

Sent: Friday, 7 June 2013 11:48 AM

Subject: State Government review of the 'one metre' passing issue



Dear Minister and Mr. Hobbs

I write on behalf of Toowoomba Bicycle Users Group (TBUG) to commend you both for undertaking this review of the community call for a one metre passing rule in Queensland, announced today.

We understand that a review is not a commitment to change, but it does signify a considerable shift in thinking from that displayed by TMR during the period of the previous Beattie-Bligh governments.

However, we wish to urge a sense of caution here.

The review of our road speeds and this review, of the passing space, cannot be, or should not be, undertaken in isolation of each other because they are linked umbilically to the fate of bike riders.

We are concerned that merely instituting a single catch-all law of requiring one metre will then apply regardless of designated road speed, so the same for 40 kph as for 110 kph, which is patently foolish and dangerous.

Our solution is a graded passing distance, depending on designated road speed, with one metre being the starting point, rising, perhaps, to two metres at 100 kph.

Also, we understand from our research conducted to date, so we may well not have a complete picture yet, that in our state there is no requirement for a vehicle, when overtaking a bicycle, or mobility scooter for instance, to cross the white line demarking one road lane from another in order to pass the rider.

Passing a bicycle within a lane, within most lanes anyway, is fraught with danger. Bicycles should be treated as the vehicles they are designated within the Act, and passing vehicles should be required to signal right, pass with a (cars width) safe space, and then signal left to return. This rarely happens.

If, as we believe at this stage, that vehicles can overtake within a lane, then this lax approach to cycle safety would have to be addressed in conjunction with a mandated one metre or greater space.

Ultimately, we feel it is counterproductive to approach this issue as a 'bikes vs. cars war', as some in the media like to portray it.

Going to the Traffic Act, we find who roads are designed for, 'road users' and then what makes up that group of road users, which clearly informs readers that motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians *all* constitute *legitimate* road users.

Any review must be based on this equality of status as spelled out in the Act.

The truth is, that the discussion of a legislated space has only come about because of a lack of understanding within the community as to what roads are for - road users, and who road users are - all of us who use roads.

Perhaps, behind the obvious topic of this one metre review, the reviewers could keep in mind the legitimate expectation cyclists have that they are entitled to be on the road as equal road users with motor vehicles and as fellow humans we are entitled to the same amount of respect for life as one car/truck driver *should* accord to the next one.

When reviewing the death figures of cyclists, they are modest compared to the figures for motor vehicle drivers in this state, bad though that modest amount is.

Clearly, many motor vehicle drivers have (or had) a serious problem with understanding how to drive safely, indicating that the community still needs a very targeted campaign to push the very simple message of road safety.

That too would have to be an expectation of this review, that, regardless of whether the law changes or not, it should become clear that there is, overall, a very poor understanding within the community of what is meant by 'driving safely' and this should be addressed through a continuing 'safer roads' campaign.

It is a sorry state we find ourselves in, supporting a review of this very modest one metre passing gap simply because of the failure of the state to educate on road safety overall and of individuals to grasp the concept of safe road use.

That message should go out and be learned very early in life, and continually reinforced throughout life.

We are also concerned that some groups who will submit proposals to this review will advocate for the total or partial removal of cyclists from roads. This fundamentally misunderstands the role of roads. We reject such approaches out of hand and urge the reviewers to do likewise.

We have yet to meet a politician from any political party prepared to raise the taxmonies required to build the frequently cited 'Amsterdam/Copenhagen Solution', where those small nation-states have provided a very different environment for cycling, that simply cannot be repeated here across such a vast landmass as Queensland, never mind Australia.

We have a good network of bike lanes already, called 'roads' and we have a Traffic Act that recognises what roads are for and who they are for - all of us.

Finally, without wishing to single politicians out as somehow 'not brave', we have also yet to meet the taxpayer prepared to fund a statewide bike separation building program that some will inevitably be advocating in this review.

We look forward to submitting a more formal response to Mr. Hobbs and his team later, if required but trust this brief submission can be counted towards the review.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Wilson for

Toowoomba Bicycle Users Group (TBUG)