

**Submission  
No 3**

## **INQUIRY INTO VULNERABLE ROAD USERS**

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## **SUBMISSION BY GRANT BYRNE TO THE STAYSAFE (ROAD SAFETY) COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO VULNERABLE ROAD USERS**

### ***Introduction***

I would like to congratulate the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) for commencing an inquiry into vulnerable road users. This is a very important inquiry as there are increasing numbers of cyclists and motorcyclists on the road for a number of health, lifestyle, economic and environmental reasons.

This inquiry has the potential to draw together aspects of a number of recent studies and reports related to the health, environmental and economic benefits cycling for leisure, health and transportation purposes.

This submission focuses on and attempts to provide the inquiry with the considered opinion of a lifelong cyclist.

### **TERM OF REFERENCE A: patterns of motorcycle and bicycle usage in New South Wales**

Trips made using a bicycle as the major form of transport appear to be increasing across NSW, but particularly in city areas and the outlying suburbs. This poses a range of issues such as amenities available at the end of a trip, the condition of roads and cycleways used during such trips, driver and rider education relating to the road rules and rights of each road user.

Most places of employment, particularly those owned and/or operated by Government Departments do not appear to provide adequate amenities to encourage people to cycle to work. For instance, my place of employment does not provide showers and hot, running water is only available from wall mounted water heaters for drinking purposes in a place with over 1100 people on site daily. This goes against the Governments desire to increase the number of people commuting via bicycle as described in the NSW BikePlan.

The condition of roads, road shoulders and cycleways is a definite deterrent for cycling commuters and recreational cyclists. Many roads pose a safety risk to cyclists and also damage cycling equipment. I have lodged complaints to the RTA about the condition of road shoulders compared to the main roads where they have repaired the main road surface to a high standard but have left the shoulder in a state of disrepair. Unfortunately I have yet to hear a response from the RTA about this issue and have continued to see the same roads being repaired while the

shoulders are left damaged. Cycleways such as the M7 cycleway are the way forward. Separated from motor vehicles, high quality road surfacing, excellent signage and lighting all provide a safe cycling experience for commuters and recreational cyclists. Obviously this is not a viable solution for all roads, however, most cyclists would agree that M7 style cycleways offer the best, safest cycling experience.

Most cyclists understand that currently if they share the road with motorists they are entitled to (almost) the same rights as those driving motor vehicles. Cyclists understand the dangers that sharing roads with motor vehicles but do not fully realise how easily it is to become hurt until it has actually occurred. The same is generally true for motorists. Most do not appear to realise that they are in fact driving one plus tonnes of metal that offers them significant protection compared to the level of protection a cyclist has. I am highly in favour of having Police hand out more fines to both cyclists and motorists who do not obey road rules and/or endanger one another, pedestrians and other road users.

The NSW BikePlan (located here <http://nsw.gov.au/bikeplan>) provides further suggestions related to bicycle use across NSW and I would suggest that the comments provided by people relating to the four criteria for comment in the NSW BikePlan be included in the readings of the 'Staysafe (Road Safety) Committee Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users' relating to Term of Reference A: patterns of motorcycle and bicycle usage in New South Wales.

**TERM OF REFERENCE B: short and long term trends in motorcycle and bicycle injuries and fatalities across a range of settings, including on-road and off-road uses**

Bicycle related injuries and fatalities on NSW roads are contributed to by a range of factors such as the condition of roads and cycleways, cyclist behaviour and knowledge, and motorist behaviour and knowledge. With an increase in cycling trips it can only be anticipated that the number of injuries and deaths of cyclists will increase.

Roads and cycleways can be maintained or developed through increased funding and the careful monitoring of the standard of work being completed. Regular consultation by local, State and Federal governments regarding the types of works that need to be carried out and advice provided by stakeholders taken into consideration when making decisions about works to be done.

Both cyclist and motorist behaviour and knowledge can be increased by a stricter enforcement of appropriate road rules and regulation by the Police. I see no problem with fining people who do not obey road rules as a form of revenue raising provided the money is used to fund educational campaigns or works needing to be carried out.

In the long term, the provision of more and higher standard facilities for cyclists and the enforcing of road rules should see a decrease in cycling related injuries and deaths on NSW roads.

Off-road uses are a very different matter. As an avid mountain biker I try to be active in a range of advocacy issues related to mountain biking. I participate in trail maintenance days as a volunteer working with National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) officers. I provide feedback on a range of issues such as land access and trail design, construction and maintenance. The major issue in NSW is definitely that of land access for dedicated mountain bike trails that cater for a variety of ability levels. Regarding this issues I would again like to point the Staysafe (Road Safety) Committee to the NSW BikePlan (located here <http://nsw.gov.au/bikeplan>) and suggest that the comments provided by people relating to the four criteria provided be included in the readings. Other official bodies that should be consulted regarding this issue are Warringah Council, specifically how they have addressed the use of the Manly Dam area for mountain bikers; and the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water, particularly the NPWS and the reviews of the Plans of Management (PoM) for the Parks. At the moment the Royal National

Park, Heathcote National Park and Garrawarra State Conservation Area PoM and the Hornsby Shire and Sydney's Northern Beaches areas are under review and a number of people will be making comments that should be included in the readings of the 'Staysafe (Road Safety) Committee Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users' relating to Term of Reference B: short and long term trends in motorcycle and bicycle injuries and fatalities across a range of settings, including on-road and off-road uses.

**TERM OF REFERENCE C: underlying factors in motorcycle and bicycle injuries and fatalities**

A significant underlying factor in bicycle related injuries and fatalities on NSW roads is the attitude of motorists towards cyclists and the reflecting attitude that cyclists have towards motorists. This societal attitude can only be changed over time through education and the provision of more facilities of a higher standard to ensure the safety of all users.

**TERM OF REFERENCE D: current measures and future strategies to address motorcycle and bicycle safety, including education, training and assessment programs**

Bicycle education programmes already operate in NSW schools, however, they do need to be administered by confident and competent in their own ability to identify issues relating to road use by cyclists of a young age. Providing appropriate amenities to encourage school staff to commute to work by bicycle would go a long way towards educating the young people in schools about the viability of bicycles as a form of transportation and the operation of a bicycle on a road or cycleway as the students observe the staff during their commute.

I have no issue with the introduction of a registration system for cyclists, including a training and assessment program, other than the cost incurred by the cyclist and the form of identification required to be used by the cyclist. The cost should be comparable to the amount of damage that is done to a facility or road surface by a cyclist compared to a motor vehicle. This would result in an almost negligible cost for a cyclist. The form of identification should not pose a safety risk to a cyclist or other road users in the event of an accident. I cannot see how a stiff board type number plate could be safely implemented for use on a bicycle.

**TERM OF REFERENCE E: the integration of motorcyclists and bicyclists in the planning and management of the road system in NSW**

The integration of cyclists in the planning and management of the NSW roads system is an essential part of achieving a fair, equitable and safe solution for cyclist and motorists when using roadways. Cyclists cannot be an afterthought or simply relegated to using a potentially dangerous road shoulder. I recall that one of the initial plans for the M5 motorway included a purpose built cycleway along its length but was scrapped due to financial issues. Cyclist now battle along the shoulder dealing with not only motorists but the debris left by motor vehicles and road works. This is not an acceptable solution for a major arterial roadway.

Consultation with relevant stakeholders and representative groups such as Bicycle NSW, should be sought during the planning of not just significant, but any new developments that may affect these stakeholders.

**TERM OF REFERENCE F: motorcycle and bicycle safety issues and strategies in other jurisdictions**

While improving the safety of cyclists will require significant financial input from a range of sources, some of this can be offset over time by the improved health of those participating in cycling as a health and fitness activity. These people can remove some of the burden currently placed on the Health System.

The safety equipment currently legislated for use by cyclists, such as helmets, may or may not improve the safety of cyclists. Some studies have shown that the use of helmets do not offer any real advantage in an accident with a motor vehicle, however, I support the continuation of this requirement as even the slightest improvement in safety is a positive point.

**TERM OF REFERENCE G: any other related matters**

The issue of land access is a very significant one relating to mountain biking and communication should be sought between the Staysafe (Road Safety) Committee and the relevant stakeholders such as NPWS, the mountain biking community and other interested groups.