



7 August 2018

Deborah Jeffrey
Committee Secretary
Transport and Public Works Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
tollroads@parliament.qld.gov.au

Inquiry into the operations of Toll Roads in Queensland Bicycle Queensland Submission to Transport and Public Works Committee

Dear Ms Jeffrey,

Thank you for inviting Bicycle Queensland to comment on the operations of toll roads in Queensland. Bicycle Queensland recognises the urgent need to find a solution to the current challenges facing South-East Queensland's transport network, with great potential to make Queensland roads safer through increasing trip volumes on toll roads.

Bicycle Queensland welcomes the Inquiry's aim to deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders through the provision of a high-frequency toll road system that will cut travel times, reduce network-wide traffic congestion, and improve the commuter experience when going to and from the suburbs – supporting a single seamless transport network, accessible to everyone.

As you know, Bicycle Queensland is the pre-eminent voice for community cycling in Queensland. With about 18,000 members statewide and 32,000 supporters on our database, we exist to help Queenslanders cycle safely. We are dedicated to the promotion of bike riding as a driving force for individual health and well-being, and the empowerment of sustainable development. Over the past 40 years Bicycle Queensland has grown from a small collective of cycling enthusiasts to one of the largest and most influential community cycling organisations in Australia. We are also committed to giving back to the community and have raised over \$3.5 million for Queensland charities in recent years.

Bicycle Queensland offers this initial submission in respect not just of our members' interests, but with respect for the wellbeing of the whole community. In terms of approach, Bicycle Queensland's submission considers the Inquiry in context of the current state-of-play for transport in South-East Queensland, together with the potential opportunities for transforming our travel future through innovative and courageous leadership. Bicycle Queensland is pleased to be among many community beneficiaries of Transurban Queensland's work in the community, whereby we are provided with exclusive no-cost access to safe, closed toll roads during major events such as the Great Brisbane Bike Ride and Mt Coot-tha Challenge.

To begin with, may we take the opportunity to strongly commend Transurban's commitments to the community and the promotion of road safety.

Logan Enhancement Project (funded by Transurban)

- The project design includes a range of active transport improvements, including a dedicated 2km shared bike and pedestrian path over the Logan Motorway at the Mt Lindesay Highway and Beaudesert Road interchange, providing an important connection between Illaweena Street in the north to Acacia Street in the south.

Gateway Upgrade North (managed by Transurban on behalf of the Department of Transport and Main Roads)

- The Gateway Upgrade North project will significantly improve active transport infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, with a new, off-road shared pathway being constructed along the length of the project. There will be over 15km of new and upgraded pathway constructed, including connections to existing local networks, providing a safe off-road alternative for active transport users.

- The new pathway will extend from Nudgee to Bracken Ridge, connecting the Jim Soorley Bikeway in the south, and the Barfoot Street pedestrian/cyclist underpass in the north.
- The path will connect to local networks at several locations including:
 - Nudgee Road interchange, Nudgee
 - Bicentennial Road interchange, Boondall
 - Sandgate Road, Boondall
 - Muller Road and Egret Place, Taigum
 - Depot Road, Deagon
 - Childs Street, Carl Place, Barrett Street, Woodcroft Street, John Fisher Drive and Barfoot Street, Bracken Ridge.

Cycling events supported by Transurban

In addition to a dedicated community grants program for non-profit and community organisations, Transurban supports multiple community cycling events including the Prince Charles Hospital Foundation's Ride For Life, the Chain Reaction event to raise funds for sick children, and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital OneDay to Conquer Cancer event, in addition to supporting Bicycle Queensland's own Great Brisbane Bike Ride by waiving service-use charges and labour costs.

In stark contrast, Bicycle Queensland currently pays Queensland Government agencies about \$85k per year in infrastructure and special service fees, with State Government costs and charges increasing significantly over the past 10 years.

These costs are charged despite our status as a non-profit and community-based organisation, whereby our major events and programs all serve to directly benefit the community and provide a tangible contribution towards a nicer world in which to live, work, and play. Increasing cost pressures have seen event entry prices rise and participation numbers fall – a disappointing trend.

While Bicycle Queensland certainly acknowledges our very positive history of support from the Queensland Government, the following points provide an outline of historical changes in sponsorship and increased government-related costs:

- Following a change of government in 2012, State Government support towards Bicycle Queensland's community-based charitable events was reduced significantly.
- At the same time, service charging was introduced, and while Bicycle Queensland's use of the South-East Busway had historically been a no-cost aspect of our Brisbane to Gold Coast Cycle Challenge, the introduction of service charging saw Bicycle Queensland incur significant additional event fees, with no option but to pass these costs on to participants, in effect creating an indirect tax on a community event designed to help achieve the State's own Cycling Strategy.
- The introduction of service charging also encompassed billing of commercial rates for the use of a number of train carriages to transport riders back from the Gold Coast after Bicycle Queensland's iconic annual event, the Brisbane to Gold Coast Cycle Challenge. Once again, this cost is ultimately passed on to participants, with no financial reserves or means for Bicycle Queensland to otherwise offset the cost.
- Service charging was also introduced across the police service. Historically, police services for Bicycle Queensland's events were provided by districts, with local police attending events as part of their rostered duties, often for a few hours only, at no charge to Bicycle Queensland. Over the past 14 years, this has changed to full payment for services, with increased police numbers required throughout.
- Our current annual total cost of \$85k to State Government agencies includes payments to Transport and Main Roads, the Queensland Police Service, and the Queensland Ambulance Service.

Bicycle Queensland is extremely appreciative of the support received and the exceptional quality of service, but does struggle to meet these costs while maintaining affordable ticket prices for the whole community. Our events are a strategically significant and direct deliverable in support of the Queensland Government's objective to get more people cycling more often. We make this submission in view of the fact that the promotion of cycling encouragement has been somewhat stifled by a heavy cost burden, resulting in fewer affordable opportunities to grow cycling trips in and around South-East Queensland in order to reduce the number of vehicles on Queensland roads.

Through this lens, Bicycle Queensland can appreciate the pressures faced by toll road operators, and the inherent conflict between maintaining an acceptable level of profitability (in order to protect a taxpayer-funded investment) versus cutting usage fees in order to meet community cost expectations. It is well established in evidence that the community generally underestimates the cost of maintaining and developing the transport network, with substantial subsidisation for public roads provided by governments on an ongoing basis.

There can be no doubt that greater use of toll roads will improve safety, access, and connectivity to and around South-East Queensland into the future, particularly in context of projected population and employment growth – with the inner-city population expected to increase by about 27% and employment in the central business district (CBD) set to grow by 65% to 2041.

To support this unprecedented growth, Bicycle Queensland strongly supports the consideration of cost-effective strategies to incentivise more frequent toll road use. Any resulting decrease in vehicles on public roads will create a safer road network for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, increasing the likelihood that people will walk and ride more often, and improving public transport travel times by reducing overall traffic congestion.

To be clear, the safety of cyclists is paramount to Bicycle Queensland's purpose, and we therefore support the suggestion of more vehicles on protected toll roads – many of which have the highest quality separated cycling infrastructure. In terms of the immediate need for ongoing investment in better bikeways, road crashes reported to the police involving cyclists and motor vehicles in just the Brisbane City region between 2001 and 2016 (inclusive) resulted in costs to the community equivalent to \$1,072,583,826. This figure was estimated by applying a conservative aggregate 'human capital cost' to each crash using the approved 'Roadside Impact Severity Calculator' developed by the Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads. In total, 4,312 crashes involving cyclists were reported over the period, and almost all involved a motor vehicle. Beyond the unacceptably high annual average cost to the economy of \$67 million (increasing annually), 33 people were killed and over 1,600 people were hospitalised as a result of road crashes over the reporting period, providing a compelling moral case for greater investment in strategies to mitigate risks by reducing the number of motor vehicles on public roads. In fact, about 23% of all cyclist fatalities in Queensland from 2001 to July 2017, and 32% of the overall cyclist crash count, occurred in the Brisbane City area. Brisbane also represented about 28% of Queensland's total cycling-related human capital crash costs for the year 2016.

According to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development report, *Australian cycling safety: casualties, crash types and participation records (2015)*, cyclist casualties represent 3% of all road fatalities and 15% of all road hospitalisations in Australia and are higher today than they were five and ten years ago. While road fatalities in Australia have decreased from about 1,600 per year in 2005 to about 1,200 in 2017, cyclist fatalities have not changed. Nationally, cycling hospitalisations have increased, with nearly 2,000 more hospitalisations in 2013 compared to 2005. Light vehicles represent the largest proportion of other vehicle type involved in fatal or injury crashes with cyclists (66% and 84%, respectively), while heavy vehicles represent a much higher proportion of fatal crashes (22%) than injury crashes (3%). Notably, the Department of Infrastructure also reports that the highest proportion of cyclist-involved casualty crashes occur on local government roads, followed by arterial roads, and while a large proportion of all vehicle crashes occur on highways, only a small proportion of cyclist-involved casualty crashes occur on arterial roads.

In light of the evidence, there seems little question that greater toll road use would improve outcomes for cyclists – reducing fatalities, serious injuries, and crashes with motor vehicles.

We support the contributions of the private sector towards transport infrastructure connecting key corridors. In particular, the enablement of safer bicycle access to the CBD is critical to support projected population growth in the South Brisbane area alone, which is set to treble by 2031, representing the city's fastest growing suburb. More than 18,000 new residents are expected to take up residence in South Brisbane over the next 15 years, representing a 270% surge in people living in a constrained two-square-kilometre precinct. During just the past 10 years, 5000 additional students have enrolled in schools in and around the Brisbane CBD, and it is predicted that more than 3000 extra students will move into inner-Brisbane in the next five years, with the total population of South Brisbane likely to exceed 25,000 within 15 years. Many of these residents and students make car trips each week – they can readily commute by toll road and should be encouraged to do so.

From a philosophical perspective, the importance of raising community awareness of the actual transport infrastructure expenses borne by the State and private providers cannot be rated highly enough. Maintaining and improving the transport network costs the Australian government an average of \$27 million every working day. In contrast, walking and cycling are low-carbon modes of transport that enhance urban quality and facilitate social cohesion – offering cost-effective, adaptable, individualised travel solutions which empower people of all ages and abilities to harness economic progress and embrace cultural diversity, providing door-to-door access to education, health-care, and other essential community services. Initiatives to divert private vehicles off public roads and onto toll roads are an important part of creating safe space for walkers and bicycle riders on our local road networks.

Thank you once again for inviting Bicycle Queensland to make a submission to the Inquiry on Toll Roads.

We would welcome your consideration of our feedback and look forward to being involved in the community conversation.

Together we can get Queensland cycling towards a healthy and affordable transport future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Savage', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Anne Savage
Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle Queensland