



**The Secretary
Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee**

27 March 2016

**Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015
Submission in support of minimum passing distance law**

Bike Safe Macedon (BSMR) is a not for profit incorporated body located within the Macedon Ranges Shire.

Formed in 2013 by local cyclists in response to a lack of safe infrastructure and a lack of awareness by both the road authorities and drivers of the vulnerability of cyclists and their safety needs on our rural roads. Cyclists were suffering injuries and abuse by drivers and nothing was being done to protect them. We are well informed as to the safety risks to cyclists in our region.

We believe that cyclists on rural roads, which often have speed limits of 100km/h, are particularly at risk of death and serious injury when drivers' do not give safe passing distance of at least 1.5 metres. We believe that the crash stats do not reflect the degree of danger faced by cyclists on rural roads because they do not count the near misses where cyclists are run off the road to avoid being hit by a driver who does not give "sufficient passing distance." Our belief is based upon what our local cyclists' tell us their actual experience is.

BSMR routinely works with a variety of authorities to deliver infrastructure improvements and twice yearly safety campaigns throughout the shire, regularly speaking to over 2000 people on all matters relating to cycling safety. BSMR continues to work on increasing safety for road users, locally and visiting.

BSMR recommends and supports the need to create new specified minimum distance passing laws following the Queensland model of 1 metre for speed limits in a 60 km/h zone and 1.5 metres where the limit is over 60km/h.

We support this because we believe:

- 'Sufficient distance to avoid collision' is too vague and open to subjective interpretation by both the motorist and by the cyclist - it potentially creates confusion between these road users and therefore conflict due to a lack of

understanding from both sides □ - Currently, the only measure that a motorist has breached the ‘Sufficient Distance to avoid collision’ is that a collision has occurred – This is an unacceptable way to measure a transgression of law.

- It will provide measurable clarity of what is a safe passing distance.
- Reduce risk of injury and death based upon the anecdotal feedback we have of running our own on road **Pass Cyclists with Care** safety awareness campaigns.
- Assist with education and where enforcement might be unfortunately necessary.
- Provide consistency of expectation and understanding, for all road users, moving between states that pass this law.
- It sets a very tangible expectation for both the motorists and cyclists on exactly what is “Sufficient Distance to avoid a collision” actually is. □
- We recommend the law also be changed to allow drivers to overtake cyclists across unbroken single or double lines when safe to do so.
- There are roads in Victoria, particularly rural roads, where it is not possible to overtake a cyclist allowing the minimum passing distance without crossing an unbroken line.
- This additional amendment will increase cyclists’ safety because it would alleviate the need for motorists to sit behind cyclists possibly for many kilometres when they could otherwise safely overtake the cyclist without risk of harm.
- This additional amendment is already working in other States where it has been introduced.

Currently the law is inadequate and does not assist in protecting vulnerable road users. □

Education and awareness

We believe that any change to legislation will meet with limited success unless it is supported by a relevant and highly visible education and awareness campaign which makes clear what the law is. We recommend the following:

- The awareness campaign should start well before the laws come into operation and should highlight that the changes will make it safer for both cyclists and drivers.
- The campaign should include television, radio, print and social media as well as on road messaging.

- The Queensland and Tasmanian campaigns both provided the community with easy to understand, simple messages that were not compromised by extraneous issues such as has unfortunately been the case in NSW. We advocate that Victoria does not attempt to reinvent the wheel with a new slogan, it is better to copy, with permission what has clearly worked well in another State, such as Queensland.
- The current on road cyclist signage will need to be widely replaced with signage which reflects the relevant minimum distance dependent upon the speed limit. Tasmania is an example where this has worked well.
- Sufficient funding will need to be allocated to support the education and awareness campaign.

Enforcement

In conjunction with an education and awareness campaign, to be credible and to effect positive behaviour change, the new law must be enforced.

- Victoria Police must inform its members of what the law means, enforce with zero tolerance and publicize the enforcement.

We thank the government of Victoria for the opportunity it has given the community to have input into this important safety proposal.

Would you kindly note that Bike Safe Macedon Ranges would like to make an oral submission in support, if permitted.

Sue Blakey
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Bike Safe Macedon Ranges

Ride Responsibly

Email 
