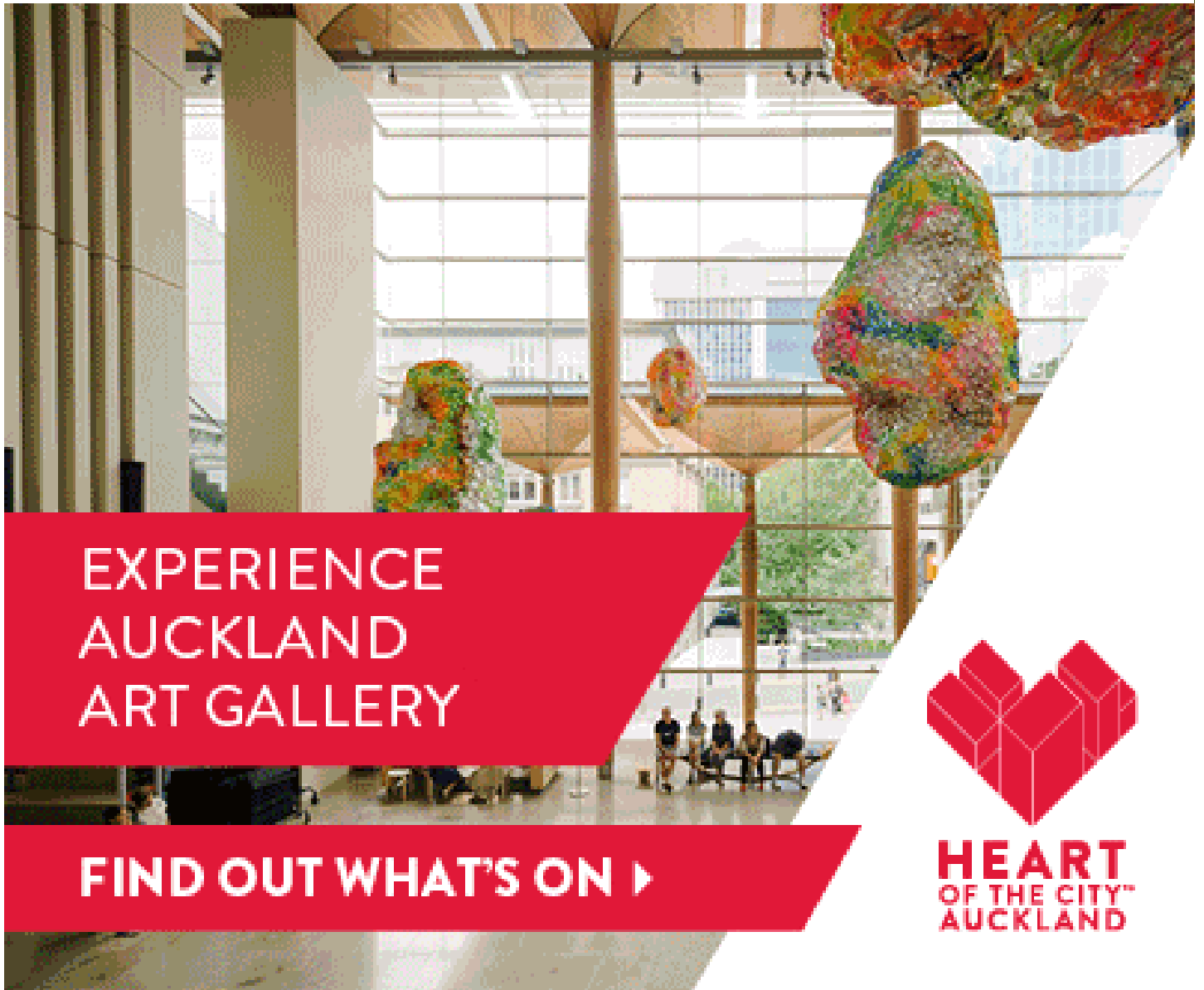
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