

INQUIRY INTO VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

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Vulnerable Road Users Inquiry

Submission by Barbara Khalifa, of 3 Sutherland St, Lane Cove NSW, 2066

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I am a regular (pedal) cyclist, and am also on the Bicycle advisory Committee to Lane Cove Council. This is a personal submission, and not on behalf of any organization.

I ride my bicycle for recreation about 3 times per week on average, usually with friends. I have also made a practice of commuting by bicycle to work from time to time though not on a regular basis, in part due to safety concerns. These days I ride about 150 kms per week on average. I ride mostly on cycle routes and on quiet streets, though at times the route requires riding on busy roads with traffic.

I have lived in various cities and cycled for recreation and commuting to work in other cities, including Melbourne, Canberra, San Francisco Bay Area, Washington DC and Geneva (Switzerland), as well as Sydney. I like to cycle to stay fit, and for environmental reasons. I also see the growth in cycling as a necessary part of the solution to Sydney's increasing traffic congestion, parking shortages and reducing air-quality.

From a personal perspective, accidents and injury are unfortunately a most likely component of cycling in Sydney. Among the 20 or so people that I cycle with, most of us have had various scrapes and vehicle accidents. Fortunately most of these have been minor. To date our more notable injuries include 4 broken hips, 3 accidents resulting in broken ribs, and another resulting in a broken thumb.

Personally my own accidents are as follows:

- ★ I was struck by a car door opening suddenly while I was riding along in a marked bike lane in Crown St. The door knocked me off my bike so that I sprawled onto the roadway. Fortunately the car coming behind me was able to swerve to avoid running over me. On that occasion I sustained a very bruised hand and a very bent handle on the bike – both caused by the car door striking.
- ★ I was 'pushed' by a car while riding in Gladesville. The driver admitted he had seen me but forgot I was there and simply moved over into me. Fortunately his wife in the passenger seat saw me being hit and screamed at the driver so he swerved away, so I wasn't pushed over and run over.
- ★ I was riding in traffic and got my front wheel caught in a bad rut in the road. With traffic around me I couldn't swerve to avoid it, and my wheel stuck. Fortunately I was able to throw myself clear of the traffic and I did a face-plant onto the pavement. My helmet definitely save my face, though I did get a gash on my forehead from my glasses, and a big graze on my hip from where I hit the gutter.

More frightening, however than these are the many close calls we have when riding on the road. While the bike routes around Sydney are increasing, most of the bike routes are piece-meal, with sections of unmarked roadway in between where cyclists must simply ride among traffic with no assistance or markings of any kind.

A recent development that increases the safety risk to cyclists is the introduction of road narrowing islands to assist pedestrians across the road. Many of these intrude well into the road so that cyclists are forced into the line of traffic – which is often traveling much

faster than the cyclist. A simple introduction of a bike lane on the left of the traffic calming island would provide a safer route for cyclists.

It is as if the RTA does not realize that cyclists actually ride from point A to point B along the whole route. Cyclists are often faced with only a small section of each bike route being properly marked for the traffic to take care of cyclists, and the rest of the way they just have to assert themselves on the road among traffic that doesn't realize this section of road is still a bike route even though it's not properly marked. As cyclists we don't suddenly levitate over the difficult or narrow sections of the route – we have to ride the whole route. I strongly believe the RTA and councils need to look at providing complete bicycle routes, and not simply a few bits here and there with nothing adequate in between.

I recommend that the RTA have road safety officer(s) specifically for cyclists. These people should be cyclists themselves, and they should be required to cycle on the routes provided, so they can see for themselves where the worst sections are.

I recommend that all changes and developments to roads and road-related areas be required to consult the LGAs' bike plans. And where the bike plan shows this is a bike route, then LGAs and the RTA should be required to take the cyclists safety into account in their design.

I urge a simple change in mindset for RTA (and also for LGAs) that would help considerably. Please always ask in every road and path situation '*Where do we want the cyclists to be when they are riding this route?*'. We need a place to be safe, even if it's not perfect, even if it's not quite able to fit the 'guidelines'. We still need a space to ride safely along the whole route.

Cyclists are an important solution to road congestion and parking shortages, and need to be given a higher priority in the road and pathway infrastructure.

Yours sincerely,

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