

Inquiry into Cycling Issues

A Submission from **Professor Trevor Grahame BOND**
Avid recreational cyclist and concerned citizen

July 2013

Background

I am a 66 year old recreational cyclist who usually rides alone or with small groups. From time to time I ride with larger groups over longer distances (c. 70 to 100+ kilometres). I ride for enjoyment, to keep fit and to maintain my health into old age. I am concerned with safety issues for cyclists who legitimately ride on public roads, and am alarmed at the recent cycling deaths of two women in North Queensland and the outcome of the recently resolved court case concerning the death of a cyclist in SE Queensland. My concerns extend to the publicly expressed antipathy of some motorists towards cyclists and the apparent dearth of knowledge of the relevant cycling rules amongst many road users. I have been cycling in Townsville since 1986 and have considerable experience cycling on public roads in England, China, Malaysia, France and Italy.

I support a large number of the submissions made to the committee. My submission is much less comprehensive than many because I aim to recommend a small number of low cost solutions to problems currently affecting the safety of cyclists on public roads in Queensland.

Overtaking provisions

Problem: Collisions involving motor vehicles and cyclists result in disproportionate damage / injury / death to the bike / cyclist, and zero or superficial damage to the motor vehicle and no injury to the motorist. RACQ data reveal that motorists are responsible for the majority of those accidents. Current legislation allows motorists to judge the apparent safety of their overtaking actions. Motorists, apparently, often do not understand the potential effect of striking a cyclist while overtaking. The larger the vehicle (bus, truck, caravan, B-double) and the greater the speed differential, the greater the disruption to the safety of the cyclist involved in any near misses.

Proposed Solution: Implement traffic rules that require motorists to leave a nominated safe distance when overtaking a cyclist. This committee is looking, *inter alia*, at the implementation of a one metre overtaking rule. While this might be a minimally safe improvement for cyclists in highly controlled, low speed (50kph) suburban traffic environments, many overseas legislations advise or require allowing a 1.5 metre overtaking margin. This latter margin would be essential where the speed and / or size differential between cyclist and vehicle is higher: outside 50 kph suburban areas and / or when buses, trucks, trailers, caravans are involved. Penalties for infringement need to be proportional to consequences of the infringement; routine transgressions would be treated as are other traffic offences. Penalties for infringements resulting in damage, injury or death would be consequently higher, parallel with dangerous driving causing damage / injury or death; *i.e.*, failure to leave the legislated safe overtaking distance would, in those situations, be classed, *ipso facto*, as dangerous driving. Loss of licence consequences for professional drivers, especially those of larger vehicles and oversized loads, should be sufficient to act as an added deterrent to those drivers, given that the public reasonably has higher expectations of the ability and judgement of professionals in charge of vehicles.

Traffic lights induction loops.

Problem: Motorists regularly accuse cyclists of breaking traffic rules with impunity. In particular, cyclists are often accused of running red lights. Many traffic lights are controlled by induction loop systems buried in the road surface. Many modern bikes have so little steel in their construction, that they are unlikely to trigger the the induction loop and the subsequent light sequence. The cyclist is left with little choice but to proceed carefully against the red light, especially at times of light traffic. Sometimes, the careful, informed cyclist can trigger the light by running the bike over the length of the coil, directly over the buried 'wire' - using the cut mark on the road as a guide.

Proposed Solution: Paint a 1cm wide line over the left hand side of the induction loop on routes routinely used by cyclists.

Interference to traffic flow by groups of cyclists

Problem: Motorists might find passing large groups of cyclists difficult, even if all cyclists are obeying the appropriate rules (riding to the left hand side of the lane where safe, no more than two abreast except when overtaking, and no more that 1.5 metres apart).

Proposed Solution: Cyclists riding in groups should be limited, by the road rules, to a maximum of 20 cyclists per group. This rule would not apply to cycling events so sanctioned by the appropriate authorities.

Legitimate use of public roads by cyclists for recreational, commuting or training purposes

Problem: Many road users, including some cyclists, remain ignorant of the road rules which support the use of public roads by cyclists for recreational, commuting or training purposes.

Proposed Solutions: General public education programs using the media would be fundamental to increasing public knowledge and improving safety for cyclists.



1 The recent use, in Townsville of existing illuminated road message boards, provides an exemplar which could be routinely implemented across the state, especially on roads with high cycling use. The simple message says: "Share the road with cyclists". Such official messages immediately legitimize cyclists' use of the road.

Other messages might include:

- Cyclist may ride two abreast.

- Look out for cyclists.

- Leave 1.5m when passing cyclists.

- Your rush might cost a cyclist's life.

- Cyclists stay left when safe.

- Cyclists light up after dark.

2 Local councils be advised to negotiate with representatives of local road cycling groups to identify suitable well used training routes so that safe cycling / driving advisory signs can be permanently installed.

Two models could be used:

a The simple advisory sign already in use in the Whitsundays, for example.



or

b One based on the sign currently used in France which indicates appropriate behaviours for motorists passing cyclists.

The French sign looks like this:



It is simple sign which conveys several layers of of the safety / courtesy message:

- 1 We share the road.
- 2 Overtaking: 1.5m pls.
- 3 Driver uses indicator to signal overtaking.
- 4 Cyclist waves thanks.
- 5 Motorist acknowledges thanks.

I would like to remind committee members that the antagonism to and impatience with cyclists shown by some motorists in Queensland is *not* endemic to cyclists' use of public roads. In my considerable experience, I have *never* been treated aggressively by a single motorists while cycling on public roads in China, Malaysia, France and Italy. Just days ago I finished seven weeks of cycling in various parts of France. My observation is that while French drivers might be aggressive and impatient with each other, their interactions with cyclists are marked by patience, consideration, courtesy, and, above all, by safety. This, in spite of the disruptions to traffic flow caused by cyclists on narrow, imperfect, winding French roads. Even truck drivers wait patiently until it is safe to pass and do so without any apparent sign of intolerance of the cyclists or the consequent delay.

The costs to public health and loss of worker time caused by injury and death of cyclists in Queensland is a considerable burden; the costs to Queensland families of injuries to cyclists, and particularly, the recent deaths of cyclists are intolerable. While I would not

comment on the cause of the deaths of the two North Queensland women, it is merely straightforward to observe that if 1.5 metres had separated them from the overtaking vehicles, then their deaths could not have occurred.

I look forward to the outcomes of the committee's deliberation and urge it to recommend changes to current state to protect cyclists from injury and death while we legitimately use public roads in Queensland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor G Bond', written in a cursive style.

Professor Trevor G BOND

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