

## **Vulnerable Road Users Inquiry**

The Committee Secretary  
ACT Government Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and TAMS  
[committees@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:committees@parliament.act.gov.au).

Dear Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to this enquiry.

I am a person who walks, drives and also rides a bike frequently and have read a number of submissions from fellow riders and support the issues and general sentiments presented in their submissions.

As a practitioner in the field of design of walking and cycling infrastructure my focus is generally on how to facilitate the reduction of risk to vulnerable users through better and smarter design and implementation of infrastructure, however this needs to be acknowledged and accepted through appropriate actions as only part of the solution.

### ***Cultural Change***

Changing the culture of the us versus them (motorists versus cyclists) mentality that is promoted from time to time through the media should become a major focus of legislative change and education if more people are to be encouraged to cycle.

Most people who ride bikes also drive a car so why should our choice of transport change our mentality. I think it is fuelled from both sides in that people behind the wheel of a car feel people on bikes have an advantage when traffic is congested and people on a bike have the ever present threat of death or maiming from an errant vehicle. This can fuel rage from both sides and as a rider of many years this does not seem to be abating and requires action to change.

### ***Legislative reform***

The acceptance of public spending to provide better infrastructure has lifted numbers of people prepared to ride however to increase numbers further the introduction of laws such as strict liability and leaving a safe distance when passing riders (such as a metre matters) should help with the perception of risk from both behind the wheel and on a bike and may allow more people who drive that have previously dismissed riding to give it a go. This may be especially when these measures are coupled with increasing congestion, parking costs and as riding a bike is more socially accepted.

A large part of the resistance to the introduction of strict liability and passing clearance laws seems to be infrastructure related however I cannot understand how 50% of the states in the USA and many European countries have the laws in place.

I would urge you as legislators to look at the other places where the laws have been successfully introduced and are functioning to drive the introduction of the laws here.

I believe that the current blanket requirement on wearing a helmet when riding form an appreciable impediment to people choosing to ride to for work trips and for other trip types. So although I am a strong advocate of wearing a helmet generally I believe the helmet law could be reassessed to enable people to ride without a helmet in certain circumstances (such as commuting etc.) especially if a lower speed environment can be generated in greater parts of the city where the target trip types are likely.

### ***Speed = death***

The impact on the reduction in speed on the likely outcomes for incidents between vehicles and vulnerable users is well documented and is becoming more accepted by the community. The community now accepts that the speed limit in suburban streets is 50 km/h yet only a few years ago this was seen as a major impingement on vehicle amenity.

It is now time to push reducing speed limits further to 40km/h especially in high use pedestrian cycle areas and I applaud the current move by ACT Government to implement this in town centres and group centres.

I have seen a pedestrian hit on Northbourne Avenue in the City and would encourage arterial roads such as this to also be reduced to 40km/hr in high use pedestrian areas. This could be through measures such as variable speed signs and innovative physical measures that may increase friction and decrease the speed environment during times of high pedestrian usage (during the day, when night clubs are closing etc.).

### ***Education = nearly everyone can walk and cycle***

I would also urge the consideration of spending more on education that could focus on issues that may help people to choose walking and cycling instead of driving such as:

- Break down the us versus them culture based on travel mode choice – we are all us;
- Choosing to walk or cycle for different trips may be better for you / everyone over driving, ie. how much you can save, make real the environmental benefits in ways that people can relate to.
- Walking and cycling is cool.
- Promotion of where you can go easily on a bike and walking perhaps by providing education where to find and how to use Smart maps / internet apps that indicate distance and approximate time to walk and ride and show steep hills and other impediments as well as main destinations such as shops, schools and cafes.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments and I hope this process can lead to some positive outcomes in cultural change and legislative reform to get more people out from behind the wheel to walk and cycle instead.

Kind regards,

Geoff Farrar



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