

Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

Parliament House

Brisbane QLD 4000

Submission to Queensland Parliament Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, Inquiry into Cycling Issues

I am making this submission from my experience as an active recreational and commuting cyclist on the Sunshine Coast and also as a professional transport planner and civil engineer with a direct involvement and interest in cycle planning.

Short and long term trends in bicycle injuries and fatalities involving motor vehicles

Improving safety for an increasing numbers of cyclists through education and infrastructure

Although there has been a decreasing trend in the number and severity of crashes involving cyclists as demonstrated by the Department of Transport & Main Roads data there has also been a very recent trend of increasing cycling participation on the Sunshine Coast. Research in the UK and Europe has provided good evidence to support the idea that cycling gets safer as more people cycle. Much of this evidence has however been demonstrated in locations, which have provided greatly improved infrastructure to support the increase in cycling.

The emphasis must now be on tackling the fears that prevent people from cycling more and this can be done by providing a safer environment through improving driver behaviour and providing more and safer infrastructure. An increased commitment is needed from the State to provide the education and infrastructure to match the increasing participation in cycling.

Recognise cyclists as vulnerable road users

Cyclists along with pedestrians need to be recognized and treated as vulnerable road users. Cyclists do not have the benefit of modern vehicle design improvements like air bags, ABS and electronic sensors that protect motorists from their errors. The need to protect vulnerable road users should be recognized by State transport authorities by adopting a user hierarchy approach similar to that used in the UK and other jurisdictions that considers pedestrians first then cyclists before other modes including private vehicles. This will help ensure that the safety needs of cyclists are fully considered in planning, design and management and never compromised.

Speed limits

The quickest and least expensive option available to reduce the severity and consequences of crashes involving on-road cyclists is to reduce the speed of vehicles involved in collision. The reduction of posted speed limits to 50km/h and to 40km/h in school zones has been accepted by the community with little impact on motor vehicle travel times and convenience.

A reduction of the posted speed limit to 40km/h for urban non-arterial roads and streets should be adopted as the most effective way of improving the livability of our communities while improving the safety for all road users; motorists, cyclists and pedestrians including children and seniors.

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

Improving standards of behaviour and knowledge of road rules

The Sunshine Coast is not unusual in experiencing conflicts and poor behaviour in both cyclists and motorists. The difference between these road users is that motorists seem to feel a certain level of protection within their vehicles, which cyclists lack in their exposed and vulnerable position.

As cyclists we have all experienced drivers who deliberately swerve to pass as close as possible or throw objects or brake hard after passing to 'brake test' a cyclist or have passengers just scream loudly while passing. This type of behaviour is antisocial, dangerous and should be unacceptable in our community. However it generally goes unreported and unpunished. If this dangerous behaviour is to change then complaints by cyclists to police need to be treated as seriously as the potential consequences of this antisocial behaviour can cause. Reporting these episodes needs to be encouraged and supported.

Cyclists are also guilty of bad behaviour and ignoring road rules in a way which antagonizes drivers. Education is seen as key to a safer environment for all road and pathway users.

Community education

Locally the Sunshine Coast Council has undertaken a community education campaign called 'Share with Care' for all road and pathway users to encourage a better understanding of road rules, road markings and signs and how to treat each other in agreeable and considerate ways. The campaign has also specifically targeted bunch riders to help these cyclists realize that some specific group behaviors can have negative impacts for all cyclists. Similar education campaigns should be initiated state wide.

There is a critical lack of knowledge of road rules by all community members and it is recommended that education is the area where efforts should be focused to produce improvements in safety and behaviour. It seems to be universally acknowledged that drivers have a poor understanding of the full range of road rules and yet this seems to be acceptable.

Road rules need to be reviewed to remove ambiguity and to clarify intent before undertaking a new and continuing road user education program. An effective way to ensure that road users understand road rules is to introduce a system of driver license renewal testing. A system where all or a random selection of drivers renewing licenses are required to undertake a test would encourage all road users to revise or relearn the practical application of road rules.

Comments on specific existing or alternative road rules are included below:

'One-metre' rule

A one metre road rule is seen as a positive way to educate road users on the benefits of providing cyclists with a safe operating space, providing a simple and easily understood message.

It is acknowledged that a road rule will create difficulties for motorists in situations where there are only narrow single lanes with no cycle lanes and centerline markings that do not allow vehicles to move out of their lanes. Although this will result in delays to motorists this is a situation where cyclists' safety is most in need of protection. Understanding and courtesy would need to be a focus of a community awareness campaign.

The ability to effectively regulate a specific distance is questionable however blatant infringements must be enforced especially if captured by video.

Wearing bicycle helmets

Regulating for helmets makes cycling seem dangerous, which seriously discourages increased participation. Worldwide the risk of head injuries from cycling is no more than from walking. The benefits of walking and cycling (lower risk of death from disease) are 10 to 100 times higher than the risk of death from injuries. There is overwhelming evidence that the potential community health benefit from increased cycling participation without helmets far outweighs the cost of head trauma from crashes.

It is however acknowledged that the benefits are perceived as impersonal population wide benefits whereas the costs are seen as individual and personal loss and it is difficult to equate the two. This is especially the case when the cyclists are children who the community feels deserve protection.

The requirement to wear a helmet to cycle is also seen as a major deterrent to bicycle hire by tourists. Public bicycle schemes are also difficult to implement where helmets are compulsory.

A recent idea from Seattle (USA) proposed an alternative approach, which has merit as a compromise solution. Failure to wear a helmet was suggested as a 'secondary offence' where people not obeying traffic laws and riding dangerously would get 'double-ticketed' if they were not wearing a helmet. This change would encourage lawful, safe riding and assist public bike schemes to succeed.

Riding across a road on a crossing

The requirement for cyclists to dismount to cross at pedestrian crossings and foot crossings at signalized intersections is difficult for cyclists using cleated shoes and increases delays for commuting off-road cyclists or those using separated cycleways. Cyclists should be allowed to ride on crossings after clarifying their legal position.

Vehicle parking in bicycle lanes

Allowing vehicles to park or stop in cycle lanes is an anomaly in Queensland and is contrary to the intention and design of these facilities. Prohibit vehicle parking/stopping in designated bicycle lanes and communicate the need to keep these lanes clear to the community.

Roundabouts

Roundabouts are rarely understood by motorists and cyclists. Giving way to other traffic, the use of a dedicated cycle lane at the entrance, the right of cyclists to occupy general traffic lanes even if cycle lanes are marked and the rules applying to two lane roundabouts are rarely understood by users.

This confusion increases the likelihood and severity of crashes for cyclists in these intersections. There is a need for a concerted campaign of education of how road rules apply for all users of roundabouts.

Keeping left and overtaking

All road users need to understand that the requirements on cyclists to keep left and overtaking can legally allow cyclists to pass stationary vehicles indicating left turns at intersection. This ability is often interpreted by motorists as illegal and therefore annoying behaviour. Undertake a campaign of education of how road rules apply to cyclists.

Left turn on red phase

The investigation of changes to road rules to allow cyclists to turn left on the red phase at signalized intersections has the potential to increase efficiency and safety of cycle movement through these intersections by allowing cyclists to move clear of stationary vehicles before the green phase and would be particularly helpful on uphill slopes. Cyclists would still need to give way to all other pedestrian and vehicle movements.

Separated cycleways

Cycleways that are physically separated from vehicle traffic are perceived as providing a significantly higher level of safety, which has encouraged increased riding in Sydney and other urban areas where they have been introduced. Studies show that female cyclists also prefer separated cycleways. Good practice guidelines and supporting traffic regulations need to be developed for separated cycleways in line with the actions in the Queensland Cycle Strategy.

Current penalties and sanctions current penalties and sanctions, including where there are differential fine rates for cyclists compared to other road users

Penalties proportionate to potential consequences

The penalty for an offence should be proportionate to the potential consequences of the action. As the risk to cyclists of serious death and injury is substantially higher in any crash with a motor vehicle, the penalties that apply to drivers at fault in these crashes should be proportionately higher than if involved with another vehicle. This will send a clear message that cyclists deserve care and will encourage drivers to be more responsible with cyclist safety.

Glass on roads

The ongoing disregard of cyclist safety and bicycle damage caused by throwing glass containers from vehicles needs to be targeted. The incidence of broken glass in cycle lanes and shoulders causing

punctures is not only extremely annoying but costs time and expense, can cause unsafe operation and discourages increased participation. An often quoted reason for cyclists cycling in traffic lanes rather than on shoulders or in cycle lanes is the amount of glass and other loose material found there.

Although throwing glass onto roads might be covered by the *Summary Offences Act 2005* namely *Part 2 Offences 26 Endangering the safe use of a vehicle by throwing an object or by a similar activity* or *Miscellaneous road rule 293 Removing fallen etc. things from the road*, the community needs to be encouraged to view this as totally antisocial behaviour that is a risk to others followed by strong enforcement with penalties.

The potential benefits and impacts of bicycle registration.

Any registration for bicycles is seen as contrary to the State's desire to reduce unnecessary regulation and would create another obstacle for increased cycling participation, which is universally recognized as having significant positive benefits for the whole community. More people riding bicycles creates less congestion on roads, more available parking spaces and lower health care costs for the everyone in the community. The cost of registering bicycles is unlikely to provide a net financial gain and would impose a further financial cost of living on Queenslanders in tight financial times. The idea of registration is most often used by opponents of cycling as a red herring. Registration does not provide good community outcomes and would be seen as such by everyone else outside of the state.

Reject bicycle registration as unnecessary new regulation and cost, which does not provide good community outcomes with clear reasons for not adopting bicycle registration and continue to communicate these reasons whenever the idea is raised.

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to make this submission in the interests of safer travel for all road users.

Yours faithfully,



Peter Duffy



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