

My name is Debbie Breen and I am 50 years of age living in Townsville.

I have only been riding since 2005 – riding a bike for rehabilitation after a hip resurfacing, and then doing my first ride from Townsville to Cairns for Children’s Cancer. I was fortunate enough to meet many like minded people; people who were interested in helping others and being involved in a great lifestyle leading to a happy and healthy life, I would like to think. Bike riders seems to be ‘healthy’ and ‘caring’ people. Almost like a ‘family’. ☺

Over the years I have been sworn at, a driver yelled ‘boo’ at me, car horns blown at me, buses creeping up on me (through no fault of their own – engine is at the back and very hard to hear, so a bit of a scare when one suddenly turns up beside you and you can shake hands with the passengers) – this must have looked terrible to see, as a fellow bike rider screamed at me to let me know it was just ‘there’. I have had very near misses at roundabouts (the guy did say sorry to me) and had cars speeding out in front of me from side streets – not slowing to look and nearly ‘wham’. I thank God (literally) every time I arrive home safely. I have witnessed side mirrors of cars hit cyclists in front (thankfully they did not fall off) and the driver kept on going. Some drivers seem to get a thrill of driving as close as they can to cyclists.

I have a light in front, one at the back and one on the side of my bike and I have a light which I wear on my jersey on the back.

I like to think I obey all the rules, but honestly, when I am riding on the road, and a car comes up behind me, horn blowing, what does he want me to do? Maybe fly into the air to get out of his way, as obviously what he is doing is far more important than what I am doing!!!

My point is that everyone is too busy thinking about their own lives and not caring for other people. I have seen numerous car drivers doing illegal things on the road. Nobody seems to be too upset about this. We take it all in our stride, hoping that they don’t come a cropper and hurt/kill someone on the road. From what I can see on TV there are a lot of car accidents caused by drivers doing the wrong thing.

We only want to enjoy a bike ride out in the open – and feel safe – which, to be honest, again, I do not. It is such an exhilarating feeling. Bikes are sold in the shops, so it is ‘legal’. There are painted signs on roads indicating that part of the road is to be used by cyclists.

You know, I really would love to see, as part of getting a driver’s licence, riding a pushbike as part of the test. Unless you ride a bike in traffic, you really have no understanding of how a **little** thing (**1 metre**) can mean a **big** difference to your safety on the road. Becoming a bike rider has helped me to understand what it was all about, and hopefully helps me to stay more focused and be more aware of cyclists/motor bikes who share the road with me when I am driving, because I know what it is like. Some ‘accidents’ can be avoided.

Be safe, in whatever you do.

Debbie Breen