

JOHN NIGHTINGALE



Friday, 26 July 2013

Ms Kate McGuckin
Research Director,
Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms McGuckin,

I commend the Committee to the submissions of Dr. Paul Martin, Mr Aaron Ball and the Brisbane CBDBUG.

I wish to express my full support for the views in these three submissions in particular.

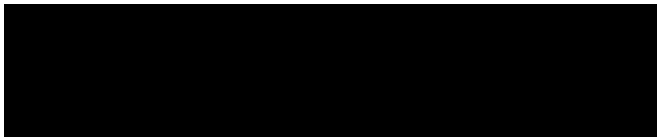
I further wish to elaborate on one issue, which I believe to be fundamental:

There is an over-arching reason for cycling being both dangerous and perceived as dangerous by Queenslanders. This is the toxic road environment that cyclists must negotiate daily. No matter how many footpaths, shared paths and cycle paths there are, all cyclists have to use roads for most of their journeys and for some part of all journeys. And thus it is the road environment that determines whether a person decides to cycle or not.

The default speed limit of 50kph is a major problem as pointed out in detail by Dr Martin. Collisions at this speed between a car and a pedestrian or cyclist will result in serious injury and death, but only to the pedestrian and cyclist involved in the incident.

There is no alternative to a 30kph speed limit if Queensland is serious about reducing the road toll on our local roads. Our residential and shopping strip roads cannot be used effectively by residents and shoppers unless motor traffic is travelling at no more than 30kph. Children cannot safely ride or walk on footpaths, let alone cycle on their own residential streets, if cars are passing at 50kph and more (as most motorists speed some of the time as shown by AAMI's survey).

Similarly, our arterial roads are much more dangerous than they should be, due to rules that maximise the speed of motor traffic, despite the fact that they do not minimise the journey time when congestion is present. At the margin, congestion can be caused by speeding to the next congested road-space, a result well-known to traffic engineers and queuing theory for many decades. Thus, a lower speed limit on roads subject to congestion will reduce journey time. But popular misperception combined with political inertia continually prevents reform.



The arterial road system, exemplified by Fairfield Rd between Rocklea and Dutton Park, is poorly regulated to provide either a quality of service to motor traffic or a safe environment for cyclists. Speed limits varying between 60 and 70kph, poorly coordinated signalised intersections, all combine to encourage motorists to speed, and encourage rat-running at arterial speeds on local roads.

Even on well-designed roads with adequate capacity, the lack of discouragement to speeding and poor management of traffic, especially during times of peak demand, has led, over the decades, to the level of frustration and consequent aggression witnessed daily on our roads. Speed and aggressiveness means little chance of attracting non-motor traffic into the commuting and journey to school task.

It is no wonder that no target set by any level of government for increasing cycle mode share has ever been achieved! In fact, mode share has, in many areas, fallen despite spending by state and local government on cycling infrastructure. This money would appear to have been wasted, in the face of inaction on the factors that would make a difference, measures to reduce the aggressiveness of driver behaviour, not merely toward cyclists and pedestrians but to each other.

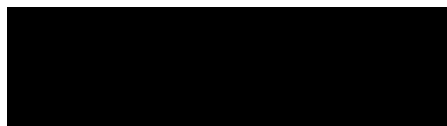
It is not impossible to change behaviour, as shown by the reduction of smoking rates, the stigmatisation of drink driving and, the most dramatic change in the shortest period, use of water by households. What is required is appropriate changes to road rules and their enforcement, along with education and marketing efforts.

For this to take place, the State Government will have to take a very strong position, political determination to make these changes and reinforce them. The culture of the Department of Transport and Main Roads must also change. Thus far, there is little evidence of that determination because for many years now the Department has consistently demonstrated inertia in response to concerns about the safety of non-motor vehicle road users, pedestrians and cyclists.

Your committee has received numbers of submissions detailing the issues on which these concerns have been ignored and on the measures that have been rejected.

The evidence is clear. The measures that should be taken are well-known, as your committee has discovered. All that is required is political will.

Sincerely,

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