

Dear Committee

I applaud you for taking this initiative and inviting cyclists to contribute. The benefits of cycling are obvious so my submission will focus on putting the reader in the cyclists seat and finish with my vision for a safer future.

MY REGULAR RIDE

I have recently moved from Newcastle and joined an Aviation company located on Pandanus Avenue, within the Aerotech Park precinct of Brisbane Airport. As part of the interstate move my family has reduced our vehicles from 2 to 1 with the intention that I would be able to commute the 12kms to work from Toombul train station by bicycle. There is adequate road shoulder between Toombul train station and DFO, however I am horrified by the stretch along Lomandra Drive and Main Myrtletown Road. There is a lot of earthworks being undertaken in this area and many large trucks frequent these roads, however there is no safe sealed shoulder provided for cyclists. I am disgusted that Brisbane City Council (BCC) and Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) are profiteering by developing this land, increasing traffic (both construction workers and new staff of the new businesses) yet are not providing sufficiently safe roads for people to get to work. In some areas BAC have picked the 'low hanging fruit' and introduced some short sections of pathways, however to date these have all been in areas that were already relatively safe and they have left the dangerous sections to deteriorate even further.

Along some sections of road there is a deep gravel shoulder that may give the perception of safety, however if a cyclist was forced into this loose gravel due to a close call with trucks/cars the road bicycle with narrow tyres would be unable to maintain control causing the close call to escalate immediately into a likely fatal accident with the rider, with or without the bike, thrown into the path of traffic. I have tested this loose surface when there was no traffic about and am very frightened about how the situation will play out when I am inevitably forced into this situation only inches from trucks wheels. As an engineer involved in safety I can not fathom how BCC, who are responsible for Main Myrtletown Road, and BAC, who are responsible for Lomandra Drive, can continue to turn a blind eye to these roads 'around the back' of the airport – out of sight out of mind for them perhaps?

BCC and BAC have clearly been made aware of the cycling black spots within their control by the cycling community (both Airport BUG and the emails I have personally sent them) and if no further action is taken a fatal accident is imminent. BCC and BAC, and similar councils across Queensland, are neglecting their duty of care and the financial ramifications of any post accident legal action would surely exceed the costs of them 'doing the right thing' by the cycling community now before someone loses their life. As a father of three, I hope it is not my death that will finally prompt them into action. Even if the decision makers in councils and BAC are not cyclists, it is likely that at least some are parents.

MY EXPERIENCE INTERACTING WITH TRAFFIC

I normally wear a high visibility tradesman style long sleeve shirt and have 3 flashing lights on the rear of my bicycle with a fourth light on the front. I use my arms to signal my intended direction changes and believe that I act as a courteous cyclist by regularly waving my thanks to drivers who

accommodate me on the road. I believe that it is important for cyclists to make eye contact with drivers where possible and to be role models and treat other road users how they wish to be treated.

I have had numerous near misses with drivers during my daily commute to work, a couple of which I will include in this submission to put you in the seat of the cyclist. In addition to these near fatal incidents I have had countless incidents of drivers swerving at me whilst hurling abuse, as well as spitting and throwing things at me. It is always an interesting experience when you catch up to these motorists at the next set of lights, however once face to face I am never inflammatory with them as I feel vulnerable to physical abuse, particularly wearing cycling shoes, and I have heard many stories of cyclists being left bashed and when I enquire about the reasons for their actions the usual response is silence and you can see the surprise on their face as they realise that the cyclist was actually a real person and that they have now lost their anonymity.

A particularly malicious incident occurred along Lomandra Drive in January this year when I was cycling home from work and passed a truck that was waiting to enter the road from a side road. After passing the stationary truck I could hear him working up through his gears aggressively as he accelerated and I was very aware of his presence. I did not look back to observe his road position as all trucks sound very close when they approach and looking back presents its own risks as there is no road shoulder and I am already only inches from the edge of the bitumen and cannot afford the risk of veering all over the road to look over my shoulder every time I hear a truck (effectively I am cycling on a tight rope). Instead, as always, I focused on maintaining a straight path as close as safely possible to the edge of the bitumen to allow as much room as possible for traffic to pass. On this occasion the truck chose to intimidate me by passing only centimetres from my shoulder which startled me and caused me to take evasive action by veering off the road into the gravel/grass. I was too busy maintaining control of my bicycle to observe the truck's licence plate but I do remember its colouring and that it was a B-Double Semi Trailer. I attempted to pursue the truck so that I could catch him at the lights and take an identifying photo but was unsuccessful. It is not feasible that the driver did not see me as I cycle wearing a bright jersey and have four flashing lights on my bicycle. As the truck passed I could see that he had ample room between his right hand side and the centre of the road and there was no traffic approaching him so he had no reason to be so close to myself.

The next day I discussed the incident with a colleague at work and he advised that he had recently experienced an even more malicious incident along Main Myrtletown Road on his way from Pandanus Avenue to Lomandra Drive. He had a B-Double come up beside him, hold down his horn and then merge across onto the gravel forcing him to leave the sealed bitumen and take the drop off the road edge into the loose gravel. This gravel 'shoulder' is not suitable for road style bicycles as the underlying surface is too rough and the top surface is varying depths of loose gravel and rock. Fortunately he was able to control his bicycle and he did not fall, however he was severely traumatised.

In another incident, whilst I was travelling to work along Main Myrtletown Road two cars approached from the opposite direction. Whilst I was cycling over the narrow bridge (that has multiple deep cracks) the second vehicle chose to accelerate and overtake the first whilst we were all on the bridge together. Without any warning the second driver lunged out from behind the first and stepped out onto my side of the road and before I knew it we were centimetres from a head on

collision. I had no where to go due to being on the narrow bridge. If this was to happen elsewhere along Main Myrtletown Road I would of attempted evasion action by veering out into the gravel and with the state of that surface after recent rain I would of certainly gone down as there is currently a deep gutter along the edge of bitumen before the gravel and rocks begins.

Fortunately on those occasions no one was hurt, but any of the incidents could have easily resulted in deaths. Along those roads, and no doubt similar roads across Queensland, trucks, cars and cyclists are all frustrated and scared and hence very poor and potentially fatal driving decisions are being made. The lack of a suitable shoulder on roads is dangerous to not only cyclists, but also to drivers attempting to get past. Drivers are often required to veer across the median line into the path of oncoming traffic to get past a cyclist. Daily I see examples of drivers who choose to accelerate around myself even with approaching traffic rather than wait for a safe gap in oncoming traffic. A serious fatal accident is imminent and I am sure that this scenario is happening all across Queensland.

VISION FOR A SAFER FUTURE

In my opinion the following actions would make a positive impact to road safety:

- Educate the general public to debunk the myths that are continually circulated, e.g. educate the general public that roads are funded predominantly by federal and state funding rather than by car registration and licencing costs and that cyclists have the right to use them (also that the majority of road cyclists also have registered cars), clarify the rules regarding cyclists and pedestrian footpaths, and reinforce the rule of no passing until safe to do so.
- Change the perception of cyclists in the media. The media and media personalities have an enormous impact on public perception and it is unfathomable how often they take cheap shots at cyclists which builds on the public belief that cyclists are a pest and that it is acceptable to intimidate and endanger them with a motor vehicle.
- Run campaigns similar to the anti-hoon campaigns (where the girls hold up their little fingers) that put the audience in the seat of the cyclists and show how wrong, stupid, immature and dangerous it is to drive past a cyclist with the passenger(s) hanging out the window yelling abuse, spitting and throwing drinks etc. It is necessary to show that cyclists are real living breathing people as when a driver gets behind a windscreen they are disengaged from the environment and they feel invincible and they see cyclists as nothing more than a pest and due to the perception continually perpetuated in the media drivers feel entitled to intimidate, abuse and endanger cyclists. It would be powerful if the advertising campaigns show the cyclist arriving home to a wife and children, perhaps to a wife that always worry's about the cyclists safety, and the cyclist covered in a thrown milkshake or torn clothes due to being run off the road. It is interesting to note that when drivers have to wait for a bus to pull over to pick up passengers they don't see red and vow to run the bus off the road at the next opportunity, why then do they see red when they have to wait for a safe opportunity to pass a cyclist?
- Undertake an audit of roads that are popular to cyclists to identify and remove squeeze points, i.e. points where concrete curbs encroach on the road shoulder which is typical before and after roundabouts.
- Similarly, undertake an audit of roads that are popular to cyclists to identify pot holes and cracks in shoulders as the shoulders are usually overlooked by road repair crews which presents a serious hazard to cyclists. A damaged road edge may as well be a cliff edge as it has the same consequence. To a cyclist it feels as though you are continually riding between a cliff edge on your left and traffic on your right. Throw into the mix a varying

condition road edge, road debris, reflectors on the road, slippery painted lines, varying weather and then dangerous drivers it is no surprise so many cyclists end up in hospital or dead.

- Expand road sweeping trucks to roads popular to cyclists as the debris presents a serious hazard to cyclists and often cyclist have to quickly dodge glass, car parts, timber, rubbish, gravel, rocks, branches which can put them into the path of traffic.
- Linking up existing bicycling and shared paths for the recreational cyclist and families wishing to cycle together.
- Incorporation of wide sealed road shoulders with roads that are frequented by cyclists as a priority. Separate shared pathways are not suitable for cyclists travelling at moderate to high speeds as there are major dangers, e.g. headphone wearing pedestrians who do not stick to the left day dreaming totally oblivious to other path users as well as children and dogs who change direction quickly. Also the separate shared pathways are usually concrete with joins every couple of metres that jolt cyclists on road bikes. If a dedicated cycleway is chosen then it should be bitumen.
- Allow cyclists to erect white bicycle frames on the side of the road as a visual reminder that a cyclist was injured or killed at that location, similar to the wreaths and flowers that are allowed along the side of the road.
- Surely there is no benefit in licensing and registering cyclists??? A good article is here <http://theconversation.com/bicycle-registration-is-not-the-answer-for-bad-behaviour-4987>
It is not going to stop bad cyclists from running red lights anymore than licensing and registering motor car drivers has stopped them from running red lights. The whole proposal would cost the tax payer far more in creating, educating, refining and policing than it would generate in licensing and registering fees. The general public needs to be advised that this option has absolutely zero merit so that ignorant drivers stop hurling this concept at cyclists. You may be surprised how often the dregs of society, usually driving a poorly maintained and dangerous vehicle, regurgitate this viewpoint and it only acts to reinforce the drivers belief that they have the right to run down and kill cyclists because 'they pay for the roads'.
- Introduce a similar system to the UK where the Government provides tax incentives for cycling as this will increase the number of commuters, resulting in less cars on the roads and a healthier community.

I look forward to seeing the tangible outcomes of your study.

Regards

Ben O'Duhring

