

# PETER MCCALLUM

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26 July 2013  
The Research Director  
Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear sir or madam,

I am writing in regard to the committee's enquiry into bicycle matters.

I would like to address a number of issues including the minimum passing distance law, bicycle registration, bicycle lighting, road conditions and reporting of accidents.

## 1. MINIMUM PASSING DISTANCE LEGISLATION

I am supportive of the move to introduce a minimum passing distance for motor vehicles overtaking cyclists. I drive a truck for a living and undertake long distance cycling for recreation. I also use a bicycle for most of my personal transport. As a truck driver I often encounter cyclists and have no difficulty passing them safely. It is my practice to slow down and look for an opportunity to overtake safely as I would with any other slow vehicle such as a tractor. If it is not possible to overtake I travel behind the cyclist at their pace and a reasonable distance back until an overtaking opportunity arises. I am rarely held up for more than a few seconds.

A couple of years ago I visited France where I cycled around 1400km on rural and urban roads. There is a minimum passing distance law in that country which is reinforced by signposting in places where cyclist volumes are high. I understand that the law requires motorists to leave at least 1.5m



between their vehicle and a cyclist on rural roads and 1m on urban roads. I found drivers to be extremely respectful and cycling was a great pleasure.

I believe that the introduction of a law requiring a minimum passing distance in Queensland would be beneficial. As it stands, there is no minimum passing distance under the TORUM Act. All that is required is that a driver must not collide with a vehicle they are overtaking. It can be quite intimidating when a car or truck overtakes at a distance of 10cm or so. I have a lot of cycling experience but have been shaken at times when drivers leave very little room, especially on roads with rough surfaces that can require me to swerve around potholes and debris.

## 2. PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Regardless of whether a minimum passing distance law is introduced, I think the state government should run a public education campaign to explain to drivers how they should pass cyclists. I believe most drivers want to do the right thing but they aren't sure exactly what that is. They may feel that if they slow down they will hold up following traffic so they take unnecessary risks.

## 3. BICYCLE REGISTRATION & RIDER LICENSING

I am not in favour of bicycle registration or rider licensing. I believe that the cost of administering a bicycle registration scheme would outweigh the benefits unless the cost of registration was prohibitively high. Through membership of two cycling organisations I am covered by public liability insurance and personal injury insurance. Perhaps the state government could create a universal third party insurance scheme funded through a levy on the sales of bicycles so as to ensure anyone injured by a cyclist is protected by insurance.

I believe that the state government could enhance its Bike Ed program by introducing an advanced cycling program for 14-15 year olds. As an incentive, riders who complete the course and receive no infringement notices should be able to apply for a learner driver licence six months earlier than they can at present.



#### 4. BICYCLE LIGHTING

I have not seen any current data but around 20 years ago the Federal Office of Road Safety analysed road fatality rates in Australia. That study found that the fatality rate per kilometre travelled was four times higher for cyclists riding during the hours of darkness than in the daytime. It was assumed that the cause was the low level of light use by cyclists at the time. In those days bicycle lights were expensive, ineffective and unreliable. Since then there have been remarkable improvements in the quality and price of lights. Consideration should be given to making it compulsory to have at least a minimum standard of lights fitted to all bicycles at all times so that if a rider is caught out after dark they aren't at increased risk of injury.

#### 5. ROAD CONDITIONS

Both the Austroads and Main Roads manuals for road construction should be rewritten to emphasise that no dangerous obstacles should be placed within any road shoulder or bicycle lane. There seems to be an increasing practice of locating cat-eye reflectors, audible line markers and road marking devices within the shoulder of major roads. These can be extremely hazardous to cyclists. Only last weekend I saw a rider hit a small dome about 1.5cm high and 10cm diameter on the Bruce Hwy at Clareview. He veered right and landed heavily on his shoulder on the centreline of the road, breaking his collarbone. There could easily have been a fatality if we had not been there to warn approaching traffic of his predicament prior to the arrival of emergency services.

It also appears to be common for road authorities to construct roads with large diameter stones. Recently in Victoria I noticed that the road shoulders were constructed with smaller diameter stones than the carriageway. That encourages cyclists to use the shoulder.

#### 6. POLICE REPORTS

There is a large discrepancy between the number of cyclists admitted to hospital and the number of injury accidents appearing in police reports. In my experience there are two main reasons for this. The main one is that cyclists don't contact the police after an injury accident. The other is that police are reluctant to take a report even if a cyclist wants to report it. This

leads to significant under-reporting in the official accident statistics issued by TMR. It also means that hazardous situations may not be identified and rectified until a more serious accident occurs. Queensland also misses out on a fair share of Federal Blackspot Program funding. The committee should investigate methods to encourage cyclists to report accidents and for police to accept those reports, perhaps by working with hospital emergency departments.

Thankyou for the opportunity to put my concerns before the committee.

Yours sincerely,

Peter McCallum