

Our reference: Vic Parliament Overtaking Bicycles Inquiry  
Your Reference:



31 March 2016

The Secretary  
Economy and Infrastructure Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Secretary,

**Subject: Inquiry into The Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into The Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015.

Bike Bendigo is a community based organisation committed to getting more people on bikes and central Victoria becoming the bicycle capital of regional Australia. The organisation works in partnership across the Greater Bendigo community to continuously improve the bicycle friendliness of our region. We promote cycling, its economic, social, health, liveability and environmental benefits to the community, advocate for improved infrastructure, facilities and programs and work to ensure cycling is an inclusive and accessible activity for everyday travel, recreation and doing business.

Our primary focus includes

- Working with the City of Greater Bendigo and other organisations to develop and implement the Bendigo Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy, with a focus on cycling and road safety
- Develop a community bicycle plan that identifies regional cycling priorities and an action plan for central Victoria to become the bicycle capital of regional Australia
- Hosting fun and engaging events for the local community, such as large scale community bike rides and integration with festivals such as the Easter Fair and International Madison
- Facilitate tourism opportunities with local business, including eco-tours, bike hire and assist with major events (including the provision of additional bike parking)
- Events and programs that promote inclusiveness, empowerment and build skills of new riders, in particular women's programs such as the Bendigo Pushy Women Urban cycling skills program

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1

- Coordinate the efforts of the many bicycle related clubs across Bendigo to prioritise funding requests and publicise upcoming events on Bike Bendigo website
- Support a kids club bike training and repairs event each month at the Bendigo Farmers Market (known as FreeWheeling Fun)
- Run skills and road rules training for Schools, including supporting schools to become bicycle friendly and get more kids riding bikes
- Provide a common voice for cycling and further the narrative and publicity of central Victoria as regional Australia's bicycle capital

### **Perceptions of safety and cycling participation**

It is estimated that approximately 60% of Australians are interested in cycling more often but are concerned about their safety, in particular with a fear of motorised vehicles (Geller 2016 and Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland, 2014). Research shows that while there is a low level of injury and fatality for cycling in general there is a relatively frequent occurrence of near-collision events experienced by people who ride bikes (Fishman, Elliot, Washington, Simon, & Haworth, 2012, 7). These near-collisions discourage people in the 'interested but concerned' cohort from taking up regular cycling for everyday travel and recreation.

It is for these reasons, and in the absence of complete networks of separated infrastructure for people who cycle across Australia's cities and regions, Bike Bendigo supports the proposed safe passing distances legislation changes. It is our experience that the overwhelming majority of drivers consider safety of people on bikes when passing, however the proposed changes will provide clear direction to drivers who are unsure what a safe passing distance is under current legislation.

Making such a change to passing distance requirements, supported by an effective communication campaign, will over time create and reinforce the social norm as to what is safe when interacting with vulnerable users on our roads.

Specific responses to each of the three sections of the terms of reference are as follows.

### **Experience from other jurisdictions**

While most trials or law changes in other states and territories have only been in place for a relatively short period, initial results are encouraging.

It is understood that in states and territories where safe overtaking distance laws have been introduced that people who cycle are being provided more space, more consistently than before. A recent survey of Bike SA members asked 'Have you noticed a difference in motorists' providing a safe distance (of at least a metre) – in areas where speed limits are less than 60km/h', 70% of respondents responded their experience had been 'better' (47% for 1.5m passing distance above 60km per hour, Bike SA 2016).

In combination with changes to footpath cycling, people on bikes (and motorists, with regard to ability to cross solid lines when safe to do so) are provided with a greater variety of tools to avoid dangerous situations on our roads.

In 2013, prior to passing law changes, Queensland saw 13 people on bikes killed on roads. When new passing laws were in place in 2015 this was reduced to three lives lost on Queensland roads.

## Education

There have been a variety of educational programs and promotions to support passing law changes across Australia. Tasmania's witty 'Distance makes a difference' advertisements provide for light-hearted awareness raising and South Australia's 'Stay wider of the rider' advertisements are clear and direct in communicating the changes. Conversely, changes made in New South Wales have been poorly communicated to the public with a distracting focus on the counterproductive increases in cycling fines for relatively minor infringements.

The Towards Zero campaign in Victoria is now a recognisable brand that is generally well received and respected in the community. There is an opportunity to create a positive communication campaign supported by Towards Zero to communicate any passing law changes as common sense, practical and with the overall objective to save lives.

In addition to such a campaign Bike Bendigo would like to see

- Updated learner driver training and testing programs to actively promote positive understanding of and interaction with vulnerable road users including people walking and cycling
- Updates to any relevant publications and programs
- Resourcing of local organisations, in particular in regional areas, to support education relating to any law changes and to promote positive understanding and interaction between road users, with an emphasis on protecting vulnerable road users.

## Enforcement

Enforcement agencies will need to be empowered through training to understand the law changes, the motivations behind these changes (saving lives) and to develop an empathy for the experience of vulnerable road users such as people who walk and cycle.

We would encourage any person in an enforcement role to participate in cycling in a variety of on road situations (eg. traffic and infrastructure levels) to develop an improved understanding of vulnerable road users experience. In addition to this, clear, practical and consistent means for reporting significant and dangerous infringements of passing rules are needed (for example the conditions in which video or other evidence is to be accepted).

Bike Bendigo is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this topic and will support positive change that makes more bicycle friendly communities. We look forward to the findings and ultimate outcomes of the inquiry.

Best regards,



Geoff O'Sullivan  
President, Bike Bendigo Inc.

## References

Geller, R, 2016, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/158497>

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[https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/media/vanilla\\_content/files/SeparatedCyclewaysGuidelinesQLD.pdf](https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/media/vanilla_content/files/SeparatedCyclewaysGuidelinesQLD.pdf)

Fishman, Elliot, Washington, Simon, & Haworth, Narelle L. (2012)  
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Bike SA 2016 <http://www.bikesablog.com/2016/03/south-australias-new-cycling-laws-3-months-on-survey-results/>