



31 March 2016

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

By e-mail to [LCLC@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:LCLC@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission in relation to the above mentioned inquiry.

Wallis is a wholly Australian owned Melbourne based market research firm that has been in operation since 1991. One of our key areas of expertise is in the field of social research, including attitudes to social issues such as road safety.

In December 2015 Wallis conducted an Australia-wide online panel survey which included interviews with 112 Victorians. The survey included questions on bicycle safety which we thought might be of interest to your committee.

Wallis is not arguing for or against the introduction of minimum overtaking distance laws – we thought that the Victorian findings might be useful in terms of illustrating community attitudes on bicycle safety issues. Some of the key findings amongst Victorians are summarised below:

- The majority of Victorians (86%) agreed that “drivers should not pass too closely when passing a cyclist on the road”;
- However an even greater proportion (91%) believe that “two or more cyclists riding together should ride in single file when riding on the road”;
- 71% were in support of building more bicycle lanes to separate bikes and cars on Australia’s roads, and 81% said that separated bike lanes would make them feel safer when cycling.

Please see more detailed findings from the survey over the page and we are most happy to make more information from the survey available should you require it.

Yours sincerely,



Anne-Marie Gut  
**Account Director**



Jayne Van Souwe  
**Principal**

## Improving cyclist safety on Victoria's roads

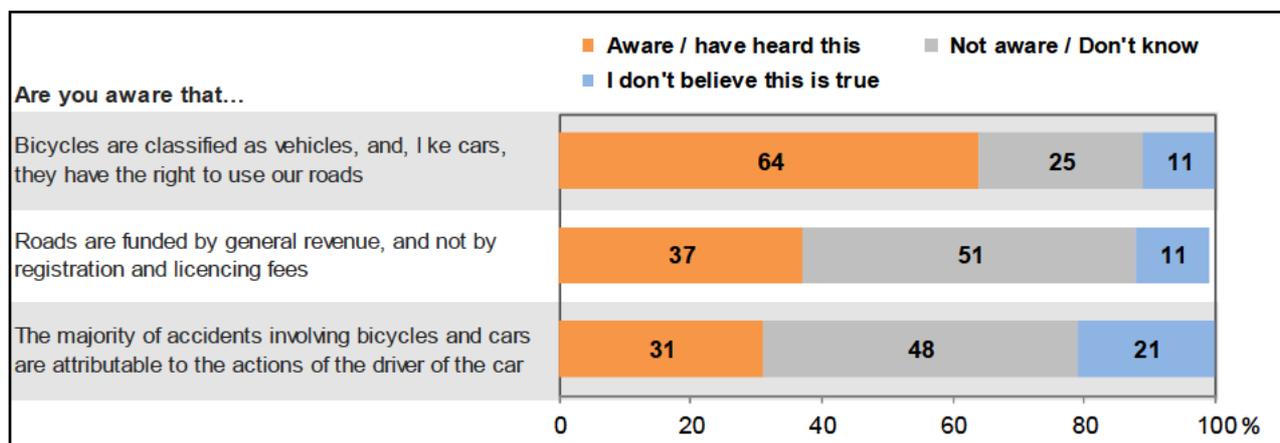
In the survey we asked Victorians what they think can be done to encourage drivers and cyclists to share the roads safely. We allowed people to respond in their own words, and then applied thematic analysis to categorise responses. The analysis found the following themes:

- 24% said there should be **more education** for road users on how to share the roads safely, for example via an advertising campaign to reiterate the relevant road rules and how they improve safety. This might contribute to the next theme;
- 23% said mentioned a need to encourage more **respect and courtesy** between road users, to ensure more care is taken by everyone using the roads;
- 17% said that **improved infrastructure** for cycling would improve safety, such as more separated bike lanes and better signage;
- 14% said that safety would be improved if **all road users do the right thing** and obey the current road rules; and
- 8% said there should be **stronger enforcement** of existing laws.

Hence the overarching themes from the above analysis centre on road user education, encouraging respect and courtesy on the roads and stronger adherence to existing laws.

## Perceptions of responsibility and entitlement

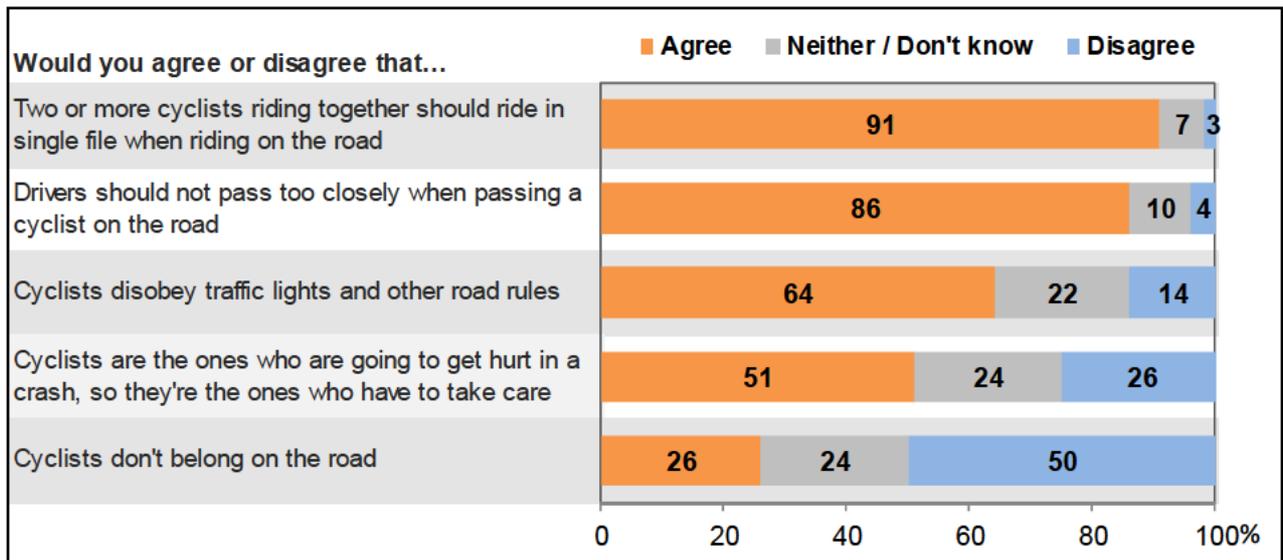
The Chart below displays some findings relating to perceptions of key topics that generally arise in discussions about cycling on the road; almost two thirds (64%) are aware that bicycles are classified as vehicles, entitled to use the roads (noting that around one in ten (11%) said they had heard this but did not believe it to be true). Less than two in five Victorians (37%) are aware that roads are funded by general revenue.



The survey revealed some further interesting findings in relation to perceptions of road user responsibility and entitlement. As shown in the Chart on the following page:

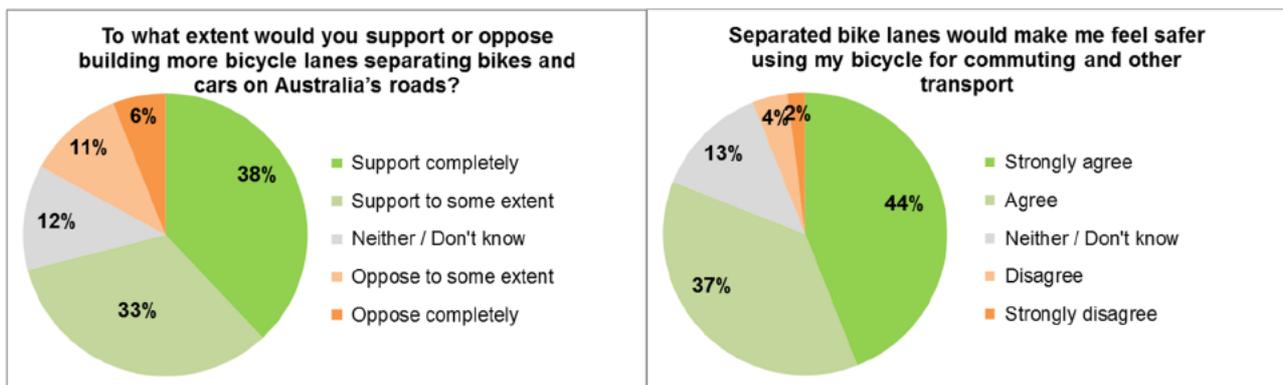
- Encouragingly, the majority (86%) of Victorians agreed that drivers should not pass too closely when passing a cyclist on the road.
- Interestingly, an even greater majority (91%) believe that “two or more cyclists riding together should ride in single file when riding on the road”.

- Just over a quarter (26%) of those surveyed believe that “cyclists don’t belong on the road” at all. About the same proportion is unsure, and 50% disagreed with this statement.
- There is evidence of a reasonably widespread perception that cyclists disobey traffic lights and road rules, which might contribute to the belief that “cyclists don’t belong on the road”. Indeed, in a later question which asked people to comment on their answer, almost one in five (17%) mentioned cyclists disobeying road rules as the reason for agreeing that cyclists don’t belong on the road. Having said that, the majority of responses were that it’s simply too dangerous, either because of driver or cyclist behaviour or both.
- Interestingly, the survey results indicate that a reasonably large proportion of people feel that the onus should be on cyclists to take more care on the roads, since they are the more vulnerable road users; 51% of respondents agreed with this.



### Separated bike lanes

Regarding infrastructure, 71% of Victorians are in support (either completely or to some extent) of building more bicycle lanes to separate bikes and cars on roads. Further, 81% agreed that separated bike lanes would make cyclists feel safer.



## The “A Meter Matters” Campaign

In April 2014, the Queensland Government became the first in Australia to implement a minimum overtaking distance trial, and backed it with a communications campaign (*Stay wider of the rider*)<sup>1</sup>. There is evidence from our survey results that this campaign has been effective, in that the vast majority (90%) of those in QLD were aware of the “A Meter Matters” Campaign. Awareness of the campaign is lower in New South Wales (46%) and Victoria (37%), although it is encouraging to see the campaign reach in other States.

Our survey revealed that in QLD, where the legislation has been in force for two years now, there might be some discontent; those in QLD were more likely to strongly agree with the statement that “two or more cyclists riding together should ride single file” (71% strongly agreed, compared to 56% in the total sample). Perhaps this is based on a perception that it is easier to pass cyclists riding in single file (even though it would take more road length to pass six cyclists riding single file than it would to pass six riding two abreast, which would halve the length required to pass).

Noting that cyclists should be courteous to other road users, cyclists are entitled to use a full lane when riding on the road, and are allowed to ride two abreast in one lane. If cyclists are taking up a full lane, motorists need to overtake as they would any other vehicle. This means waiting for a safe opportunity to pass.

If the minimum overtaking distance laws are to be introduced in Victoria, it should perhaps come with clarification of the current rules and courteous conduct in this regard, to avoid adding to any existing resentment and misunderstanding.

## Final remarks

Our survey also found that almost one in four Victorians have cycled on the road in the past 12 months (24%). Hence a significant proportion of the population will benefit from improved cyclist safety on our roads.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.amygillett.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1.-A-metre-matters-national-update-March-2016.pdf>