

INQUIRY INTO VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

Organisation: Private Citizen
Name: Ms Beverley Maunsell
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SUBMISSION – STAYSAFE COMMITTEE

Dear Committee Members,

My previous safety experience is 20 years as a Safety Specialist for QANTAS, both in Occupational Health & as an Airsafety Investigator (retired).

I took up cycling for the first time at the end of 1998 and completed the Bicycle NSW Big Bike ride in the following year. During my preparation for the ride I biked from Balmain to Mascot for 4 months. I always wore a fluoro yellow shirt and even down King St Newtown, I found car drivers went out of their way to avoid me. On the other hand, I have had in the intervening years two close calls with cyclists on the same route, both these near misses occurred at dusk and the riders were wearing brown or kaki clothing and very difficult to see.

The two above incidents prompted me to start a programme of observation of bike riders on this route, most of the riders I encountered were men going to and from work and students going to Sydney University, the one thing they all had in common was for the young, a uniform of Black helmets/black clothing and black back and for many of the men, work clothes of kaki or brown.

I had intentions of writing an article for submission to the Bicycle NSW magazine but failed to follow up. An article in our local paper that prompted me to submit my analysis of my observations.

Safety deficiencies observed 2000 – 2008:

- Black/dark coloured helmets which make riders difficult to see;
- Dark coloured or kaki/grey coloured clothing (same colour as the road surface);
- Wearing dark backpacks which obscure the rider's shirt if it is light coloured;
- Inadequate lighting either worn on the rider or on the bike, these lights have to compete with the multitude of other lights in the streetscape, including car tail and brake lights advertising and street lighting;
- Riders are often unaware that the only visible area of their body when bent over is their bottom and a small section of the helmet and some of their legs - all this makes them very difficult to see, both day and night;
- Motor bikes can be brightly coloured when viewed from the side, but these colours are frequently not visible to a motor vehicle driver behind, they see only a black tire and a small section of the rider; and
- On motor scooters they often have a case attached behind the rider, if this is brightly coloured it is a good visual indicator of the bike, but frequently they are black.

In my opinion changes to improve bike safety should be mandatory, otherwise compliance is unlikely.

- 1) Change the Australian Standard for Helmets, so that it excludes dark colours and black; and
- 2) Design change helmets to incorporate reflectors/lights into the rear base/foam section of the helmet, to ensure the reflector/light can be seen when the rider is bent forward; and
- 3) Fluro vests or sashes to be compulsory for all bike/motorbike riders.

May I also suggest the incorporation of photos in literature to show bike riders what they look like to motorists and how difficult they are to see.

Yours sincerely

Beverley Maunsell
79 Louisa Rd
Birchgrove 2041