



back

Road spots help safety trial drive its point home

Cherie Howie

No, you do not have spots in front of your eyes.

And neither have parts of a busy downtown Auckland street turned into what looks like a giant adult-size game of twister – yet.

Large oyster pink-coloured spots have appeared on two sections of Shortland St, which runs off Queen St in the heart of the city.

The spotty sections are at intersections with high pedestrian use, at the eastern end of O'Connell St and where Shortland St meets High St and Jean Batten Place.

Auckland Design Office general manager Ludo Campbell-Reid said the spots, which he described as the "Shortland St polka dots", are a temporary traffic calming measure installed due to safety concerns raised by the Waitemata Local Board.

Their year-long trial is a first for Auckland following similar international examples and the project budget, which will also include soon painting the spots in a colour "sensitive to the heritage context" of the area, is \$25,000.

Traffic still has the right of way, but the attention drivers pay to the unexpected pattern serves to slow everyone down and heighten awareness of other street users, Campbell-Reid said.

The spots were chosen because "they're fun and create an element of surprise", he said.

Yesterday was only day two of the trial, but on-site monitoring had shown many vehicles were slowing down or stopping for pedestrians.

"The aim over time is to change

the behaviour of vehicles on Shortland St and deliver a more pedestrian-prioritised and safe route between High St and Jean Batten Place, and over Shortland St from O'Connell St."

Overall, the project was about turning traditional traffic engineering approaches "on their head".

"Just because it is simpler,

cheaper and more beautiful and fun doesn't mean its intention or impact is any less serious."

The long-term aim was to complete the inner-city pedestrian laneway circuit.

Pedestrians spoken to yesterday were puzzled by the attention-grabbing addition, but most were in favour.

Computing student Harsimran Singh, 21, described the spots as "kind of beautiful".

Sixty-two-year-old Grier Balderston was also impressed.

"I love it. Thank you whoever did it."

But not everyone was smitten. Zahoor, 28, said there were many other things that deserved priority.



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[back](#)



Two sections of Shortland St were among the areas in the Auckland CBD traffic calming trial.

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