



Winner - Dept. Transport and Main Roads Sustainable Transport Section
Living Smart Awards 2009

Submission to Queensland Parliamentary Enquiry 2013

"Inquiry into Cycling Issues"

Damien Jones (Foundation and Life Member), July 2013

INTRODUCTION

Who we are

The Suncoast Cycling Alliance is a voluntary and independent organisation representing bicycle riders, retailers, tour organisers, educators, clubs and groups based on the Sunshine Coast, Australia.

What we do

The Suncoast Cycling Alliance was established in 2006 in response to the exclusion of appropriate cycling infrastructure in major road projects on the Sunshine Coast. The Suncoast Cycling Alliance began primarily to lobby local, state and federal governments to provide bicycle lanes and paths but since then it has evolved to become a key stakeholder in local transport projects, representing the needs of all bicycle riders on the Sunshine Coast.

Specifically, the Suncoast Cycling Alliance:

- always acts with integrity and credibility in its communications as the peak body representing all stakeholders involved in emission free, sustainable and safe modes of cycling and transport on the Sunshine Coast;
- meets formally with representatives of local and state government to advocate and lobby on cycling issues;
- is a communication gateway for the cycling community on the Sunshine Coast to connect with representatives of local and state government;
- works with local cycling groups to foster a culture of respect and road etiquette amongst cyclists for other road users;
- advocates the adoption of the Sunshine Coast Bunch Rider's Charter;
- advocates the benefits of cycling to improve health, as a means to reduce congestion and parking issues on Sunshine Coast roads and as an affordable, alternative transport option; and
- advocates safe, responsible and considerate road use across all forms of transport or movement on public footpaths and roads.

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RESPONSES TO INQUIRY ISSUES

Cycling Safety

This first issue is listed somewhat differently in the Inquiry's terms of reference as "trends in cycling injuries and fatalities".

It would be difficult if not impossible for us to comment on this as we do not have access to the relevant local accident data over a statistically significant period of time.

However, the overwhelming response from local cyclists of all ages is that their perceived level of safety and comfort is enhanced immeasurably after the construction and integration of properly engineered cycling facilities into the road or pathway network.

The 1 meter Rule

We believe that such a rule would be technically and legally impossible to enforce.

We also believe that it would elevate the level of animosity between cyclists and road users.

The enquiry is challenged to revisit page 141 (Section: "Share the Road" -> "Sharing with other road users" -> "Cyclists") of "Your Keys to Driving in Queensland" (Qld DTMR) and define "a safe distance" so that it is unambiguous, easy to understand (for example: "Could my passenger reach out and touch that cyclist? If so, I am too close.") and not open for interpretation.

Even so, the "1 meter rule", or whatever it is called, is no substitute for the provision of safe cycling facilities and the inculcation of a more respectful and considerate culture amongst all road users.

We see this discussion as a twin to the Amy Gillett Foundation's "a meter matters" campaign. Their campaign supports our belief that cultural change and common courtesy are also important amongst all road users, as already stated.

Penalties and Sanctions

We believe that cyclists old enough to have a Driver's Licence should obey the road rules like every other road user and have the same penalties imposed for breaching them, including licence demerit points, if that is appropriate.

That is not to say that children should be completely exempt from consequences if they should happen to breach the road rules. However, it is our view that children on bicycles should be "cut some slack" and treated with the same respect, tolerance and care due to pedestrians of all ages.

However, we should also recognise that the road environment is intrinsically unsafe and that sometimes cyclists cannot avoid breaching the road rules in order to remain safe.

Registration

We believe that the registration of children as cyclists is preposterous.

We believe that the registration of each and every adult cyclist is unnecessary and would be administratively burdensome.

In reality, most adult cyclists own at least one motor vehicle and duly pay their registration and licence fees. As already stated, traffic law infringements by adult cyclists can have the same consequences for their Driver's Licence as if the offence was committed whilst operating a motor vehicle.

The registration of each and every cyclist could be shown to be an act of deliberate discrimination unless each and every cyclist enjoyed the same level of safety and service as does each and every motorist.

In summary

- The Inquiry is reminded that the bicycle is a legitimate form of transportation.
- The Inquiry is reminded that every cyclist has the same rights as every other road user and is subject to the same laws.

We believe that the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry lean towards more punitive actions being taken against the cycling community. We believe that there is a real danger of this increasing the level of animosity between cyclists and other road users.

- Therefore, the Inquiry is encouraged to recommend the development of a permanent education, publicity and safety campaign regarding the rights of cyclists on the road.
- The Inquiry is reminded that the harassment of cyclists by drivers and occupants of motor vehicles (including deliberate unsafe passing and the throwing of objects) is a disturbingly common occurrence.
- Therefore, the Inquiry is encouraged to explore the imposition of significant penalties for such harassment when sufficient evidence (video, for example) exists.
- The enquiry is challenged to revisit page 141 (Section: "Share the Road" -> "Sharing with other road users" -> "Cyclists") of "Your Keys to Driving in Queensland" and define "a safe distance" so that it is unambiguous, easy to understand and not open for interpretation.
- The Inquiry is reminded that we are all human and that mistakes whilst on the road can sometimes have tragic consequences. The consequences for a cyclist are usually far worse than for occupants of a motor vehicle.
- The Inquiry is reminded that for some people a bicycle is the only choice for transportation. Therefore any action targeting cyclists alone could be demonstrated to be discriminatory.
- The Inquiry is reminded that the bicycle can make significant contributions to congestion reduction and public health.
- The Inquiry is reminded that there is really no substitute for the provision of safe and effective cycling infrastructure.