

Trial of 'female' traffic signals starts in Australia

9th March, 2017



Gender equality has reached the small human characters on traffic signals in Australia. Signals at ten pedestrian crossings in the city of Melbourne now depict walking red and green people in dresses. The initiative is part of a trial 12-

month gender equality campaign unveiled by the city. The Minister for Women, Fiona Richardson, explained that the rationale behind the trial was to put more images of women in public places. She said: "There are many small, but symbolically significant ways that women are excluded from public space. This is a wonderful way to make public space more inclusive for women." She hopes the city's signals will have equal numbers of male and female figures in the future.

The new signals have drawn a mixed response from citizens. Many critics say the new scheme is unnecessary and a waste of taxpayers' money. A leading critic is Melbourne's mayor Robert Doyle, who told reporters: "I'm all for doing anything we can for gender equity, but really?" He added: "Unfortunately, I think this sort of costly exercise is more likely to bring derision." Others said the new images were a sign of political correctness gone crazy. Social media users asked why the image of the woman has to wear a dress, when many women wear trousers. Others said the money could have been better used for worthier projects that helped people in need.

Sources: BBC.com / SMH.com.au / ABC.net.au

Writing

There must be an equal number of male and female images used in society. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

gender equality / traffic signals / initiative / campaign / rationale / public space / mixed / response / waste / taxpayers' money / political correctness / dress / need

True / False

- There are 10 new female pedestrian traffic signals in Melbourne. T / F
- The traffic signals are part of a year-long trial. T / F
- The idea is to have more images of women in public places. T / F
- Men cannot cross at the female traffic signals. T / F
- The new signals are amazingly popular. T / F
- The mayor of Melbourne said the signals are good for his city. T / F
- Many people say the signals are a good example of political correctness. T / F
- Social media users said the money should help people in need. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. depict | a. reaction |
| 2. initiative | b. insane |
| 3. unveiled | c. identical |
| 4. significant | d. scheme |
| 5. equal | e. ridicule |
| 6. response | f. important |
| 7. waste | g. represent |
| 8. derision | h. requiring help |
| 9. crazy | i. squandering |
| 10. in need | j. revealed |

Discussion – Student A

- Should pedestrian traffic signals show male and female images?
- How important is this initiative for gender equality?
- Are images of people the best things to have on traffic signals?
- How could signals at pedestrian crossings be improved?
- Should there be more images of women in public spaces?
- Do you agree with Ms Richardson that women are 'excluded'?
- Will the female figures on the signals make it more 'inclusive' for women?
- How will an equal number of male and female figures change society?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. gender | a. numbers |
| 2. The initiative is part of | b. behind the trial |
| 3. the rationale | c. correctness |
| 4. small, but symbolically | d. response from citizens |
| 5. equal | e. a trial |
| 6. The new signals have drawn a mixed | f. money |
| 7. a waste of taxpayers' | g. people in need |
| 8. more likely to bring | h. equality |
| 9. political | i. derision |
| 10. worthier projects that helped | j. significant ways |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why have the new signals drawn a mixed response?
- What would the reaction be in your town to this scheme?
- Do you think this scheme is a waste of taxpayers' money?
- Why might this initiative 'bring derision' to Melbourne?
- Should the images be of a unisex figure?
- Should the money have gone to worthier projects?
- What questions would you like to ask the city's mayor?

Spelling

- Gender tiulaqey
- asediptrne crossings
- The iitveianit is part of a trial
- campaign evdliuen by the city
- the riaaanolt behind the trial
- make public space more icisvlnu for women
- drawn a mixed response from itscnzie
- A leading rtcici
- Melbourne's raomy
- more likely to bring isneoird
- iaiolptcl correctness gone crazy
- better used for rtioerhw projects

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. j	4. f	5. c
6. a	7. i	8. e	9. b	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Countdown Timers

You think countdown timers are the best safety devices at pedestrian crossings. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their devices. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): colourful signals, beeps when it is safe to cross or fences.

Role B – Colourful Signals

You think colourful signals are the best safety devices at pedestrian crossings. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their devices. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): countdown timers, beeps when it is safe to cross or fences.

Role C – Beeps When Safe to Cross

You think beeps when it is safe to cross are the best safety devices at pedestrian crossings. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their devices. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): colourful signals, countdown timers or fences.

Role D – Fences

You think fences are the best safety devices at pedestrian crossings. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their devices. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): colourful signals, beeps when it is safe to cross or countdown timers.

Speaking – Crossings

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things to keep pedestrians safe at crossings at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| • all traffic stops | • male and female signals |
| • road markings | • beeps when safe to cross |
| • fences | • countdown timer |
| • well-lit space | • colourful signals |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.