

18 March 2016

Dear Parliamentary Committee

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

I refer to the abovementioned matter and make the following submission in support of the introduction of a minimum overtaking distance (**a metre matters**) legislation in Victoria.

I support this introduction of **a metre matters** legislation from both a personal and community perspective.

#### **Current Victorian Legislation**

The current Victorian Road Rules require drivers to allow *sufficient* distance when overtaking a bicycle rider. The definition of what is *sufficient* is vague and subjective and has repeatedly not protected bicycle riders.

As a cyclist myself I regularly experience on my daily commute to work, motor vehicles passing me at a distance that is clearly not at a safe distance. I believe that it is only a matter of time and probability that I am injured by a motorist who does not allow sufficient distance when passing me because they are not aware of what constitutes sufficient distance.

This confusion or lack of awareness for cyclist could be overcome by the introduction of clear mandated safe overtaking distance of 1 metre. It is a logical and practical step to changing behaviour of all road users, and provides an *objective* measure for law enforcement.

#### **Implementation in other jurisdictions**

**A metre matters** laws already exist in countries in Europe and in 29 states in the USA.

In Australia, the proposed legislation has been implemented in five jurisdictions. South Australia has mandated these laws, Queensland, the ACT and New South Wales are trialling the laws, and some road rules have been amended in Tasmania to introduce and reflect **a metre matters**.

I have recently ridden a bike in South Australia during the Tour Down Under where this law has been implemented and have notice the significant difference in driver behaviour and the increased feeling of safety on their roads. This is similar to the cycling experience who have in Europe where drivers are more aware of cyclist and take other road users into account.

#### **Proposed law**

**A metre matters** laws would require drivers to leave a minimum distance of 1 metre when overtaking bicycle riders at speeds up to 60 km per hour and a minimum of 1.5m when overtaking at speeds of over 60km per hour.

**A metre matters** laws provide absolute, practical and enforceable clarity. These laws:

- Recognise that bicycle riders are physically vulnerable and need the protection of

- Provide drivers with a clear, easily recognised measure when overtaking bicycle riders – otherwise they must slow down and wait;
- Reduce the risk of bicycle rider-driver crashes, and bicycle rider crashes resulting from being side-swiped (but not hit) by motor vehicles;
- Are enforceable; they allow a law enforcement officer or witness to readily observe a driver's actions;
- Will improve safety for bicycle riders;
- Acknowledge bicycle riders are legitimate road users; and
- Will ultimately reduce bicycle rider fatalities and serious injuries.

Research confirm my personal experience of this legislation and shows that **a metre matters** is working in promoting behaviour change, and that cyclists feel safer. For more information, please go to: <http://www.amygillett.org.au/a-metre-matters>

**A metre matters** is innovative in its simplicity and immediacy. Better infrastructure is critical for safe cycling but we cannot afford to wait for safe cycling infrastructure to be built. The law is practical, enforceable, will reduce serious injuries and will save bicycle riders' lives.

Safer cycling will benefit the community as a whole by:

- improving health of participants through increased activity, decrease impact on the health system by reduced accidents and improved health outcomes,
- more cyclists will reduce congestion on the roads; and
- both improved health benefits and reduce congestion will have economic benefits

Finally, everyone has the right to ride safely for work and play.

I support the Amy Gillett Foundation's **a metre matters** campaign and urge you to support the introduction of **a metre matters** laws in Victoria.

I urge you to support the introduction of **a metre matters** laws in Victoria without delay.

Sincerely

Sue Brown

