

Mr Cameron Jose
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Dear Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services

I welcome this inquiry into vulnerable road users. I regularly use the road, as a driver, cyclist and pedestrian. I wish to make some comments as a cyclist, which is when I feel most vulnerable on the road. I ride around 15 hours a week, early in the morning, at lunch time, and after work. I ride by myself or in a group, I commute to and from work every day, and ride on the weekends. I wish to address two issues: a meter matters; and aggressive drivers.

A Meter Matters

I consider that the ACT government should make it law that cars must allow one meter when overtaking cyclists on the road. I was recently cycling in France where I felt much safer. In France there are laws that require drives to overtake cyclist with one meter in cities and 1.5 meters on the open road (clearly on open roads where the speed limit is higher, a greater distance is necessary). These laws are prominent around Europe and in many states in USA and Australia should catch up. Whilst riding, I am regularly passed by drivers with less than 30cm. This is dangerous. Cars often pass cyclists much faster and its draft can push cyclists off its line causing an accident.

In mid 2012 I was involved in such an accident. It was the middle of the day and I was riding towards Manuka on State Circle where the speed limit is 80kmph. A car had broken down in the bike lane that morning and I was approaching it. As I went to pull out onto the road, two cars came past and did not leave me sufficient room (less than 30 cm) and due to the draft, I ended up swerving off my line into the back of the broken down white car, breaking its rear window with my helmet (see picture below) and landing on the road. Thankfully after an ambulance trip to the hospital and all the required scans, I was cleared of all injuries. I do not blame the drivers that did not overtake me with sufficient room or the driver who had broken down (and did not move his car out of the bike lane onto the grass) but consider that the Government needs to do something to protect its vulnerable road users.

The ACT Government needs to make it law that drivers allow one meter to overtake cyclist and undertake a campaign to inform the public that allowing one meter is necessary and saves lives. Accidents happen but it is the Government's responsibility to ensure all road users are protected and this law should be enacted immediately. Thankfully I was not seriously injured in my accident but I may well have been. This law will save lives and serious injuries in the future.

Aggressive Drivers

Clearly there is not a lot of love between cyclists and drivers. More and more I have seen and been involved in a number incidents where cars act aggressively towards cyclists. This should not be tolerated. Drivers/passengers leaning out of windows hitting cyclists, drivers holding down their horn then overtaking with less that 10cm, drivers overtaking cyclists and deliberately slamming on their breaks to cause an accident in a group, drivers deliberately hitting a cyclist are incidents that occur too regularly and which I have been on the wrong end

of. Often it is the same irrational drivers which are seen undertaking this unacceptable behaviour.

If any driver is caught undertaking aggressive driving towards cyclists, the punishment should be significant and immediate. Generally it takes a significant amount of time to prove these drivers are guilty and whilst this is occurring, they continue to drive and menace cyclists. Drivers should immediately lose their licence. Deliberately causing harm/injury is a significant crime and aggressive drivers should not be allowed to drive until it is proven that they will accept all road users.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I look forward to seeing some positive action towards vulnerable road users.

Kind regards,
Cameron.

