



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy), Mark Parton MLA

Submission No 17 - Mr Matthew Busch

Inquiry into the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic
Management) Amendment Bill 2021 (No 2)

Received - 26/07/21

Authorised - 29/07/21

From: [REDACTED]
To: [LA Committee - PTCS](#)
Subject: Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Bill 2021 (No 2) Inquiry
Date: Monday, 26 July 2021 4:18:03 PM

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To the Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the inquiry about the Road Transport Amendment Bill 2021. I encourage the committee to explore ways to make the road safety legislation more protective of the rights of cyclists as valid road users. As cyclists are particularly vulnerable to serious injury (or even death) in the event of a collision, the penalties for dangerous, inattentive, or antisocial driving should be made more commensurate with these risks. As has been shown in other jurisdictions, such changes would almost definitely change driver behaviour for the better.

Although I have thankfully never been involved in a collision, I have witnessed numerous instances of unsafe situations resulting from both driver inattention or antisocial behaviour towards cyclists. I think both issues should be addressed in our road safety legislation. The outcome of an incident (in terms of a vulnerable road users' injury) should not matter in terms of determining the punishment if a certain threshold of unsafe or inattentive behaviour is crossed. These penalties should certainly be more in line with the severity of the potential consequences.

I would certainly feel safer as a cyclist - and as a parent of children who enjoy cycling and want to do more of it as they grow - if the legislation took the safety of vulnerable road users more seriously. In my mind, this would include more severe punishments and/or fines for drivers who commit acts that endanger vulnerable road users.

Not only is this approach sensible given the importance of protecting all road users, but it also makes sense given the laudable investments the Territory is making in cycling infrastructure such as paths, missing links, and cycleways. Without a safe road environment, no amount of infrastructure investment will overcome the effect unsafe drivers have on many citizens' willingness to cycle. As the Territory also has ambitious transport emissions reduction targets, it seems to me that maximising the number of people cycling should be an important priority. Updating the road transport safety laws would be an important step in this direction.

Finally, I would recommend that the Territory explore some way of preventing dangerous antisocial cyclist-focused driving on semi-rural roads (like Cotter Rd). This road is used by hundreds of cyclists every weekend, and yet it is also a hot spot for teenagers in utes passing too closely or tough guys on sport motorbikes buzzing by well in excess of 100 km/h. Fixed cameras, special weekend patrols, or some other measures would, when combined with more punitive punishments for such behaviour, go a long way to protecting vulnerable road users and affording people the respect that all road users should be accorded. I have ridden thousands of kilometers per year on these roads and I can tell you that it is only a matter of time before someone's attempted joke or macho intimidation ends up with a seriously injured cyclist.

Sincerely,
Matthew Busch



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