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From: Inquiry into Overtaking Bicycles POV eSubmission Form
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To: LCLC
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/eic/article/2961>

My submission for the Inquiry into the Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015, relates to points 2 and 3, only because I have no personal experience with riding a bicycling nor being a motorist in states where similar minimum passing distance laws apply.

As a regular cyclist, sometime motorist, and an academic social psychologist, the road space is a remarkable space to witness a wide range of perceptual biases that inform the reality that we experience on a daily basis. However, as a social psychologist I am in a privileged position to be able to understand many motorist and cyclist interactions through a lens informed by the many cognitive biases that we experience daily - group behaviour, social identity processes which influence perceptions of in group members and out group members, risk taking behaviour, perceived legitimacy of road users, and moral outrage based on a perception of road users acting outside of the law or norm, to mention a few. It is with this experience, and knowledge, that I make the following submission points.

Firstly, I am in support of a definitive safe passing distance for overtaking bicycles, a vulnerable road user group. While I acknowledge that the road rules already stipulate a "sufficient distance", and many motorists already give sufficient distance when passing, providing a definitive distance of 1m at speeds at or below 60kph and 1.5m at speeds above 60kph, would not only remove any doubt from motorists who feel that it is safe to pass close to a cyclist, but also clearly communicate to motorists that cyclists are legitimate road users and importantly vulnerable human beings who need to be given space when riding on the road.

Since I started thinking about this submission three weeks ago, I have been saddened to hear of at least half a dozen cycling incidents where motorists have hit a cyclist and in some cases fled the scene. Most if not all of these end terribly for the cyclist and their family, with death or severe injuries that take many months and years to recover from. Personally, recent rides into the local country-side have seen motorists purposely use

their vehicle to intimidate and act aggressively towards me, coming within 30cm at times. I fear that one day my family will receive a call from the police. I cannot know precisely why some motorists feel the need to act so aggressively against cyclists, but having a passing distance would allow police to take action against the few despite the many already being quite accomodating of cyclists.

In terms of the educational campaign related to communicating changes to Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015, one that humanised road users as people, rather than as road users (motorists, cyclists) would likely be more successful in terms of acceptance. We know from decades of research into prejudice and in-group and out-group derogation, that conflict and acts of atrocity are facilitated when people dehumanise others. Categorising others, rather than seeing them as similar and unique individuals (rather than motorists or cyclists), leads to poorer attitudes and actions towards the out-group. Therefore, it is my strong belief and consistent with research on intergroup conflict, that promoting these road rule changes as being beneficial to all road users is a must. Campaigns could also remind motorists that cyclists do not cause traffic, and a cyclist is one less motorist - congestion for the most part is due to motor vehicles.

Finally, with respect to the enforcement policies and strategies that would be required to implement the Bill in Victoria. My understanding is that there are already good approaches being taken interstate to enforce the minimum passing laws and consideration of the pros and cons of these approaches should inform Victoria.

In sum, I am advocating for a minimum passing distance rule for motorists when overtaking cyclists, similar to those interstate and worldwide. A distance of at least 1m when vehicles are travelling at or below 60kph and 1.5m at speeds above 60kph. Communicating this through educational campaigns that are inclusive and speak to the commonality of all road users is important to engender support from all affected by this change.

Mathew D. Marques, Ph.D.

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File1:

File2:

File3: