

The green man gone in a flash

I'd like to report a disappearance, even though it hasn't quite happened yet.

As a dedicated pedestrian, I've observed a shift in the timing of the green-man/flashing-red-man signals at Brisbane's traffic intersections.

Increasingly, I'm noticing that the green man has turned into a flashing red man moments after I've stepped off the kerb to walk across the road.

I first became aware of this last year when I was living in Kelvin Grove. I frequently had to cross at the intersection of Kelvin Grove Rd and Blamey St, near the Urban Village. Walking at a normal pace, unencumbered by pram or stroller or shopping bags, unafflicted by any physical disability, I was lucky to get across one side of this busy dual carriageway before the green man vanished and the flashing red man took over.

Since then I've experienced, in various other locations, this same sense of being tyrannised by crossing signals.

Now, according to the letter of the law, it's perfectly fine to continue walking across a road once the green man has given

way to the flashing red man.

In theory, who cares if the man is green or red, as long you can cross, right? Well, the law also decrees that it's not OK to commence crossing when old Blinky appears.

So you might be approaching an intersection – you might be only three feet away – but because the green man's screen time is so fleeting, it's likely to have ended before you reach the intersection.

So you have to stand there, waiting while the signals run through their



DAVID COHEN

cycle, until the green man finally shows up once again and you can commence your law-abiding journey across the road.

Or you can simply jaywalk, risking death or, worse, a \$70 fine.

And while pedestrians may be within their rights to continue crossing while the red man is flashing, drivers don't necessarily see it that way.

Recently I was almost cleaned up by a car turning left from Boundary St into Adelaide St in the CBD while I was three-quarters of the way across Adelaide. The red man was doing his on-off thing and yet the driver fumed at me from behind his windscreen.

I can't help but suspect that the Brisbane City Council is deliberately reducing the green man's term by very small increments – a process so gradual pedestrians won't be aware of it until it's too late.

One day we'll wake up to find the red man is all there is, the green man having been phased out of existence.

Assuming that such a conspiracy is afoot – if you'll pardon the pun – what is its purpose?

Why, to enable vehicles to go about their business unobstructed by troublesome walkers of course.

And one day, just like the green man, the pedestrians themselves will be completely forgotten.

David Cohen is a Brisbane freelance writer

