



A BRIGHT IDEA

WRITTEN BY CATHARINE MACKENZIE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BURTON

Gina Jones was driving along our grey motorway into Wellington in 2010 when she had a bright idea. Why not reflect Wellington's weather with a rainbow along State Highway One from Petone and the Ngauranga Gorge to the Mount Victoria tunnel?

Gina had already been asked by the Tunnels Alliance, led by the New Zealand Transport Authority, to come up with ideas for decorating the Terrace Tunnel.

How would it be if the rainbow guided all lighting or painting of tunnels, bridges and other infrastructure along the state highway?

She had a look at recent colourful artwork on the sides of the highways out of Melbourne and Sydney and came up with a Rainbow Corridor for Wellington.

The Wellington City Council approved the idea and its art advisers asked her to link the colours to the

The Tunnels Alliance liked the idea and commissioned Gina to design bright orange panels for inside the Terrace Tunnel. They also installed wiring for her lighting.

Feedback from motorists was excellent and Lexus New Zealand organised a fashion shoot with one of their latest cars against the background of brilliant orange panels inside the tunnel.

The next stage was to install special orange lighting. NZTA agreed verbally at the time, as confirmed by email, to pay for the inside lighting if the artist could find a sponsor for lighting the entrances.

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districts of Wellington that the road passed through.

So her rainbow theme began with blue for Petone, with green, purple and red for the Taniwha of Wellington coming out of the Ngauranga Gorge. From there the rainbow changed to green for the foliage of Kaiwharawhara, yellow near the stadium, red for Project Crimson on Tinakori Hill, yellow for the roses in the Bolton Street Memorial Park, orange for the creativity of Te Aro, red for Cuba Street's red light district, green again for the National War Memorial Park, blue near the Mt Cook Police Station and royal purple in the Mount Victoria tunnel.

Gina and her husband, Malcolm Fleming, approached the Wellington Sculpture Trust, responsible for commissioning and funding much of the public art work in Wellington.

The Wellington Sculpture Trust agreed to underwrite and fundraise for lighting the exterior of the tunnels. But it also wanted commitment in writing from the parties involved, NZTA and the council, to the whole Rainbow Corridor concept.

At this point progress stalled. Meetings were held, personnel changed, letters written and telephone calls made, but no decisions emerged from either party.

More than a year later, nothing has changed. Mr Fleming says they have become very frustrated with the whole process but particularly the council's lack of decision-making.

"Gina's done hundreds and hundreds of hours on the project," he said this week. "It's a legacy project so which artist wouldn't like to have that implemented?"

"It's creative. It's smart. Auckland and Christchurch are pumping away but Wellington is not doing these things."

It is not as if there is lack of support for the idea in the council. The Public Arts Panel has approved it and Councillor Ray Ahipene-Mercer, leader of the Arts and Culture portfolio, is very enthusiastic.

"The (Rainbow Corridor) idea is fantastic. It should be done. It's a wonderful project," he said.

"If we are going to do something about the entry into Wellington, this project is exciting. I've seen the design and art work for it. It's fantastic," he said.

But despite the enthusiasm, the project seems to be totally lost in the fog of the council's decision-making processes.

Natasha Petkovic, manager of the council's arts team, said there was confusion over who "owned" the project. The Council thought it was NZTA but NZTA said its involvement was just for the tunnels. No commitment had been made to a rainbow along the length of State Highway One.

It is up to the council, said Rod James, NZTA State Highway Manager.

"Our position is for WCC to take a lead in this. It's an urban design issue. We would need them to be committed to the whole overall idea."

In the meantime, NZTA has signed off the Terrace Tunnel project without installing the recommended lighting. The council says NZTA ran out of funds.

However, Mr James did say that NZTA would be open to looking at the Rainbow Corridor colours for the Mount Victoria tunnel if the council was able to be a leader.

The Tunnels Alliance asked Gina Jones three years ago to be involved "earlier" with the Mount Victoria tunnel upgrade.

Panels and lighting for that tunnel were designed and Gina asked lighting experts to test the luminosity of her "Royal Purple". But nothing further has happened and no more work has been commissioned.

The Wellington Sculpture Trust has been trying to move the project along.

"This one is taking its time," says former chairman, Neil Plimmer. "We need a clearer commitment from the other parties before the trust and the artist can do more detailed planning and we start fundraising."

"A lot of people need to buy into this plan and it takes time to get that commitment," he says diplomatically.

And the trust is not going to fundraise unless support is given in writing to the whole scheme.

"There's no point in doing little bits of it, otherwise it becomes meaningless," says the new chair, Sue Elliott. "Half a rainbow isn't a rainbow"

Ms Elliott says she likes the project. "I like works of art that are lyrical and have a journey and this one definitely does. It would be a glorious ribbon through the city." ■

