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From: Inquiry into Overtaking Bicycles POV eSubmission Form
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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

Mr Ross Piper
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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Thankyou for making the opportunity to explore the road rules in the context of trying to protect one of the most exposed road users; road cyclists. During my submission unless stated all experiences and opinions relate to "country roads". Whilst I am a cyclist commuter to and from work my fears directly relate to high speed rear end collisions.

Long has this country had an extensive network of country roads which act as a means of connecting adjacent towns. Speed limits existing on many of these roads are remnants of a past time where we lacked superhighway infrastructure and road traffic was a lot more sparse. In my region a number of the roads I ride reasonably regular run parallel with tertiary level roadways which are quite available to road users. My concerns relate to drivers who use these more country roads as a quick way to get to work or home, or a quick way to get from work to a delivery. I remember two specific instances I want to share.

My first example is a couple of tradesman who shot past me in a 100 zone easily doing 110km+. Both passed me within a metre whilst I was riding 30km / hr. Controlling a bike running on a 1cm strip of rubber isn't always easy. This is particularly obvious in more inclement conditions like rain or strong wind but also relates to rider fatigue with long distances. Whilst we see a lack of compassion for others in many areas of life nowadays, I was shocked. It would've been easy for me to slightly lose control being pulled by the turbulence associated with their speed and to swerve into the path of the second car. I controlled it but just. I am not sure a defined distance would've made a difference here but I certainly believe it wouldn't have hurt.

Secondly I was riding a very country road between Anglesea and Moriac just prior to Christmas. This road is well known among cyclists being part of Cadel's ride and quite picturesque. There are some semi-trucks carrying gravel heading too and fro from a Quarry on this road otherwise historically it has been very quiet. Whilst riding one day I may have been a little obscured by a dip following a slight incline but a truck went flying past me at 100km+. He gave me some distance berth as he passed. But having a truck pass you at that speed at close quarters sucks you hard towards them. I lost control somewhat. But that was the least of it.

There was a car coming the other way. Without the car swerving into the gravel edge all of us would've died. The road is really just 1.5 lanes containing us all in the one space

I raise this example to highlight the designated passing distance is a facet of a broader discussion around our roads and their speed limits, and our philosophy regarding speed limits to highways. In both examples quite nearby are a highway and a main road that could've instead been used by the highlighted drivers. However they all chose to use the country route as a quick "shortcut". I'm a driver as well remember; I know! I think having a thin country road with limited visibility as a 100km zone and a parallel Anglesea road as a 100 zone is ludicrous.

Given the Anglesea Road is twice as wide, has excellent surface and visibility, the speed limit on this road should be encouraging drivers to use that infrastructure. I actually think dual divided lane roads should have higher speed limits and country roads lower ones. People only die on highways through lack of concentration, poor design, or because they behave like dickheads. Cyclists die on country roads because the speed limits allow only a short reaction time before they descend on unsuspecting cyclists particularly when driving too fast.

Many roads are just not designed to carry cyclists and cars. Given the funding barriers I am sure that isn't about to change quickly. Broader manipulation of speed limitation may actually lessen the frequency of fatalities by greater segregation on different road frameworks of cyclists and drivers. The minimum passing distance is a good start, but I still think it isn't the answer in isolation for safer country road cycling.

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File1:

File2:

File3: