

SUBMISSION TO VICTORIA GOVERNMENT - supporting changed cyclist passing laws in Victoria



I speak on behalf of a recreational cycle group of 30 riders who each ride (around) 200 km per week on rural roads near Shepparton. “The Addam’s Family” riders (pictured above) ride collectively a total of 6000 km per week most weeks of the year.

We all have had the “A Metre Matters” logo added to our ride jerseys over two years ago!

We urgently request that the Victoria Government Review Panel redraft Regulation #144-2009 to introduce set safe passing distances between vehicles and cycles to clarify what is actually safe.

Tasmania has introduced these laws in March and I have witnessed the huge number of cyclists, who have now taken to their country roads as tourists. Although the Victorian Government rightly continues to fund infrastructure improvements this will do nothing for us as riders on rural roads, where passing distances were unregulated, and no bike lanes exist or would ever be constructed. Our rural roads will never have bicycle lanes, just the occasional sign that alerts motorists that cyclists may be encountered on the roadway ahead. Our “rural reality”, under the existing inadequate law, is that after a rider is struck from behind nothing much can, in practical terms, be done by the police or the individual rider in terms of apportion blame or delivering justice. A “near miss” event would have even less chance of being actioned legally.

New definitive distance legislation should also inform the public that the passing distance provisions apply to two riders riding alongside each other- as is their legal right. Perhaps every second advisory roadside sign could show this as a double graphic? It would be news to most motorists!

The incidence of motorists deliberately passing our cycling group, with just centimetres to spare, does happen. It frequently occurs even when the oncoming carriageway is totally clear and plenty of room is available to pass safely. This intimidation of cyclists, with a deadly weapon, travelling at 100 kph, which threatens the lives of 10-12 riders is not practically reportable as an offence. Currently it is just the riders’ opinion that the vehicle’s passing manoeuvre was “too close” – no workable definition in law currently exists. A set distance would make any necessary legal action a possibility. As video cameras in vehicles and on bikes are now commonplace, this could be tendered as evidence and registration numbers produced if video footage is available.



Tasmanian's new Safe Passing Distance sign – Photo: G Holland- February

2016

The “A Metre Matters” legislation has been criticised as simplistic approach and that it was unproven. In the case of our group of thirty riders we agree that it is simple, a no-brainer in fact! Future reduction of cyclist deaths, when passing distance laws are adopted, will prove the case and the collisions may be prosecuted. It will be easy to quantify distance if an offence has been committed.

Members of our ride group, led by Ken Muston, who are very safety conscious, have already delivered a \$40 000 series of local TV advertisements encouraging motorists to sound their horn when coming up behind cyclists. This action allows us to further compact our group and brace for any passing vehicle, often when the road is narrow and the verges of the road, being coarse gravel, meaning a fall is certain. These ads encourage cyclist and drivers to “Share The Road”.

Our group chooses to ride on quiet secluded rural roads to minimise any delays for motorists. It is a highly ironic and harsh consequence that this considerate route choice exposes us to high speed traffic on minor roads. Traffic passing from the rear of our group is, to us, the major risk to which we are exposed as riders. We cross very few intersections and largely avoid these dangerous interactions. Knowing motorists have seen a distance passing sign (pictured above) and are compelled, by law, to allow us a 1.5 meter space to pass would be very reassuring.

Please pass these safe distance as soon as possible!

Signed: *Geoff Holland* -as the delegate/secretary of the Addam's Family Ride Group

