



Promoting and protecting the rights, interests and wellbeing of all Queenslanders under 18

Advice to: Queensland Parliament Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

Topic: Inquiry into Cycling Issues

Date due: 26 July 2013

Thank you for inviting comment from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (the Commission) in relation to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee's inquiry into particular issues to improve the interaction of cyclists and other road users.

The Commission is an independent statutory body charged with responsibility for protecting and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of Queensland children and young people under the age of 18. The Commission is dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and young people in Queensland.

The Commission's child death review functions began on 1 August 2004. Under Chapter 6 of the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000*, the Commission is responsible for:

- maintaining a register of the deaths of all children and young people in Queensland
- reviewing the causes and patterns of deaths of children and young people
- conducting broad research in relation to child deaths
- making recommendations for improvements to laws, policies, procedures and practices to help reduce the likelihood of child deaths, and
- preparing an annual report to Parliament and the public regarding child deaths.

Each year, the Commission's *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people, Queensland* publication has reported on the incidence, demographic characteristics and contributory factors for both natural and external cause child deaths in Queensland. A chapter is dedicated to transport-related child deaths, which includes detailed information regarding bicycle fatalities. Copies of our Annual Reports are available from our website at: <http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/resources/publications/reports.html>

In addition to our Annual Report, the Commission has undertaken other research activities regarding bicycle safety of children and young people. This has included the publication of a Trends and Issues Paper – *Bicycle safety for Queensland children and young people* in February 2012. This paper is available from our website at: <http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/resources/Trends-and-Issues-Papers.html>

A review of the Queensland Child Death Register has identified that there have been 12 bicycle-related deaths of children and young people between 1 January 2004 and 30 June 2013¹. As Table 1 outlines, there is an average of 1.2 bicycle deaths per year of children and young people under 18 years in Queensland. All of the children and young people were male.

¹ Note: An additional bicycle death was not included in this count as it was determined to be due to suicide.

Table 1: Number of bicycle fatalities by age group and year of death (2004–2013)

Age group	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 [*]
0–4 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5–9 years	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10–14 years	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
15–17 years	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	3	2	1	2	0	2	0	2	0	0

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

When examining the data, of the 12 bicycle fatalities, there were 11 which involved a collision with another vehicle (91.7%)². Further analyses of the locations where these deaths occurred are provided in Tables 2 – 4 below.

Table 2: Death incidents by Local Government Area

Local Government Area	Total
Brisbane (City)	3
Mackay (Regional)	3
Bundaberg (Regional)	2
Rockhampton (Regional)	1
South Burnett (Regional)	1
Total	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

Table 3: Deaths by road type

Road type	Total
Highway (100–110 km/h)	2
Major road (60–90 km/h)	4
Residential street (up to 60 km/h)	5
Total	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

Table 4: Deaths by speed limit of roadway

Speed limit	Total
Limit of 100 km/h	3
Limit of 80 km/h	3
Limit of 60 km/h	5
Total	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

² The one non-collision event involved riding on private property. This death is excluded from further analyses.

As illustrated in Tables 3 and 4, children and young people are riding bicycles in both low traffic and high traffic areas, as well as areas that potentially have a high volume of traffic and vehicle types (including commercial and heavy vehicles).

An examination of the death incidents is provided in the following tables.

Table 5: Cyclist action at time of incident

Road type	Total
Riding on road	5
Crossing road	3
Travelling through intersection	2
Riding on side of road (shoulder)	1
Total	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

Table 6: Nature of collision with vehicle

Speed limit	Total
Cyclist rode into path of vehicle on roadway	6
Struck by approaching motorist while riding on roadway	3
Struck by approaching motorist after falling on roadway	2
Total	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

Table 7: Underlying cause of death by collision type

Speed limit	Total
Injured in collision with car, pick-up truck or van	8
Injured in collision with heavy transport vehicle or bus	2
Injured in non-collision transport incident ³	1
Total	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

³ The rider swerved to avoid a collision with a parked vehicle and was rendered unconscious when he struck the roadway. He was then struck by an oncoming vehicle.

Table 8: Risk factors relevant to the death incident

Risk factor	Total
Risk taking by deceased child (unsafe road usage, inappropriate helmet use)	5
Intoxication of drug and/or alcohol substances	4
Environmental factors (night riding, wet roads)	2
Speed of motor vehicle	1
Driver experience	0
Fatigue	0
Total deaths	11

Data source: Queensland Child Death Register (2004 – 2013)

Note: Risk factors will not sum accurately where more than 1 factor is identified under each heading.

The data indicates children aged 10-14 years were most likely to have been killed in an incident while riding to school in the morning, with teenagers aged 15-17 years most likely to be killed in incidents occurring after school and in the evening.

In a large number of cases, the young cyclists were engaging in intentional risk-taking behaviour while others were unintentionally increasing their risk due to lack of riding experience, such as unexpectedly crossing roads without waiting for traffic to clear, riding at night in poorly lit areas or riding on the wrong side of the road. None of the incidents featured a motorist who was considered criminally responsible for the death of the child or young person.

Three of the 5 young people aged 10-14 years were riding on roads with a speed limit of 80km/h or more. These children were all riding unaccompanied to school or school bus stops during a peak traffic period. In two of these three incidents, the roads did not have any designated bicycle lanes. This can potentially increase the risk for cyclists and also for motorists (if required to veer onto the incorrect side of the road to avoid cyclists).

In considering the inquiry's specific issues under consideration, the Commission recommends alternative solutions are adopted for children and young people. Due to the age of these riders, proposed strategies to use penalties and sanctions, such as fines and bicycle registration, may not be appropriate. Further, the introduction of a 1m distance rule may not have reduced the risk of injury in several of these incidents. The Commission supports the development of strategies and actions that will help increase the safety of cyclists, including children and young people and their families, and recommends the adoption of strategies such as improved road safety education and cycle path infrastructure to reduce cycling fatalities in Queensland.

The Commission acknowledges the value of an evidence-base for policy and program initiatives aimed at improving safety for cyclists, particularly those most vulnerable. The



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Commission is hopeful that the trend data provided herein will assist to inform the development of effective bicycle safety strategies.

