

**Submission
No 24**

DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

Name: Ms Sara Stace
Organisation: Australian Cycle Alliance
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Driver Education Inquiry

To the Staysafe Joint Standing Committee,

We are writing in response to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Driver Education, Training and Road Safety .

The Australian Cycle Alliance ('Cycle') is a not-for-profit organisation representing everyday cycling in Australia. There are 3.6 million bicycle riders who ride every week in Australia, and 8 million who ride at least once a year.

The Staysafe Committee is inquiring into the role of whole-of-life driver education and training to support improved road safety outcomes in NSW. Our response makes particular reference to impacts on driver behaviour around vulnerable road users (bicycle riders and pedestrians).

a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics

After decades of improvements in road safety, there is a worrying recent increase in road fatalities and injuries in NSW. We believe this mostly a result of driver inattention, lack of awareness about road rules, and aggression on the roads. As bicycle riders we experience and see this every day.

A year ago the NSW Government introduced minimum passing distance legislation which requires motor vehicle drivers to allow at least 1-1.5 metres when overtaking a bicycle rider. This legislation appears to have had some results in reducing bicycle rider fatalities in NSW, but drivers have not received enough education to ensure they understand and implement this every day. It has also not been enforced: enforcement forms part of driver education and awareness, and only a handful of drivers have been charged to date.

By contrast, in West Midlands in the UK, plain clothes police officers on bicycles have technology that allows them to measure when drivers are in breach of the minimum passing distance. Drivers who are caught are offered the option of a fine or 15-minute on the spot lesson on how the rule works. The trial resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in crashes between motor vehicles and bicycle riders. It was so successful that it will now be rolled out in six boroughs in London. It is a cheap and effective way to educate drivers and enforce compliance at the same time.

We recommend that much more investment should be made to educate drivers on how the Minimum Passing Distance Legislation works, and increase enforcement for breaches.

We also recommend that plain clothes police officers on bicycles undertake an operation similar to the West Midlands/ London Police describe above.

b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology

Once a driver in NSW has passed their learner test, they no longer undertake any further training. They may drive for 60 years or more without ever formally learning about updates to road rules.

Given that drivers in NSW can renew their licences online, a simple and cost-effective solution would be to require people renewing their driver licence to complete a short online quiz. This should include:

- Questions about changes to NSW road rules in the past 10 years
- Compulsory questions about vulnerable road users
- Questions about road rules that are often misunderstood or poorly applied (e.g. give way to pedestrians when turning)
- Questions about road rules that are different in NSW compared to other states (to cover drivers who may have learnt to drive in another jurisdiction).

We recommend that an online test be included for drivers when renewing their licences, which includes compulsory questions about changes to road rules and driving near vulnerable road users.

d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional

The ACT Government has recently introduced a compulsory section for learner driver training and testing covering the topic of vulnerable road users.

We recommend that driver training and testing should include a compulsory section on 'vulnerable road users'.

f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users

In NSW, at least one million people ride a bicycle every week. We believe that driver education should support the safety of all vulnerable road users.

h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues

The inconsistencies between the Model Australian Road Rules and the various states and territories, is problematic. This could be addressed, for example, through online testing as suggested above.

Regards,

Sara Stace
Secretary, Australian Cycle Alliance



About the Australian Cycle Alliance

The Australian Cycle Alliance ('Cycle') is a not-for-profit organisation that creates and shares media content about **everyday cycling in Australia**. We provide content, moderation and commentary with the aim of ensuring that media coverage across the nation is fair and balanced, and represents the interests of the whole community.

We represent a **broad and diverse range of people** who ride bicycles, whether they are young, old, women, kids, wearing lycra, in business attire, or riding to the local shops in bare feet.

Cycle works with a **wide range of organisations** at national, state and local level, including governments, businesses, communities and individuals.

There are 3.6 million Australians who ride a bicycle at least once a week. Eight million Australians ride at least once a year. We want to **encourage more people to ride**, and to benefit from the joy of riding for fitness, fun and transport.

CYCLE's core guiding principles

1. To ensure that media coverage about cycling is **fair and balanced**.
2. To **share and create** media content about everyday cycling in Australia.
3. To represent a **broad and diverse range of people** who ride bicycles for fitness, fun and transport.
4. To **engage and work positively** with other organisations at national, state and local level to:
 - facilitate better planning and building of safe cycling networks
 - remove barriers and impediments to participation
 - educate the community about important cycling-related issues
 - provide resources, support and information
 - reach the broader community.
5. To foster an environment that **encourages and enables** people to ride their bikes wherever they live, whatever they ride, and whatever their ability.