



**Submission to Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee
Inquiry into Cycling Issues**

To:

The Research Director
Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee
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From:

National Heart Foundation of Australia (Q'ld. Division)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cathy Donald".

Cathy Donald
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26 July 2013

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The Heart Foundation welcomes the opportunity to make comment on the Inquiry into Cycling Issues. We agree that too many bicycle riders are being killed or injured in Queensland and the increasing perception of the lack of safety in cycling is impacting negatively on cycling participation. Therefore, our interest in this Inquiry lies in the need for legislative and policy reforms that will make cycling safer for all, thereby increasing participation in cycling in Queensland.

As more people cycle, their participation in physical activity increases, which helps to improve their cardiovascular health and reduce risk factors in the population. In addition to health benefits, the evidence shows there are real economic benefits to be gained from increased cycling and walking (Tolley, 2011).

The Heart Foundation is the leading non-government organisation in cardiovascular health, committed to reducing heart disease and improving the health of all Queenslanders. The Heart Foundation is seeking policy and legislative solutions that will prioritise safety and see the adoption of an approach to road use that accommodates the needs of all users, including bicycle riders, motorists, pedestrians and public transport users, of all ages and abilities.

The Heart Foundation believes we need a cultural shift that is respectful of all road users. By adopting a 'Streets for People' policy (Government of South Australia, 2012) federal, state and local governments signify their commitment to all citizens and modes of transport.

The Heart Foundation has been working for many years, often in collaboration with peak bodies in health, but also in government, transport, planning and cycling; to support infrastructure changes to improve health. We commend the committee to a broad cross section of resources as evidence to support their work in the Inquiry into Cycling Issues (Heart Foundation 2012a).

Cycling improves health

One of the greatest public health challenges in Queensland is the obesity epidemic. The prevalence of overweight and obesity has been steadily increasing with 1 in 3 adults now overweight and 1 in 4 obese (Queensland Health, 2012).

Obesity cost an estimated \$11.6 billion in Queensland in 2008, including costs to the health system, productivity, other financial losses and loss of wellbeing. If prevalence of obesity was reduced by 11%, it has been estimated that there would be an 11% reduction in healthcare costs over time (Queensland Health, 2012).

Physical inactivity is a major health problem in its own right. It is linked with weight gain, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, colon and breast cancers. Disturbingly, almost half (44%) of all Queenslanders are not sufficiently active to gain health benefits (Queensland Health, 2012).

Physical inactivity:

- was the third largest cause of burden of disease and injury in Queensland in 2007 at 6.4% (AIHW 2007) and the second largest for females at 6.7% (Queensland Health 2012 – Key health indicators 2012).
- is responsible for one in ten premature deaths in Australia (Lee I-M et al, 2012)
- causes between six and eleven per cent of Australian cases of heart disease, breast cancer, colon cancer and type 2 diabetes (Lee I-M et al, 2012)

Over the period 2009–10 to 2010–11, eight per cent of all Queensland hospitalisations were potentially preventable (141,631 hospitalisations per year). These are conditions where hospitalisation is thought to be avoidable if timely and adequate non-hospital care had been provided, and many more could have been prevented with improved protective factors such as physical activity (Queensland Health, 2012).

It has been estimated that the life expectancy gained as a result of increased physical activity was larger (3-14 months) than the lost life expectancy due to increased air pollution (0.8-40 days lost) and increased traffic accidents (5-9 days lost) (Jacobs, Nawrot, de Geus et al, 2010).

Increased cycling participation will have clear benefits for improved cardiovascular health in Queensland. To measure these health benefits, there needs to be appropriate consistent surveillance of comprehensive targets to boost active travel modes, including a four-fold increase in cycling by 2030. In Queensland there are 170,000 cycle trips every weekday however there is a need to capture distance travelled data as a surveillance process to adequately understand behaviour.

Cycling is a low impact form of activity that is safe without risking too much exertion or straining of joints and muscles. It is therefore a good option for people who are overweight or with other mobility limiting conditions.

Cycling is active transport

A healthy future for Queensland requires non-partisan action to encourage more Queenslanders to use active transport, including cycling, walking and public transport. To do this, we need a safe cycling environment and public policies that support cycling infrastructure, programs, education and awareness campaigns and legislative reform. The Heart Foundation commends the Moving Australia 2030 (Moving People 2030 Taskforce, 2013) report to the Committee.

Participation in cycling for active transport:

- increases physical activity levels in our population with the co-benefits of better health (physical and mental), increased safety on our streets and less congestion.
- is currently low with only 6% of Queenslanders cycling for active transport at least once a week; while 1 in 3 adults walked for transport at least five days a week (Queensland Health, 2012).
- provides significant health, environmental and economic benefits. Current levels of cycling participation provide \$227m per year to the health system and financial benefit of \$63.9m every year through reducing congestion (Bauman et al, 2008).
- is cost effective and can help people to get their minimum level of 30 minutes recommended physical activity per day, without having to find extra time. Children who actively travel to school go a long way towards achieving their required minimum 60 minutes a day activity.

Cycling needs a supportive environment

Perceived safety risks are a major barrier to cycling. Women in particular are afraid to cycle and see safety as a major barrier. The national Women and Cycling Survey (Cycling Promotion Fund and Heart Foundation, 2013) found that a lack of safe cycle paths is stopping women from cycling. More than 60 per cent of women (equivalent 5.2 million women) said they would like to cycle more often, with 50 per cent identifying that having more separated cycle paths, bike lanes and wider lanes on the road would be the main reason that would encourage them to cycle more.

The Women and Cycling Survey also found that:

- The main safety concerns among women involved motor vehicles (car, bus and trucks) due to speed, volume and distracted motorists (66% or equivalent to 5.6 million women)
- 90% of women agreed that government should improve cycling facilities by providing more bike paths and/or lanes
- 30% (2.55 million) women reported they had ridden a bike in the past six months. In comparison, 90% had ridden a bike at least once every six months as a child.

Case Study: Recreational female rider afraid on urban roads

"I always feel afraid when I ride along King Arthur Terrace, Tennyson because the cars tear past really close at 60km/h. Cars park all along the cycle lane, so I have to pull out onto the road. I would prefer to stick to the bike paths, but they're often not connected and I have to use roads. I want to keep active and healthy, but most of all I'd like to stay alive on the roads. I wish motorists would slow down and leave at least a metre when they pass."

Mid aged woman in Brisbane

Legislative reform can make cycling safer by providing a supportive environment

Two top priority legislative reforms that the Heart Foundation believes will contribute strongly to making cycling safer are: 1) the one metre rule and 2) lowering speed limits:

1. One metre rule

Introducing the one metre rule, along with public education campaigns to increase awareness about leaving a minimum one metre space when passing a bicycle rider, will increase safety for all road users. Over 3 million Australians are aware of the *A metre matters* campaign, a joint initiative of the Amy Gillett Foundation, VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission (Amy Gillett Foundation and Cycle Safe Communities, 2013). Such campaigns support understanding about how motorists and bicycle riders can be safer together on our roads.

One metre minimum safe passing distance legislation, or established legal precedence, exists in several European countries and about half the states in the United States of America (AGF briefing paper minimum overtaking distance, released 3 June 2013). Consequently translating near universal recommended driver behaviour and overseas precedent into legislation in Queensland, if not Australia is a logical and practical step to changing behaviour.

Legislation has been used effectively in the past to protect people from dangerous behaviours, without these laws becoming onerous to enforce. Often enforcement occurs in the form of community pressure to “do the right thing” and increases awareness of “what the right thing to do is.” Many motorists who are not bicycle riders, may not realise how necessary it is to leave more space between their car and bicycle riders.

Examples of effective laws that have not become onerous to enforce are our passive smoking laws which protect people, especially children, from being exposed to environmental tobacco smoke. Laws were passed to stop people smoking within ten metres of children’s playground equipment and within a car carrying children under 16. This has not necessitated increases in police presence in playgrounds or pulling over cars in smoking blitzes, rather it has led to a high awareness of the dangers of smoking around children.

Case Study: Father and son near miss on rural road

“I was cycling ahead of my 10 year old son when a car came around the corner on a quiet rural road. The car passed us ok, but as the trailer went by, the rear corner of the trailer passed under my handle bar. It was an unbelievable shock and it’s a miracle that my son and I are alive. A one metre rule would have at least made the motorist aware of the issue.”

Mid aged Father in Rural Queensland

2. Lowering speed limits can be good for business and reduce injury

Lowering speed limits in areas of high pedestrian and cycling use will reduce injury and increase participation (Heart Foundation 2012b). Pedestrians and bicycle riders struck by a motor vehicle travelling at 50 km/h have about an 85% chance of being killed, while at 30 km/h this drops to only 10% (Garrard, 2008).

In addition, it is good for business because safer streets attract people to walk and cycle to their local retail area. Also, retail rents and residential sale prices have been shown to increase around areas that have been developed to make streets more walking and cycling friendly (Tolley, 2011).

Building infrastructure supports increased cycling participation

One of the key ways to actually improve safety, as well as the perception of safety, amongst bicycle riders, pedestrians and motorists is to build communities where all of these modes of transport can co-exist with as few injuries as possible.

Building infrastructure that makes cycling easier and safer, will increase participation (Tolley, 2011). Infrastructure is a critical part of the equation. Building infrastructure such as off-road bike paths, on-road cycle lanes, pavement colour coding, improving connectedness, end of trip facilities and so on; will all support legislative changes such as reduced speeds and the one metre passing rule.

There is good evidence to show that infrastructure can improve the perception of safety by bicycle riders and increase participation positively (Garrard, Rose & Lo 2008; Tolley, 2011). We also know appropriate, supportive infrastructure can effectively reduce injuries (Tolley, 2011).

Heart Foundation doesn’t support the registration of bicycles:

- The potential impact of bike registration is a negative impact on participation due to fees; in particular fees for children’s bicycles which could have a big impact on whether or not parents allow their children to use bicycles. For cultural change to happen, we need children to start cycling and develop a lifelong behaviour.

- Most bicycle riders are motorists and are already paying registration fees.
- As more than 80% of total road expenditure comes from council rates bicycle riders in the main already make a fair contribution for the road they use.

The Heart Foundation supports the two current proposed amendments to improve road access with the thought that they will support increased participation in cycling:

- Bicycle riders allowed to ride their bike across a crossing.
- Bicycle lane does not need to lead into a bicycle storage area. Bicycle storage areas should be 'fitted' in all practicable instances at intersections, regardless of whether a cycle lane leads to that intersection, for increased visibility and awareness that bicycle riders are present.

Heart Foundation recommendations for reform:

Most importantly, the Heart Foundation believes that any reform needs to increase participation in cycling and not inadvertently decrease participation. We believe the following recommendations would support safe cycling and therefore increase cycling participation:

- Legislate for a motorist to provide a minimum of 1 metre passing distance between the vehicle and the bicycle rider on urban streets; and 2 metres on 100km/h highways.
- Legislate to bring motorist and bicycle rider monetary penalties in line with each other, as all are equally legitimate road users.
- Legislate to reduce speed to reduce near misses and injuries and increase participation.
- Increase investment in infrastructure to ensure connected pathways to remove bicycle riders from roads where practicable.
- Ensure provision for walking and cycling, including separation of bicycle riders and motorists where practicable, in all transport infrastructure projects.
- Increase investment in active travel initiatives.
- Implement and adequately fund the Queensland Cycle Strategy going forward (State of Queensland, TMR, 2011).
- Adopt a "Streets for People" policy at federal, state and local levels.

The Heart Foundation, in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association, Bus Industry Confederation, Cycling Promotion Fund and the International Association of Public Transport (ALGA, BIC, CPF, HF, IAPT, 2010) recommend an increase in the support for the following initiatives:

- Prioritise cycling along with walking and public transport in transport policies.
- Implement health-related urban planning standards (Heart Foundation, 2013).
- Expedite the expansion of cycling infrastructure.
- Support programs that make cycling to school safer eg. Healthy Active School Travel (HAST) and AusCycle development programs.
- Support infrastructure and incentives that promote and support cycling and walking to work eg. end of trip facilities such as lockers and showers.
- Continue to support Bicycle Share Schemes such as Brisbane's City Cycle scheme with more infrastructure (such as cycle lanes for shared use by cars and bicycles, separated cycle lanes) to increase safety and integrate it further into the public transport GoCard system to increase participation.
- Increase access for bicycles to public transport by making infrastructure provisions for bicycles to be taken on public transport at peak times.
- Resource complementary education and social marketing campaigns to promote active transport and physical activity benefits.

Annually in Australia, an average of 35 bicycle riders are killed and more than 2,500 are seriously injured (Amy Gillett Foundation, 2013). This is unacceptable. Road safety is everybody's business. A multi-strategy, comprehensive approach is needed in our community to achieve cultural change and improve respect for people using all modes of transport.

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