



**TOWNSVILLE BICYCLE USERS GROUP**  
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**Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee  
Parliament House  
Brisbane QLD 4000**

Submission by email [thigc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:thigc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Friday 12th July 2013

**Submission by the Townsville BUG for the Inquiry into Improving the interaction of cyclists with other road users.**

I am writing on behalf of the Townsville Bicycle Users Group (BUG) to thank the Legislative Assembly for requesting the undertaking of the Inquiry into Cycling Issues. While change is usually achieved over time, it is heartening to know that in response to the continuing up-swelling of public support in favour of furthering cycling as a mainstream form of on road transport and recreation, that the government and the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) are shifting their thinking toward a better system of shared road usage for all.

That said, it is the opinion of the Townsville BUG that the issues outlined within the Inquiry are too defined and constrictive to properly address and improve the interaction between cyclists and road users. It is not just the interaction of various forms of transport that should be considered, but also the choice to use one form of transport over another and the speeds allowed within our cities and towns that should be investigated in the longer term. While not an 'issue' mandated for the Inquiry to investigate, a point that should be noted is that the reduction in the number of car and heavy vehicle trips made on our roads would be the single most important aspect of improving road safety for all users.

Encouraging "more people to cycle more often on safe, direct and connected routes" is beneficial to both the community<sup>1</sup> and the economy<sup>2</sup> not to mention the environment<sup>3</sup>. By protecting and promoting Active Travel and established rail transport we would see a decrease in the number of heavy vehicles and cars on the road which would naturally lead to fewer incidents between all road users and as such, cyclists and motor vehicles as well.

Responses to the "particular issues" are outlined following:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.austcycle.com.au/promoting-healthy-cycling-in-your-local-community/what-are-the-benefits-of-promoting-cycling-in-your-local-community>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.austroads.com.au/abc/economic-benefits-of-cycling>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.deakin.edu.au/travelsmart/docs/theenvironmentalbenefitsofcycling\\_fact%20sheet.pdf](http://www.deakin.edu.au/travelsmart/docs/theenvironmentalbenefitsofcycling_fact%20sheet.pdf)

### **1. Short and long term trends in bicycle injuries and fatalities involving motor vehicles;**

I refer to the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Transport May 2013 update on Road Deaths in Australia: [http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/rda/files/RDA\\_0513.pdf](http://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/rda/files/RDA_0513.pdf)

Deaths by Road User Australia ended of May 2013

	Driver	Passenger	Pedestrian	Motorcyclist	Cyclist
2009	687	339	201	255	35
2010	687	292	182	217	38
2011	600	283	166	223	28
2012	568	269	196	207	35
2013	637	241	153	216	35

You will note that the number of bicycle-related deaths is fairly small compared with that of motor vehicles (driver and passenger). However these figures do not take into consideration the apparent increase in number of motor/heavy vehicle and cyclist related incidents resulting in injury to the cyclist. Nor the incidents of 'close calls' which have seen the popularity of the bicycle mounted video camera on the rise so as to record events for further action. It is worth noting that many incidents go unnoticed as the person has to be injured, with value of property damage greater than \$2500 (other than to the vehicle) or at least 1 vehicle towed. Many cyclists do not report injuries because insurance is rarely involved and they are too startled at the time.

With the increasing number of cyclists of all types on our roads, these incidents are bound to increase in number and frequency.

However, the relative risk of cycling is negligible compared to the impact of inactivity in the population.

A report prepared for The Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Sports Commission 2000 estimated 8000 deaths per year occur as a result of inactivity. [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/Publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-publicat-document-phys\\_costofillness-cnt.htm/\\$FILE/phys\\_costofillness.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/Publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-publicat-document-phys_costofillness-cnt.htm/$FILE/phys_costofillness.pdf)

Given this, the small size and resulting unlikelihood of bicycles causing injury to others as well as the Environmental, Health, Economic and Community connectivity benefits related to cycling there is every reason to encourage an increase in bicycle use by infrastructure, campaigns and laws that recognize the responsibility of motor vehicle users to be considerate and aware of vulnerable road users.

## 2. Evaluation, considering factors such as effectiveness, enforceability and impacts on other road users of existing and any other alternative road rules, such as the 1m rule, which govern interaction between cyclists and other road users;

The recent spate of incidents in QLD involving cyclists highlights the dangers that heavy vehicles pose to cyclists. I refer to the TMR technical guide on Cycling and Heavy vehicles:

[http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/Travelandtransport/Cycling/Bike%20user%20guide/Technical%20information/C7\\_Cycling\\_and\\_heavy\\_vehicles.pdf](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/Travelandtransport/Cycling/Bike%20user%20guide/Technical%20information/C7_Cycling_and_heavy_vehicles.pdf)

*“Aerodynamic forces: Given the overrepresentation of sideswipes in crash statistics, it is important to understand the role of aerodynamic forces to minimise the potential for such crashes. Sideswipe crashes can occur without initial collision between the truck and the bicycle. Instead, the incident can be due to the “blow and suck” effect as the truck passes the bicycle rider. This effect is proportional to a truck’s size, speed and distance from the rider”*

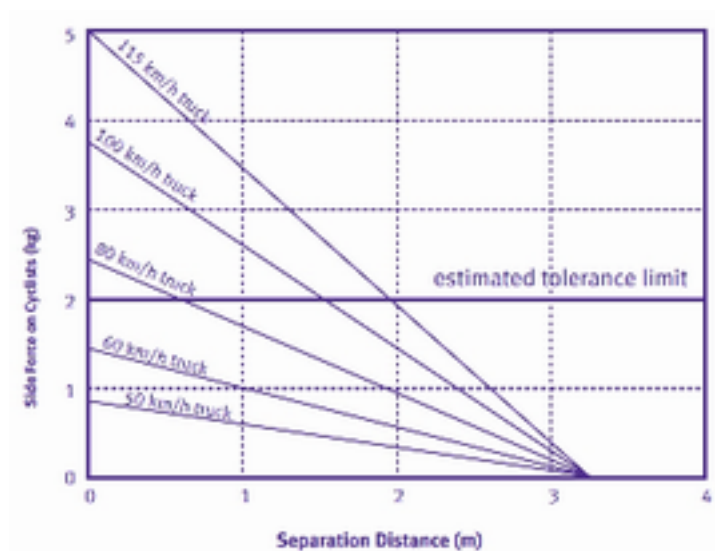


Figure 3: Truck side force impacts on cyclists

The graph above, sourced from the quoted TMR guide, indicates that the estimated tolerance limit of a truck travelling at 100km/hr is 1.5 to 1.6m while a truck travelling at 115km/hr is 2m. The 1m rule therefore is insufficient for safe passing of a truck at this speed.

While a 1m passing gap may be sufficient in many suburban low speed areas, I believe there should be a sliding minimum distance requirement. So as the speed limit increases so too does the minimum required passing distance. A suggestion is perhaps areas up to and including 70km/hr zones would retain the 1m minimum passing rule, and all speed limited areas 80km/hr and above would then require a 1.5m minimum passing distance.

While laws are important and I fully support the inclusion of a safe-passing distance law, enforcement is equally or more important. “Operation Halo” style crackdowns on illegal driving activities that create conditions dangerous for vulnerable road-users convey the message that cycling is a mode of transport and sport encouraged by police. There is, I believe, little issue the enforceability of the laws, especially the 1m minimum passing law. At the very least if a bike gets hit by a car while the car is overtaking they have obviously not left a 1m gap.

Effective is also the cultural shift that happens when a behaviour is recognised in the law as being dangerous and irresponsible. That is, provided appropriate advertising through the mainstream media is undertaken to ensure the population is made aware of their responsibilities.

I would suggest that amendments to the road rules and law should not be limited to the 1m minimum passing law however. Other items worthy of review include:

1. Presumed liability of the motor vehicle when involved with a non-motorised vehicle, similar to the Article 185 of the Dutch Road Law that was introduced in the Netherlands in the early 1990's;
2. Introduction of the Idaho Stop Law<sup>4</sup>. A rolling stop gives cyclists a chance to assess the dangers as they approach a stop sign and not lose the momentum caused by coming to a complete stop. This helps alleviate the slight delay other vehicles may incur while waiting for the cyclist to proceed through the intersection;
3. Cycling over pedestrian crossings should be permissible as one can cycle just as slowly as one can walk and yet have the ability to accelerate away from danger;
4. Disallow parking in bicycle lanes, and fine those who park too far from the kerb thus encroaching on the bike lane;
5. Allow cyclists to travel straight through an intersection from a lane marked "left turn only". This helps alleviate the slight delay other vehicles may incur while waiting for the cyclist to proceed through the intersection;
6. A more comprehensive analysis of inadequacy of the current Road Rules in relation to cycling is available in the Brisbane CBD BUG submission for the Review of the Australian Road Rules: <http://www.cbdbug.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/draft-road-rules-submission/Final-road-rules-submission.pdf>

Also non-Road-rules related changes:

7. Requirement of all levels of government when providing improved infrastructure to mandate giving cyclists priority. There is currently a requirement that cyclists are provided for where possible during road upgrades but even this is often disregarded due to financial restraints. In such cases the road upgrade should not go ahead.
8. Advertising campaigns and financial incentives to get people to cycle more often which not only reduces the volume of traffic and motorised traffics impact on the road, but would promote healthier lifestyles and thus lower the tax payer load on medical services.
9. Salary Sacrificing of a bicycle or other non-motorised transport should be available similar to that currently available for motor vehicles.

### **3. Current penalties and sanctions, including where there are differential fine rates for cyclists compared to other road users**

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<sup>4</sup> <http://bikeportland.org/2009/01/14/idaho-stop-law-faq-13387>

Cycling has a net community benefit to society so penalties, sanctions and implementation should reflect this to encourage “more people to cycle more often on safe, direct and connected routes”. There is also the need to recognise that many infringements such as talking on a mobile phone while operating a vehicle are more visible to police when the culprit is on a bicycle travelling at 10-40km/hr than if that person is in a car possibly with tinted windows travelling 40-100km/hr. Thus cyclists are likely to be disproportionately punished/criticised by these actions.

#### **4. The potential benefits and impacts of bicycle registration.**

It is our view that the negative impacts of bicycle registration would far outweigh any perceived benefits of introducing bicycle registration.

Points to note are:

1. The latest Bicycle Usage Statistics available for Queensland from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates 84.6% of cyclists ages 15 years and over who rode a bicycle in the previous 12 months also had a motor vehicle licence;
2. Further ongoing financial burden on households;
3. Deterrent to cycling and therefore a healthier lifestyle;
4. Require significant resources and associated financial costs to administer and maintain
5. Most offenses require police to be witness to the infringement. In such cases they are interested in the identity of the offender and not the owner of the vehicle. Speeding is rarely achievable on a bicycle;
6. Bicycles impose negligible maintenance costs and use less road space both while moving and stationary;
7. Bicycles aren't a serious danger to other road users and would have to be exempt from third party personal insurance;

On completion of this inquiry I expect the state government to clearly state the reasons registration of bicycles is not a valid option to help put an end to this fruitless debate. Registration is a topic that promotes argument and division, that is not in the interests of improving the interaction between cyclists and other road users.

In summary, I would like to thank the Queensland Government and TMR again for the forethought in establishing this Inquiry into Cycling Issues and taking another step toward a future where goods and people travel more safely on a network that gives proper consideration to the requirements and impacts of the various forms of transport and road use.

Approved by Townsville BUG committee  
The Townsville BUG

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