

Personal Submission to the Inquiry Into Vulnerable Road Users

The Committee Secretary
ACT Government Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory
and Municipal Services
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I would like to thank the ACT Legislative Assembly for launching this important inquiry into vulnerable road users and for allowing interested parties to have their opinions voiced and recommendations considered.

I am a very keen cyclist who participates and trains daily for road races, triathlons and to maintain my physical and mental health and well-being. A bicycle is also my primary form of daily transport to get to and from work and other destinations. While this is a personal submission, I am the main organiser of group training rides and coach for Bilbys Triathlon Club and many of the points and recommendations raised stem from my experience during 13 years in this role. I have also worked with a large number of junior cyclists and triathletes over the past 15 years.

In my role with Bilbys, I work hard at rider education and strive to ensure that those who attend the rides are considerate of other road users and obey the road rules at all times.

While the majority of drivers are very considerate, I very regularly encounter incidents where drivers take unacceptable risks, due to impatience, which places the lives of cyclists in danger. I have also observed or have experienced an alarmingly large number of incidents where drivers have used their cars as a weapon to harm or intimidate cyclists.

I strongly disapprove of cyclists who display irresponsible behavior. Thankfully, these cyclists are a minority; however, they attract a large amount of attention and harm the reputation of and general attitude toward law abiding cyclists. I approve of penalties for cyclists who break the law.

Issues that I have encountered include (thankfully some of the more serious incidents are less common):

Drivers who do not wait until it is safe to pass cyclists; putting themselves, the cyclists and other motorists in danger.

Drivers who deliberately intimidate cyclists by driving too close, or by yelling at them or aggressively sounding their horn when beside them.

Drivers who fail to indicate.

Drivers who deliberately cut off or turn left across the front of a cyclist.

Drivers who either do not look properly, thus failing to see a cyclist, or who come out of an intersection when they should have waited, causing the cyclist to swerve or brake to avoid a collision.

Passengers of motor vehicles who deliberately throw projectiles at cyclists.

Drivers who stop their car after passing a cyclist or group of cyclists and then get out of their car to threaten or abuse the cyclists.

Drivers who deliberately swerve to run cyclists off the road or cause them to crash.

Drivers who wait an unreasonable amount of time for a cyclist to approach, and then turn right in-front of the cyclist causing them to brake to avoid a collision.

Drivers who abuse cyclists for riding two abreast when it is legal and actually safest when in a group as it increases visibility and makes the group more compact.

I have been very lucky. Although, I have had more close calls than I would like to think about and have been subjected to a large number of road rage incidents, I have not actually been hit by a vehicle while cycling. I have many close friends that have been injured as a result of drivers failing to see a cyclist, and far more disturbingly, several that have been injured through being deliberately hit or run off the road.

Recommendations

I think the ACT government should produce a series of television and newspaper advertisements highlighting that cyclists are somebodies sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, mothers or fathers.

Representatives from the major group rides could submit the details of major bunch rides to ACT policing so that there could be regular patrols on these routes. A think tank could be formed to share wisdom so that the safest routes could be worked out. Possibly even signs along some of the popular routes where there is no shoulder advising that cycle bunches use this road.

Share the road signs placed alongside major on-road cycling routes.

More regular sweeping of on-road cycling lanes and roads commonly used by cycle groups so that it is safer for cyclists to keep to the left.

The Canberra Times be asked to act responsibly when writing articles about cyclists in the ACT. Several articles that I have read portray us as risk taking law breakers with little regard for the rules.

Please continue to invest heavily in cycling infrastructure. This is a great legacy of the ACT government and attracts lots of positive publicity and tourism.

Make it law to leave at least a 1 metre gap when passing cyclists.

Publicise the laws as they relate to cycling on the road so that cyclists and motorists are more aware of their expectations and responsibilities.

These issues are not unique to the ACT. As a very proud Canberran, I live here by choice, I would like to see the ACT take a lead in setting up initiatives to protect vulnerable road users. By enlarge; we have great roads, so it should be easier for motorists to consider the safety of vulnerable road users.

I am very happy to further clarify points or be involved in meetings with representatives from other cycling groups.

Kind regards,

Gary Rolfe

