

Wednesday, 24 July 2013

Submission: Inquiry into Cycling Issues

Rather than a lengthy submission addressing multiple points, I thought it would be best just to summarise my thoughts about cycling in general and how I see it in Queensland.

In summary, cycling is an activity that has a number of extremely positive outcomes for the communityⁱ with little negatives. The importance of a low cost, flexible and personal transport mechanism is only going to become more important as the cost and attainability of fossil fuels decrease in the near future.

Whilst cycling is seen as a popular sport, where local growth needs to happen is the use of cycling for transport/utility purposes such as shopping, commuting, visiting friends, etc. Cycling in Australia is seen as a mainly male oriented sport for fit people. This perception inhibits new cyclists who do not fit that demographic from trying cycling out. The sport orientated nature also leads to the perception that cycling is an extremely dangerous activity which in turn helps promotes transport unfriendly laws (such as Mandatory Helmet use or the inability to not stop at a stop sign if safeⁱⁱ).

Whilst actual statistics show cycling to be a safe activityⁱⁱⁱ, cyclists are the moment do not feel safe when having to share roads with fast heavy vehicles. People need a combination of actual safety (better infrastructure), subjective safety (how safe do you feel) and social safety (threats from other people)^{iv}.

Pressures with existing transport options (such as motor vehicle running costs) will bring greater pressure on governments to show increased focus on cycling infrastructure (and education) that is friendly for cyclists from an age of 8 years to age 80 years^v which is not the case for the vast majority of cycling infrastructure that is available and built today in Queensland.

Queensland (and Australia in general) however seem to refuse to leverage off the work already performed by other countries which have much more mature cycling cultures. Netherlands for instance is easily 30-40 years ahead of Queensland in respect to cycling^{vi}. However we seem to have a culture here of 'reinventing the wheel' and performing costly and unnecessary planning and investigation phases when a great majority of the work can be 'copied' from countries which have already tried and ruled out the bad ideas^{vii}. Whenever I hear some excuse about why it's harder for Queensland to become like these other countries I think of the excellent summary of excuses provided by David Hembrow (an Englishman who lives in the Netherlands) on his cycling blog^{viii}.

Queensland should set an example for the rest of Australia and show that they can be a leader once again by doing everything they can to promote cycling for use as a transport option and enjoy the benefits this will bring to the community at large.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission into the enquiry.

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ⁱ <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Travel-and-transport/Cycling/Benefits.aspx>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.sfbike.org/?idaho>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://helmetfreedom.org/908/how-safe-is-cycling-in-australia/>

^{iv} <http://www.aviewfromthecyclepath.com/2008/09/three-types-of-safety.html>

^v <http://www.aviewfromthecyclepath.com/2011/10/safe-cycling-for-8-to-80-year-olds.html>

^{vi} <http://www.aviewfromthecyclepath.com/search/label/we%20are%20n%20years%20behind>

^{vii} <http://www.crow.nl/nl/Publicaties/publicatiedetail.aspx?code=REC25>

^{viii} <http://www.aviewfromthecyclepath.com/2011/02/all-those-myths-and-excuses-in-one-post.html>