

## **Personal Submission to Vulnerable Road Users Enquiry**

The Committee Secretary

Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services

ACT Legislative Assembly

[committees@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:committees@parliament.act.gov.au)

I welcome your inquiry into vulnerable road users in the ACT.

I commend the level to which current submissions detail issues faced by vulnerable road users and am in agreement with a number of the suggestions for improvements to infrastructure, driver education and legislative changes.

As one of the key purposes of the inquiry is to gathering evidence from the community about issues faced by vulnerable road users and potential improvements, I have made my submission based on my personal experiences as an enthusiastic Canberra cyclist and motorist.

I have been living in Canberra my whole life and for 12 of those years I have been a cyclist on Canberra's roads and cycle paths. As a junior cyclist at 15, I was lucky enough to be learning to ride on the road at the same time as I was learning to drive a car. I developed a strong sense of awareness, patience and compassion for all types of road users which I believe was able to carry through to my adult years as a cyclist and driver. If only this could be said for all motorists.

Canberra is a wonderful city to be a cyclist. I train up to 15 hours a week on my bike in road cycling bunches and individually. I also commute to work most days by bike.

While I recognise that there are infrastructure issues such as those addressed in detail in Pedal Power's submission, the most pertinent and reoccurring issue I have faced over the last 12 years is lack of driver awareness or education, ignorance and road rage.

Not a week goes by that I can't say that I have not been verbally abused, harassed or worse, by Canberra motorists. I have had friends hit by motor vehicles with extensive injuries and even threatened with a machete and I truly fear the day that this may happen to me.

Some noteworthy and unwanted interactions with drivers I have experienced over the years include:

- Occupants of a car throwing their McDonalds rubbish, including a half-full soft drink container, at me, nearly causing me to crash from complete shock and from trying to avoid the rubbish.

- Being hit by a car at a 4-way intersection (with traffic lights) by a driver who decided to take off from the line early when I was actually crossing in front of him.
- A driver on Brindabella Road throwing a coke can at me and my riding partner and swearing abuse.
- Commuting to work in Deakin, a young driver turning left directly in front of me going downhill, causing me to run into the back left corner of her car and fall off in the middle of the intersection. She was apologetic, however all she could say to explain was "I didn't see you". This was after she had overtaken me, turned left in front of me and I was wearing a fluoro yellow vest which I commute to work in.

I believe that motorists need better education about cyclists and other vulnerable road users and the dangers that they face by sharing the road with cars.

Suggestions worthy of immediate investigation include:

- Introduction of safe passing distance laws, requiring drivers to keep a minimum distance from cyclists using the road. The Amy Gillette Foundation has run a nation-wide campaign called "A Meter Matters" addressing this very issue.
- Legislation which, in the event of an accident between a motorist and cyclist, assumes the motorist to be at fault in the first instance.
- Tougher penalties for endangering the well-being of vulnerable road users.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Kind regards,

Bethany Thompson

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