Submission: Inquiry into Cycling Issues by Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

Date 26 July 2013 BY EMAIL one attachment of two pages herewith

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Cycling in Queensland: What if anything can be changed?

The opportunity to make a submission is welcomed since the well regarded Travelsafe Committee no longer exists. However the combined interests of the current Committee clearly reflect recognition of the need for much more and better integration of transport and land use as well as sustainability, public health and safety in urban planning and management.

Accordingly this submission supports this move by way of identifying areas where over the previous 10-15 or more years, opportunities have been lost, ignored, refused or refuted by way of some examples from recognised sources and several case studies. Case studies are useful as they illustrate 'the real world' ie practices and on this basis, while they may be seen as only one example or as peculiar situations, equally if they are occurring, then it is likely they are occurring far more often than is recognised and in some cases are systemic.

The emphasis on and promotion of cycling over this period is well documented but rarely illustrated in practice. Requests from users ie cyclists but given very similar needs, also pedestrians, users of public transport and people with various disabilities, are regularly ignored or marginalised. For ease this group will be referred to as NMRU ie non-motorised road users.

One area where this is particularly the case relates to speed limits. Here the 'safety' of the NMRU is actually based not on making the road environment safer, but on reducing the exposure of the NMRU to threat or risk. As will be mentioned later, too often "safety" is emphasised but for the NMRU, convenience is ignored. Examples include the fact that requests for reduced speed limits in 'people places' ie where the NMRU population is larger, is expected and might be thought to even be encouraged are typically refused by road authorities. Rather than create a 'safe' road environment for all road users, too often the target is to only kill say 300 people per annum. Alternative targets are of course available eg "Vision Zero" but it appears this idea unlike in the passenger aircraft industry, is too much of a challenge. Instead, it appears that for those responsible ie the road authorities such as TMR, the idea of safe roads is only a 'dream' http://www.atrf.info/papers/2001/2001 Yeates.pdf

The problem is illustrated by a request in 2003 seeking a trial of local community input into road, traffic and speed management by way of local road safety committees (see http://www.yeatesit.biz/transfiles/comunitycabinet0103.pdf) and the refusal by the then Minister (see http://www.yeatesit.biz/transfiles/comunitycabinet0103.pdf).

While some elements have changed at least in some situations (although not in others hence the idea of consistency is problematic) the problem of reliance on an arguably out-dated road hierarchy is illustrated by a recent request seeking a reduction of the 60km/h speed limit along The Esplanade and Landsborough Parade in Caloundra given this route is between established housing and the beach front and parks through which runs the Coastal shared path. However while these and other factors might be expected from the Minister's letter back in 2003 to influence the request favourably, as can be seen from the attached correspondence from the Sunshine Coast Council (dated 2 July 2013), this was not the case. Instead, the response is couched in terms of compliance, consistency and credibility as determined by the MUTCD. This despite additional warning signs about the very few pedestrian crossings, no crossings for cyclists, several very low speed roundabouts, and a number of advisory speed signs set well below the 60km/h.

What is interesting then is in the same correspondence Council advises some of the findings from the traffic survey which show that the speed limit could indeed be 50km/h rather than 60km/h. Why not therefore use 50km/h instead of defending 60km/h?

Of course this is only one case but of interest and relevance and perhaps even in support of the flexibility available if all criteria are taken into account by way of the MUTCD, several of the examples cited in the request for a local road safety committee have subsequently been modified since 2003. The main road to UQ (Swann Road and Hawken Drive) formerly 60km/h at the time of the petition, and Brisbane City Council defended the 60km/h as being in accordance with the MUTCD, is now 50km/h. Radnor Street is still 50km/h but has the yellow BIKE symbols now known as and indicating BAZ (Bicycle Awareness Zones). Some of the other examples eg Station Road in Indooroopilly is now 50km/h not 60km/h. But why is there no difference in the speed limit between the sections of the same road through a busy shopping village or similar precinct, and the remainder of the road?

Why the reluctance to be consistent and credible and complying with the MUTCD as described by the previous Minister by having slower speed limits where they are needed not only for the safety and convenience of NMRUs but to encourage more NMRU trips?

The same question arose when the 50km/h in residential streets concept was first raised and claims were made that some roads should be increased from 60km/h to 70km/h although the safety of 40km/h was not mentioned. Despite meetings with senior QT personnel, a number of main roads went from 60 to 70km/h without evidence of any consideration of cyclists needs on those roads. One example was Fairfield Road north of Rocklea where there was little road space, high volumes of trucks and no alternative route for cyclists. There were others.

Related to this question, periodically there are promotions of concepts such as "Share the Road" examples of which can no doubt be provided by TMR. While these are of course welcome to the extent they might be successful, the more problematic issue is illustrated by the reluctance and in some sections of the former DMR now TMR, opposition to any forms of signage that might imply endorsement of or encourage more cycling. One of these is the well know W 6-7 sign which is a yellow diagonal square warning sign with a black bicycle. Quite often used in conjunction with other or supplementary signs, there have been many cases where requests have been refused on state controlled main roads. Similar opposition arose and apparently continues within some sections of TMR in regard to (i) provision of segregated on-road cycling facilities eg bicycle lanes and (ii) to use of the yellow bike symbols known as BAZ to show motorists and cyclists how to "share the road".

In most cases, it is the fact neither of these facilities is being included in new projects that makes it clear the opposition continues, sometimes to the extent that a section of new or old road may have the facilities but they are not connected ie they stop. This applies to the example of Landsborough Parade and The Esplanade referred to previously in that access to the Coastal path is not provided and neither is signage. Again the question is why or why not?

In an attempt to provide both a relatively short but also widely accepted view, the following extensive quotations have been used rather than re-interpreted in order to ensure they retain the views of the original author. Dr Ray Brindle has for much of his professional life been an authority on the interface of road planning and management and town and urban planning. Indeed I believe I recall correctly that at some point in time he illustrated the problem as having engineering looking after the public road reserves while town planners looked after the other side of the property-road boundary. In one of his many papers, Brindle writes ...

Pindar (1994) observed from a survey of practitioners in NSW agencies that, while there appeared to be no significant impediment to achieving integration of land use and transport strategies, road safety was not perceived as a "driving force" in strategic land use planning. This is taken to mean that road safety sits as an assessment criterion (i.e. a *consequence* of planning) rather than an *objective* with its own specific strategies. This may not seem such a bad thing. But by relegating road safety to a yardstick rather than a target, we will find it hard to achieve anything like a "vision zero" for road safety – unless the performance criterion rejects, in effect, any situation likely to involve any sort of collision risk. The result of such an absolute criterion is likely to be the complete stifling of the planning process. Pindar was led to ask whether or not it was appropriate for road safety to claim a more strategic role. He added that, if it was, then it was incumbent upon the state road and traffic agency to "provide a theoretical basis for road safety". (One could comment here that the lack of a theoretical basis has not held back other dominant planning criteria.)

It would be difficult enough to deal with this situation if the integrated planning process gave credit to the contributions of alert and informed road safety professionals. However, there may sometimes be subtle forces working in the opposite direction. "Integrated planning" has, for some, been taken to mean implicitly "retrieving transport planning from the engineers" (although so far the result of integrated planning has, if anything, been to the contrary). A discussion of that point, tempting as it might be, is not our purpose here, but one of its spin-offs is: There is a corollary of "integrated planning" that implies that what are perceived as engineering based requirements in planning and development (e.g. public works, transport operations, and road safety) are in some way counter to good outcomes, ergo engineering-based constraints on plans can be discounted (see, for example, Department of Planning and Urban Development (1990)). Put another way, it is implied that there is always an engineering solution to any problem, so safety considerations can be regarded as a management issue once the physical environment has been arranged. You will not find this stated anywhere, but it underlies much current planning thought. If this is true, it is a severe impediment to integrating safety-conscious planning into modern urban planning – and the more so for being covert and unspoken.

http://www.atrf.info/papers/2001/2001_Brindle.pdf p10/23 bold emphasis added

An adequate level of permeability for vehicle travel to meet fuel consumption and other environmental objectives can be provided through a connective traffic network at around 800 m grid spacing. **Permeability for pedestrian movement requires a much finer grain of connective paths at the local level.** To match that level of connectivity for motor vehicle movement is likely to encourage more rather than less car use. It almost certainly would be disadvantageous to pedestrian safety and amenity, and to the quality of the locality as a whole.

http://www.atrf.info/papers/2001/2001_Brindle.pdf p19/23 bold emphasis added

The point made by Brindle in relation to permeability is both illustrated and emphasised by the spacing of pedestrian crossings most often at great distances and/or widely spaced from where the crossing is convenient for pedestrians, usually for the convenience of motorists. While this may be appropriate in some locations, it is increasingly not the case where or if more trips are made other than by car. This is even more the case for cyclists and especially inexperienced cyclists when there are no crossings provided when clearly if the roads felt sufficiently safe and where needed facilities were provided, these cyclists could simply "Share the Road". Dutch research shows the desirable (ie not optimum) local permeability grid for cyclists to be of the order of 200m maximum. It is considerably less for pedestrians of all ages and abilities. This then relates to the other point in the previous quotation namely that safety can be (and arguably is) regarded as a management issue once the physical environment has been arranged ie the standard MUTCD hierarchy compliant road has been constructed. Too often indeed almost always this means the roads continue to be designed and managed as previously thereby excluding and preventing both innovation and adaption to changing circumstances in particular changing land use along and in the road corridor and catchment.

The following is taken from one of my conference papers (it was awarded best paper) and it and related and/or cited references provide greater detail should the Committee decide to investigate these fundamental issues further.

A review of road safety literature or reports in Australia presents a picture of success with current annual fatalities on the roads now approximately half of the maximum annual number ever recorded. However, exposure data is very scarce if not non-existent. This is especially true for those who are mobile but without motorised vehicles. This group, previously classified as "vulnerable", but for the purposes of assessment, more correctly described as "non-motorised" road users, comprises people in transit including people with various access disabilities, people walking, people cycling or people using movement devices such as roller blades, skateboards, and most recently returned, scooters in various forms and configurations.

In fact, the non-motorised road user (NMRU) is "potentially" by far the most populous component of the population, "potentially" only because many of the trips are not counted in current research and exposure data. Trips may be short eg from car to workplace or to shop, on footpaths or on private land, or on public land but not specifically on roads. However, people who are NMRUs are very prevalent. They are ubiquitous (1), or at least, in urban areas in particular, they ought to be. If not, where are they and why are they not "seen" in the research and travel data?

One reason frequently provided is the difficultly of actually measuring the trips and classifying and assessing the trip types. However, as with most methodological difficulties, it is often useful to utilise "quick and dirty" techniques to begin to understand the nature of the problem and to quantify its scope and scale as such techniques often give sufficient accuracy to provide "indicators", if not specific measures. Thus if people cite "fear of traffic" as a reason for not cycling or for not letting children walk or cycle to school or for not using public transport, it may not be necessary to quantify the problem but rather, to assess its validity as an indicator of users needs. This paper aims to explore and utilise the concept of indicators of needs as an alternative to orthodox statistical analyses.

The paper therefore explores road safety from the perspective of the various road users and their needs. It examines a number of scenarios which seek to illustrate a widening gap between community expectations and resolution of often complex issues by "experts". Given that governments, for health, environmental and economic reasons, increasingly encourage walking and cycling including to public transport, it is suggested that the idea of road safety and its application should ensure non-motorised road users can use road and transit systems safely, easily and conveniently if these goals are to be met.

In order to achieve such outcomes, it is suggested that road safety strategies and transport opportunities should assess "safety + convenience", not just road safety, and that the assessments should always be undertaken from the perspective of all road users of all ages and abilities, if not by processes which include these interests and ensure their needs are met. <u>http://www.yeatesit.biz/transfiles/rsafe00papera.pdf</u> p1-2/6

Unfortunately it appears from examples such as the recent Sunshine Coast Council response cited above that the "experts" continue to prevail thereby excluding users and user representatives, or in some cases, selectively 'cherry picking' those who are perhaps less well informed. The problem here is that as the "experts" sometimes say (and a view that has at least a degree of merit) the issues involved are of a technical rather than political nature. However by the "experts" demonstrating by way of the practices that their expertise is no longer of sufficient merit, the credibility and consistency they seek and cite eg the MUTCD, is or may no longer be, relevant. Here again cycling and safety are useful to consider. Why would a road authority such as TMR not promote devices such as the BAZ for use on roads without bike lanes? Why would road authorities provide major shared bike+ped paths such as the Coastal Path at Caloundra yet not provide crossings to it? Why would a road authority not provide W 6-7 signs or BAZ at locations where there is an elevated risk to cyclists which may not be obvious to motorists? Why despite several editions of the AUSTROADS guidelines and the National Cycle Strategy have so many roads been changed, renovated, retrofitted or built in the last 10-15 years but without provision or warning of the likely presence of cyclists?

As argued in the extract in my paper above, one reason is the invisibility of cyclists in data. It is not long ago that Queensland Transport in an otherwise quite outstanding campaign promoted cyclists as "unexpected". In many ways it seems that despite the millions of dollars on research, promotions, media campaigns, strategies and plans (and goals such as those in the IRTP in the 1990s) cycling has remained or has been able to be kept invisible both in and outside the road authorities such as TMR at least as far as meeting requirements and provision of documented facilities and achieving stipulated goals is concerned.

Sadly this has required the resurrection of the "Give cyclists a metre" campaign of the 1980-90s period due to cyclists not only still being threatened, but injured, seriously and fatally injured by motorists, but in some cases, the motorists using what amounts to the "unexpected" concept as a legal defence. Clearly a number of road rules ie regulations also appear to have been viewed from this point of view by investigators most notably the requirement to travel a safe distance behind the vehicle in front, to operate a vehicle safely for the conditions, and to only overtake when it is safe to do so.

In summary then, what if anything has changed?

The MUTCD still dominates to virtually exclude provision for cycling.

Local communities still have little or no say about road and traffic management other than by political rather than technical submissions yet in many cases their political representatives simply seek advice from the responsible "experts".

Controversial as it may be, it appears that rather than apply the "Safe Systems" or "Vision Zero" approaches, current authorities defend their provision on grounds other than 'safety + convenience' except for motorists instead applying 'safety' to NMRUs as a means to justify constraining rather creating more convenience for, the NMRUs.

Despite extensive policy and strategy expenditure in staff, consultants, expensive handouts etc, little is applied or intended to be applied, and when cited, is too easily ignored or refuted.

Much of what has been done has of course some merit and no doubt deserves support and praise. However much of this is the easy part, isolated or symbolic as can be seen by looking at the maps that show both cycle facilities and roads, given these reflect the same ie common desire lines and show how many of the roads are connected into a useful cycling network as for motor vehicles. Too often the assumption is the need for separate cycling infrastructure which is (i) very expensive and (ii) can be left out for later as with recent examples.

I trust this submission may contribute to the investigations of the Committee.

I would also ask that being a complex and in many ways challenging and multi-disciplinary topic and inquiry, the Committee considers favourably providing a draft of its recommendations for public scrutiny and subsequent review of submissions.



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Sunshine Coast

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02 July 2013

Mr Michael Yeates

Dear Mr Yeates

TRAFFIC SPEED- LANDSBOROUGH PARADE, GOLDEN BEACH

Thank you for contacting council and bringing your concerns to our attention in relation to the abovementioned matter. has noted your correspondence and referred the matter to our unit for consideration and response, as the matter is of an operational nature.

Your request for a review of the existing speed limit on the Landsborough Parade, Golden Beach has been investigated, however, is not supported at this time.

Sunshine Coast Council sets speed limits are determined in accordance with Transport and Main Roads 'Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices'. The process for determining speed limits considers road function, existing vehicle speeds, roadside activity and crash statistics and is used by Main Roads and all local governments in Queensland to determine consistent and credible speed limits.

The Esplanade Golden Beach and Landsborough Parade function as a major traffic carrying road between the Caloundra and the Golden Beach and Pelican Waters area.

Council officers have investigated Landsborough Parade for traffic volumes, road geometry, and road signage in December 2012. The survey included the installation of a traffic counter to accurately record the vehicle speeds and volumes. The counter was placed between Beattie Street and McLean Street.

The results of this traffic survey are as follows:

Summary	
Northbound	
Average Daily Traffic	3017 vehicles per day
Average Traffic Speed	51.7 km/h
Southbound	
Average Daily Traffic	2548 vehicles per day
Average Traffic Speed	50.0 km/h

The above count data indicates that drivers generally acknowledge the speed limit and prevailing road environment and drive accordingly.



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The review in December also included an assessment of signage, to highlight any opportunities for improvement to road safety. Council has since installed pedestrian warning signs, improved above standard pedestrian crossing warning signage and pavement marking, as well as extra roundabout signage.

It is acknowledged that a small number of motorists may drive inappropriately. This is often the cause of concern for safety and subsequent requests for either traffic calming or the installation of speed limit signs or a review of the speed limit. In these instances the appropriate response is referral to Queensland Police Service for enforcement.

Should you require further information, please contact Customer Service on 5475 7272. Please quote for any future communication regarding this matter.

