

Thank you for offering the opportunity to submit my concerns regarding vulnerable road users.

Firstly, I would like to express my concern regarding the dangerous proximity within which motorists are permitted to pass cyclists. I understand that a minimum of one meter is recommended but is not enforceable. Speaking from personal experience, I can confidently state that this recommendation is often not observed in practice.

Further to this is my concern for penalties imposed on motorists who are responsible for causing a collision with cyclist. Here, I consider the penalties so insufficient that they pose little, if any deterrent. It is common for me to witness, or personally experience, motorists opting to endanger the lives of cyclists rather than cross the centre line (broken, hence legal) or pause for a moment until passing at the appropriate distance is possible. In such cases, it appears that the penalties risked are of less significance than minor alterations to one's speed or direction of travel.

Thirdly, and most importantly, is the danger of motorists using their vehicle as a weapon. This occurs often enough for myself and other cyclists to feel it necessary to wear a video camera as a means of gathering evidence. Many instances of motorists driving very close to cyclists are preceded by acts of aggression (e.g. verbal abuse, over-use of the horn) and can be considered a deliberate act to "teach the cyclist a lesson". In some cases, motorists have been observed to swerve immediately in front of cyclists in a very dangerous manner, and even slam on their brakes in an attempt to cause a collision. I have experienced this latter behaviour on several occasions. Of course, it is difficult in such instances to prove intention but often the swerve or application of brakes is accompanied by rude hand gestures, use of the horn, throwing of projectiles and other aggressive behaviours. Recently a friend was witness to such an act that involved a collision and broken bones for the cyclist. Despite there being multiple witnesses, I suspect that the motorist will get little more than a minor fine and the loss of a single licence point – hardly a deterrent. I have seen news reports of motorists using their vehicles as a weapon in incidents involving pedestrians and this has resulted in charges of man slaughter or murder.

Finally, I would like to voice my concerns about the lack of knowledge from all road users regarding the basic road rules. For example, it is common to encounter people who have no idea how to indicate on a round-about. It is also common to receive abuse as a cyclist because I am riding on the road (the motorist assuming I am confined to bike lanes and foot paths) and/or to not receive the same rights as a motorist.

I ask that you please consider four actions:

1. The "one meter rule" where motorists are not permitted to pass a cyclist at a distance of less than one meter must be enforceable and carry a reasonable penalty.
2. All motorist-cyclist accidents where the motorist is found at fault must carry much heavier penalties. At present, the penalties are so low that many unreasonable motorists are not at all deterred from causing an accident.
3. Education campaigns regarding the road rules are required for all road users. I also recommend periodic knowledge tests for holders of motor vehicle licences because rules change but motorists are often unaware.

4. Severe penalties need to be imposed for motorists who deliberately drive in a manner that endangers the safety of cyclists and other vulnerable road users. For those where it is reasonable to assume intent, either through witness statements or video footage, I recommend that charges similar to other acts of aggression be applied (e.g. assault with a deadly weapon, GBH, murder). I see no reason why acts of aggression using a motor vehicle should be considered anything else.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Russell Reid