

Submission to the Queensland Government Inquiry into Cycling Issues.

1. Relevance of current road rules to today's road users including cyclists, and possible ways to address perceived problems

1.2. Introduction

Numbers of people 9 years and older that are cycling (2011)

According to a peer reviewed study by Sydney University, published in "World Transport Policy and Practice, Volume 18.3 May 2012" (1), Queensland's cycling population comprised the following age groups:

Table 4.23: Cycling participation in past 7 days by gender and age group in Queensland

Age group	Population proportion who rode in past 7 days		
	Male	Female	All
0 – 9	60.0% (49.5% – 69.6%)	43.9% (34.0% - 54.3%)	52.2% (44.6% – 59.6%)
10 – 17	44.5% (35.7% – 53.6%)	24.3% (17.4% – 32.7%)	34.6% (28.5% – 41.2%)
18 – 39	16.3% (12.1% – 21.7%)	7.5% (4.9% – 11.3%)	12.0% (9.3% – 15.3%)
40+	11.4% (8.9% – 14.4%)	4.1% (2.7% – 5.9%)	7.6% (6.1% – 9.5%)

That totals 490,619 people in Queensland aged above nine years who cycled an average 6.1 times in the previous week, which totals 2,992,776 trips per week, or an average **427,539** trips per day in 2011. This compares with **321,900** bike trips per day by people in Queensland aged nine or above in 1985/86, according to the CR69 survey over 12 months including winter when cyclist numbers are far lower than in March and April when the 2011 survey was conducted.

Despite this clear increase in cycling usage, the current Queensland Road Rules with respect to cyclists have not been substantially modified for many years. Given the clear evidence of the increase in popularity of cycling, it is clearly time for a major review to the regulations to provide for greater safety for cyclists. The changes should consider at least the following:

- Increased emphasis on vehicle interaction with cyclists in driver training.
- The introduction of a mandatory clearance that motorists are required to give cyclists

In addition, there is an urgent need to provide an environment for cyclists which is as safe as possible by improving cyclist training and infrastructure i.e.

- Improved training programmes for young cyclists with emphasis on adherence to road rules.
- Enforcement of the existing standards for the construction of dual use cycle pathways at local Council and State highway level

1.3, Driver Training and testing:

The Queensland Government provides a website that is recommended as a training device for new drivers seeking to obtain a Learner Driving Permit (2). The training is arranged as a multiple choice tick-box test of 30 questions allowing the trainee multiple opportunities to learn the Queensland Road Rules by taking this simulated test. Of the series of six tests that I performed, it appears that only one question in each series of 30 training questions relates to cyclists. This seems an inappropriately small number of questions about cyclists when one considers the increasingly substantial proportion of Queensland's population between 9 and 64 years that make cycle trips each week.

Recommendations.

- The Queensland Driving Test and Learner Driving Permit Test be updated to include greater emphasis upon the interaction between motorists and cyclists.
- The Queensland Government implements an advertising programme to increase the mutual awareness of their responsibilities as road users, for both cyclists and motorists.

1.4. Introduction of a mandatory clearance distance between cyclists and powered vehicles.

There are several countries which currently mandate a minimum clearance that motorists are required to give cyclists. New Zealand mandates 1.5 metres as the required clearance and several European countries have similar laws. Indeed, in the Netherlands, the motorist's responsibilities are taken much further where a standards-based approach to road design and management is employed. Conflicts between different modes of transport are eliminated wherever possible and reduced in severity as much as possible where elimination is not possible. The result of this is that cycling is made both objectively and subjectively safe.

In particular, "Strict Liability", supported in law in the Netherlands, ⁽³⁾ leads to driver's insurance being deemed to be responsible in a collision between a car and a cyclist. Dutch drivers are trained for the interaction with cyclists, for example by checking and re-checking their near-side side before making a turn to the right (left in our case!).

The net result of this approach is the Netherlands has one of the lowest per capita rates for accidents between cars and bikes, and one of the highest per capita bicycle usage rates.

Recommendation

The Queensland Government introduce legislation that requires motorists to allow a minimum of 1 metre clearance between their vehicle and cyclists. This regulation should be supported by introducing stricter laws to ensure that where a cyclist/motorist collision occurs and it can be demonstrated at law, that the required clearance distance was not given, a minimum three point licence penalty should be incurred by the motorists.

1.5. Improved bicycle use training for primary school children

As a keen observer of both cyclists and motorists, it seems clear to me that many young cyclists have little real awareness of the dangers of road use, or the possible catastrophic impacts that colliding with a vehicle could have on their future. Safety requirements aside, our children are

becoming increasingly obese and unhealthy due to lack of exercise. Walking and cycling habits are undoubtedly established when children are young. Increasingly, we are told that we are becoming an obese Nation and that there are already substantial increases in the proportion of the younger community that either already has diabetes, or are strong candidates for it in the near future.

Cycling to school presents a way to encourage a healthy childhood without cutting into school time currently allocated to the components of a formal education, however many parents that I have spoken do not allow their children to cycle to and from school because they are fearful of accidents.

Part of this problem is the lack of dedicated cycle paths in and around schools. However, a properly structured mandatory bicycle training course, at say year three, carried out and maintained as a part of the school curriculum, with the award of "School Cycling Licence" by the school, would help to alleviate the fears of parents. In my opinion, this would result in improved road awareness from a very young age, which will in turn, improve the quality of young drivers when the graduate to four wheels.

Recommendation

That the Queensland Government give favourable consideration to the inclusion of a mandatory Cycling Traffic Safety course in Primary year three, which is treated as a standardised component of the normal school curriculum.

1.6. Enforcement of existing standards of road construction by State and Local Government Authorities.

The Queensland Government Policy covering cycling infrastructure is displayed on The Department of Transport and Main Roads web site (4).

The Policy states (5).

“ that along principal cycle routes, the department will positively provide for cyclists in transport infrastructure projects.

On other routes, the department will seek to make state-controlled transport projects cycle-friendly by incorporating cycle-friendly design. This may include the economical retrofitting of roads where necessary to accommodate cyclists.

Positive provision for cyclists includes marked bicycle lanes, bicycle or shared paths or other suitable facilities. Cycle-friendly provision involves road design that makes it easier and safer for cyclists to use a particular section of road.”

The reality appears to be quite different, especially in regional centres where many State roads do not provide for cyclists to travel safely on highways. For instance, in Bundaberg where I live and ride, travelling along the three major feeder roads whilst riding to work in the central business area is fraught with risk for the cyclist. This problem is exacerbated where such roads are the responsibility of Regional Local Government. In many cases, even the very minimum requirements to allow cyclists to travel in modest safety, is not provided for.

A way to improve the road infrastructure with respect to safety for cyclists would be to insist that, where road funding is provided by the Queensland Government, it is conditional upon the provision of mandated minimum standards of cycling infrastructure.

Recommendation

That the Queensland Government tie expenditure on road infrastructure by the Department of Main Roads funding grants, to design criteria that include adherence to its stated policy objectives. Additionally, where funding is provided to Regional Councils for road infrastructure, agreed minimum cycling infrastructure standards are a prerequisite of the particular project.

1.7. Potential benefits and impacts of bicycle registration

Registration for cyclists is a hot topic currently in the EU countries where over 100 million of the nearly half a billion population claim to be regular cyclists. To date, registration is not being seriously considered by any EU country.

The issue of registration of cycles or cyclists will require careful thought. For instance:

- Will registration incur a cost and if so how much?
- What benefits will accrue to registered cyclists, or is this simply a revenue raising exercise?
- Do all cycles have to be registered or is it just the cycle user, regardless of how many cycles he or she owns?
- At what age will registration become compulsory?
- Will the registration cost include a third party insurance cover option?
- Is registration to be extended to other “human powered vehicles” such as Push Scooters, Skateboards, Roller Blades etc.?
- How would a system of cycle or cyclist registration be policed?
- Will registration convince some cyclists and potential cyclists to leave the bike in the garage?
- Will a registration programme damage a growing retail market segment in Queensland?

It seems clear that implementation of such a proposal would involve many difficulties and issues to be overcome, without clear benefits for cyclists, or indeed any other road users. Additionally, the cost of the new bureaucracy required to manage the system, at a time when Governments are slashing Public Servant numbers, will probably be seen as unacceptable.

In my discussions with cyclists and motorists alike, it seems that the pressure for such a process is driven by the expectation that cyclists should pay their “fair share” of road costs etc. In reality, as most cyclists are also motorists, they already do this through their motor vehicle registration costs. In any event the contention that cyclist cause road damage can be easily dismissed based on the average cycle weight of 13 Kg compared with that of the family saloon of around 1200 Kg. i.e. approximately 1 % of the road wear based on vehicle mass.

Many road cyclists are already members of cycling clubs and organisations that are affiliated to either Cycling Queensland or Bicycle Queensland, and are covered by third party insurance which provides a safety net in the case of injury. Registration, should it become a requirement should provide for bona-fide Cycle Club membership as an alternative requirement.

Reccomendation

That the Queensland Government does not implement a registration requirement for cyclists

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References:

(1) Australian cyclist numbers and population 1985/86 - 2011

<http://www.cycle-helmets.com/cycling-1985-2011.html#qld>

(2) Queensland Govt. Web site for simulation of driver testing:

<https://www.service.transport.qld.gov.au/rrtexternal/SelectExam.jsp>

(3) Netherlands: Standards based road rules

http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0006622/HoofdstukXII23/Artikel185/geldigheidsdatum_07-07-2011

(4) Transport & Main Roads web site: <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Travel-and-transport/Cycling/Cyclists.aspx>

(5) Transport & Main Roads Cycling Infrastructure Policy: ([Cycling Infrastructure Policy \(PDF, 774 KB\)](#))