

Metre matters submission: in support.

My name is John Handley. I live in Reservoir, and cycle to work most days. I cycle to visit friends and the various parklands and events around Melbourne, within an approximate radius of 20 km of the CBD. I also drive a car when the bike is inconvenient or the distance too far, and I use public transport, mostly trains and trams.

I see improvements to cycling infrastructure and laws as of great direct benefit to myself as a cyclist, and also as a motorist. More people cycling makes my ride safer, and more people cycling makes my drive quicker by reducing congestion and freeing up limited parking spaces.

To date the law has stated that a driver “must leave a safe distance when passing [either another car or a bicycle]”. It is apparent that too many motorists have no idea what might constitute a safe distance when passing a cyclist. They have no trouble leaving a metre or more when passing a parked car or mobile car, but apparently a person on a bicycle is of less value than that, and also less likely to damage their car. So any old distance will do when passing a cyclist.

And then there are the “punishment passes”. These are deliberate close and fast passes to punish a cyclist for being on the road. They are more common than you would think, and I have experienced many such passes. In effect they are at worst a threat to kill, and at least, deliberate bullying.

Defining the safe passing distance at 1 metre (1.5 at higher speeds) gives motorists a clear measure for what is safe. It also gives the police and the judiciary a clear measure when prosecuting offenders. On that matter, it is all too common for both police, and especially the judiciary to go soft on motor vehicle offenders. Perhaps they feel “there but for the grace of god go I”.

This is very common, and I cite one example here: <http://road.cc/content/news/99403-lorry-driver-not-guilty-killing-cyclist-jury-retrial-fails-reach-verdict>

The most common forms of car/bicycle crash are (not ranked) dooring, hit at an intersection (car hits bicycle waiting to turn – an education campaign on hook turns for bikes needed here), *cars turning left across a bicycle, and being hit from behind whilst travelling in the same direction*. Research from London and Adelaide suggests that 75 – 80% of car/bike crashes are the direct fault of the car driver. It is the last two that “metre matters” addresses.

In addition, it is my belief that the current law that a cyclist must give way to a vehicle indicating left and turning left is contradictory and dangerous. Because bicycles most commonly are travelling through intersections to the left of cars, they ought to be treated the same as pedestrians – having the right of way over turning vehicles.

As it stands this law is very confusing for motorists, many of whom stop for bikes anyway. This is how it is done in countries with high levels of cycling like Denmark and the Netherlands. A typical example of this is at the intersection of Royal Parade and Cemetery Rd Parkville. Go down there one morning and watch how it all pans out.

“Metre matters” type laws are very common around the world, in most European countries, and in about half the States in the U.S. as well as several Australian States. Victoria is dragging the chain on

this, and since Melbourne is fast becoming the cycling capital of Australia, the law should be implemented as soon as possible.

Anecdotal reports for Queensland are encouraging, with riders reporting more drivers taking care when passing and fewer close passes.

Metre matters also has an important effect on driver attitude to cyclist in that it enshrines in law and road rules the rights of cyclists to use the public roads. It indicates that drivers must be responsible not only for their own actions but for the safety of others.

What NOT to do: what NSW has just done!

However this is just one law in a raft of laws that need either changing, refining or reversing in order to improve cycling safety in Australia. These are outside the scope of this enquiry, I list them only as suggestions for further consideration:

Removal of Mandatory Helmet Laws.

Riding on footpaths where safety or lack of infrastructure demands it.

Idaho stop (Permitted in Idaho since 1982 - hence the name - the law is pretty straightforward. "A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a steady red traffic control light shall stop before entering the intersection and shall yield to all other traffic. Once the person has yielded, he may proceed through the steady red light with caution," "Provided however, that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a right-hand turn. A left-hand turn onto a one-way highway may be made on a red light after stopping and yielding to other traffic." Essentially, the law means cyclists have to apply common sense when approaching a red light or stop sign.)

Better driver education as to the rights of cyclists on the roads, and in particular to dispel the incredibly common myth that cyclists do not pay their way. This provides a justification for motorists to treat cyclists as second class citizens, and a rationale for their irrational hatred (literally) of cyclists.

Thank you for considering my submission. I encourage you to implement the Metre Matters laws as a matter of urgency.

John Handley.

Metre matters submission P. S.

I have made my submission, but I forgot one important thing!

A new direction for cycling in Queensland

**Report No. 39 - Inquiry into Cycling Issues Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee
November 2013**

This is an excellent, well-researched, and comprehensive document that is relevant to cycling in Australia, not just Queensland. I highly recommend this as background reading for your committee members.

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/thlgc/2013/inq-cyc/rp-39-29nov13.pdf>

All the best, John Handley

From: John Handley [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 15 April 2016 5:45 PM
To: LCLC
Subject: metre passing laws and Bicycle Network does not represent me!

Hi just to clarify:

Bicycle Network's submission to the Inquiry does not represent my views, nor those of many many cyclists. I am NOT a member – I resigned my membership because of their repeated stupidity regarding law reforms in the cycling areas, and their exclusion of member viewpoints in their policy development.

I disagree with the Bicycle Network submission's exemption clause in section 5.3

The Metre Matters set of laws is working very well in Queensland, and in fact the trial has just been ratified into law.

Modifying the national standard 1m/1.5m passing law will put Victorian riders at risk and makes a simple and effective law unnecessarily complicated.

Riding in a painted bike lane does not provide a safety barrier, and in fact many of those painted lines are in fact NOT gazetted bike lanes at all. This is a cause of much confusion for car drivers who assume that they are bike lanes and cyclists should be restricted to them regardless of how dangerous they can be.

School zones should not be exempted. Really, one is rather tempted to use expletives on this one, but since it is a formal email... School zones are one of the MOST DANGEROUS for cyclists because of constant law breaking by parents in cars, particularly double or triple parking, parking in no standing zones, illegal turns and so on. There is also, obviously a high percentage of children riding – consequently MORE protection is required, not less.

Sincerely, John Handley.



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