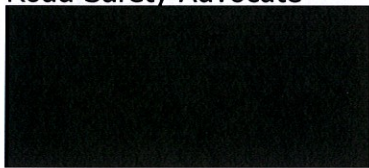


From: Pete Dowe <[REDACTED]>
To: "rsc@parliament.vic.gov.au" <rsc@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Date: 22/07/2011 04:40 PM
Subject: Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety submission Pete Dowe

Submission No. # 30
Received
Road Safety Committee

Road Safety Committee
Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety
Submission by:
Pete Dowe
Road Safety Advocate



I would also like to appear before the Committee and speak to my submission "...others will invite or reject you, depending on the respect that you have for their personal space." Alan Pease

Firstly I would like to state that there are many parallels with motorcycling safety and cycling safety which I touch on in my submission. Perhaps it would be more effective and economic to have 'generic' programs/ approaches to these areas where possible. This would give a much larger/ broader message to the roads culture and wider community.

Road Rage

In 2010 I witnessed a Motorcyclist assault a Motorist on Charman Road, Cheltenham Strip Shopping Centre, after the Motorcyclist alleged he was 'cut off' and "could have been killed".

Although no collision had occurred, fear (arousal) for safety, becoming anger in the motorcyclist, motivated him, after a heated verbal exchange, to strike the male driver with a fist to the Driver's head whilst he was sitting in his car in gridlock, with the Driver's car window down."

During the periodic lengthy Charman Road Strip Shopping Centre peak hour gridlock, (caused by Cheltenham Railway Station crossing boom gates, and a Pedestrian Crossing) The Motorcyclist had parked his Motorbike on the Strip Shopping Centre footpath and gone to 'settle the score' with the Driver
Nb. (thinking on the run) Rule One: During Road Rage incidents, all occupants of Motor Vehicles should remain in their vehicles with windows up, and doors locked!

(I gave my contact details, as a witness, to the Driver, as did a female bystander. I never heard from the Driver by the way, the assault at least, was not grievous)

The Motorcyclist left in fear of Court action against him. It was a classic 'poor' Anger Management situation of a human feeling scared and then feeling angry

and briefly empowered by taking action such as lashing out, striking, and then feeling the fear of reprisal (in this case an assault charge).

Fear/ Anger/ Retaliation/ More Fear of Reprisal

Just think of Middle East Foreign Policy (seriously!)

Australian Body Language Expert, Alan Pease

refers to Road Rage in his book Body Language under the heading "Territories and Zones" (attached):

"Psychologists have noted that people driving cars react in a manner that is often completely unlike their normal social behaviour as regards their territories."

"It seems that a car sometimes has a magnifying effect on the size of a person's personal space. In some cases, their territory is magnified by up to ten times the normal size, so the driver feels that he/ she has a claim to an area of 3.7 to 4.6 metres in front of and behind his/ her car "

"When another Driver cuts in front of him/ her, even if no danger is involved, the Driver may go through a physiological change, becoming angry and even attacking the other Driver.

Compare this to the situation that occurs when the same man/ woman is stepping in to an elevator and another man/ woman steps in front of him, invading his/ her personal 'territory'.

His/ her reaction in those circumstances is normally apologetic and he/she allows the other man/ woman to go first, remarkably different from what happens when another Driver cuts in front of him/ her on the open road.

"In summary others will invite or reject you, depending on the respect that you have for their personal space."

Body Language by Alan Pease "Territories and Zones"

It is interesting to note that many motorcyclists/ cyclists seem to view Cars etc as invulnerable "tanks" that they are oppressed by, and that they (more) 'vulnerable road users' are incapable of causing harm to other road users. This is an oversimplification, and in relation to cycling re pedestrian safety, patently untrue.

If we recall Alan Pease's statements above: "...others will invite or reject you, depending on the respect that you have for their personal space."

And "When another Driver cuts in front of him/ her, even if no danger is involved, the Driver may go through a physiological change, becoming angry and even attacking the other Driver."

The point is Cyclists and Motorcyclists cause fear in Motorists when they cut them off, invade their 'territory'. Motorcyclists and Cyclists are counterproductively oblivious and in denial about this fact, and its significance for cooperation, mutual respect, sharing the road.

Motorists (I am a former motorist, and have chosen not to drive the past 20 years) are well aware they are driving 'heavy machinery' capable of causing death and serious injury. They have individual responsibility behind the wheel, and they are identifiable and accountable for their actions.

A near miss incident with a vulnerable road user creates fear in most motorists that they could hurt someone, and fear of the consequences of doing so, legal, psychological, financial including when it's "not their fault"

ie. Being cut off by a motorcyclist/ cyclist.

The Car may seem like a Tank, but the Driver is flesh and blood and feelings.

I reiterate "...others will invite or reject you, depending on the respect that you have for their personal space."

Road Users must also think of their emotional impact upon other road users.

Yes, motorcyclists and cyclists must respect the 'personal space' of motorists if they really want mutual respect, and acknowledge their emotional impact upon drivers.

"...others will invite or reject you, depending on the respect that you have for their personal space."

To refer back to the analogy with Middle East Foreign policy, the Middle East Governments definitely, in my belief, need to learn Anger Management 101 (a vital, fundamental, human relations skill!) as we do as a society in Victoria.

Anger Management training/ awareness applies to Road Safety/ Road Rage/ Violence, and the contributing factors to Road Rage of invasion of 'personal space'/ fear for safety on the roads/ off road.

Anger Management training/ awareness is a vital skill, and potential Crime Prevention measure. It should not be stigmatised/ nor stigmatising, by using Anger Management training solely as a reactive, remedial 'punishment' for the 'deficient'.

In any case, Magistrate's don't have the power to order Anger Management training prior to an actual assault taking place, even where there is a history of intimidatory behaviour. This is far too reactive an approach to violence and aggression for our society of Victoria

(The Big V) We Victorians are/ ought to be, better than this: more proactive, preventative, enlightening on Anger/ Aggression/ Violence.

Any Assault Victim could well feel, that Anger Management training for the perpetrator was "shutting the stable door (on the victim) after the horse had bolted"

How many Road Rage incidents, Criminal Assaults (Crime Prevention) could be prevented by Anger Management skills taught in our Victorian Education system? (And its pretty basic stuff too, available on the net, not copious, easily put into fact sheets, not 'rocket science' but possibly of more tangible benefit to Society.

In relation to the TAC Premium funding for Motorcycle Safety programs I refer to the RoadSafe South East (of which I am a Kingston community member) Minutes of April 12th 2011 which state: "MRA ride-off reaches 1000's... MRA ride-off is a great opportunity to access large numbers of riders for promoting safety messages – opportunity to get out and mingle with riders... not just the riders that come to the stall.

"Westernport festival – again large number of riders reached & MSD in a good month will reach more riders each year."

These RoadSafe South East Minutes also state: that Motorcyclists re Safety messages are a:

"Difficult target group - main people falling off their bikes are returned riders with limited skills and new bikes: men who are 40-60, have got a licence and \$ and a Harley/big bike but they are not used to them. They have the basic skills and competence, so licencing is not necessarily the issue."

On the point of returning riders, the Vic Roads 'Chasing the Dream' motorcycle safety program states:

Safer Riding for Motorcyclists aged 30 years and over

'Chasing the Dream' provides valuable road safety information for motorcyclists who are aged 30 and over and riding for the first time or returning to riding after a number of years.

You have probably been thinking or perhaps dreaming of the day when you can ride a motorcycle for the freedom and excitement that riding can bring.

But before you 'chase the dream' and make it a reality, there are some important facts to consider.

'Chasing the Dream' contains vital road safety information about the difference between driving and riding, choosing the right motorcycle, protecting your body, and your responsibilities if you carry a pillion passenger. You will also learn about the importance of maintaining your motorcycle properly and some simple checks to keep you on the road.

Why is the safety of motorcyclists aged 30 years or over so important?

Because in the ten years between 1995 and 2004, the number of motorcyclists, aged 30 years or over, who were seriously injured or killed increased from 250 to 555 - more than double!

Motorcyclists need to be mindful of the risks!

Returning riders may falsely believe it's simply a matter of jumping back on a motorcycle, but the reality is different. Motorcycle riders are around 29 times more likely to be fatally injured than other vehicle operators (Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Monograph 12 October 2002).

<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/SafetyAndRules/SaferRiders/Motorcyclists/SafetyForRidersOver30.htm>

Re "Chasing the Dream"

'Oh to be young, or young at heart, and 'ride through (the) Paris (end of Collins St.) with the wind in your hair (if you've still got some)

Advertising and Movies market portray Motorcycling with a cool image. Danger, or disregard for danger, is cool. Being safe is uncool/ woosy.

The RoadSafe Minutes of April 12th 2011 re motorcycle safety reinforce this, stating, "Inappropriate clothing is also a key issue. Need to educate all riders – new & old – that you need to wear the proper gear to avoid serious injury."

Movies and Advertising including newspaper/ Magazine ads will often show Motorcyclists/Cyclists without helmet, for the simple reason of seeing the actor's/ actress's face* The Ads are also Bank ads etc, not businesses which sell bikes/ motorbikes, but any business wishing to associate themselves, and potential clients, with an image.

It would seem that Motorcyclists are not showing a duty of care to their own safety and like Cycling Advocacy focusing on the hazards created by other road users behaviour.

This lack of duty of care to one's own safety is reflected in the cavalier attitude problem stated above in Vic Roads 'Chasing the Dream' "Returning riders may falsely believe it's simply a matter of jumping back on a motorcycle, but the reality is different."

The July 2011 Edition of Frankston City News published by Frankston City Council states on Page 4:

"Motorcycle riding is growing in popularity, with a resurgence of returned riders - people who have resumed riding after a break of many years."

"If you are returning to riding after a break, ease yourself in gradually and take time to get your riding skills up to date. While new bike technology often means more powerful performance, your reaction time, eyesight and strength may not be the same as when you were last riding. The roads and traffic conditions have also changed."

"An appropriate motorcycle training course is highly recommended and is the best way to brush-up on your safe riding skills." Frankston City News July 2011
There are similar problems in relation to returning riders with Cycling and Bunch Cycling.

The highest amount of cycling injuries are also in the 30 years plus demographic, with 30-39 year old males sustaining the most injuries.

There is a saying, "It's like riding a bike, you never forget" This truism is plainly and simply untrue, particularly as it applies to motorcycling/ cycling safety.

It would appear that ..."a large cohort of cyclists on Beach Road at weekends are males over the age of 30, who returned to cycling having not regularly cycled since adolescence." (2)

"Riding in bunches is an acquired skill which many cyclists returning to cycling do not possess." (2) Moreover..." Riding in a group requires much more skill and concentration than just riding a bike..." (1)

In fact given that we know such more about Road Safety now, and that there are vast road safety resources for motorcyclists and cyclists to draw upon if they were of the mindset to do so, I would add an amendment to the above truism:

"It's like riding a bike. You never forget what you didn't learn to do properly in the first place."

Training/ Skills is also an issue with Cycling:

"No formal training programs to develop bunch riding skills were found during this review (of bunch cycling)...and there are no minimum requirements for cyclists to achieve before riding on the road in a bunch." (3)

"The evidence establishes that there can be difficulties, especially for inexperienced cyclists, in stopping safely when traffic lights are red, when they are riding in bunches." (2)

Please note Behaviour Change and Behavior Modification mean two entirely different things.

Behaviour Change means changing from one mode of transport to another i.e. stepping out of a car straight on to a motorcycle/ bicycle. And indeed the focus on Behaviour Change programs encourages inexperience/ lack of preparedness. In other words we are sending mixed messages. People who just jump on a bike/ motorbike are also doing what we have told them to do.

Behaviour Modification means modifying the behavior of existing road users in relation to safety and legitimacy.

Or, one might say, remedially addressing the problems caused by Behaviour Change programs.

Behaviour modification is best addressed off road, before people become road users.

Unsafe, problem behavior on the part of road users is largely created by erroneous advocacy and promotion, and the mind-set that encourages in road users.

ERRONEOUS ADVOCACY/ PROMOTION HAS BEEN IGNORED AS A ROAD SAFETY HAZARD, UNREBUTTED, AND ENABLED FOR FAR TOO LONG

For instance, I have critiqued a particular piece of erroneous advocacy re cycling: that traffic infringement penalties "punish" cyclists:

Cooperation on the roads, and Cycling legitimacy, which road users say they want, depends on being predictable by being law abiding. The road rules are in effect 'safety regulations' of a 'life and death environment'. Yet the enforcement of these safety regulations/ road rules is touted as unfairly 'punishing cyclists' This is nonsense. A traffic infringement penalty is not punishment, it is a vital road safety measure, and an appropriate, just penalty for a traffic infringement. Whereas a vigilante act, (tacks on Beach Road) (Motorists driving at Bunch Cyclists) (a Cyclist being punched, kicked, or struck in the head by a bottle or rock) is definitely punishing cyclists.

It is important to note that vigilante acts, 'taking the law into one's own hands' (what a misnomer!) universally occur when the law (the road rules) are not being enforced.

Law enforcement is a Road Safety measure, is a Cycling Safety measure.

I question why advocacy such as this was ever allowed to gain 'oxygen' unrebutted? No Road Safety Authority supports illegal, illegitimate, unsafe road usage. Even the Bike Lobbies state all cyclists must obey the road rules. But Bicycle Victoria mixes the message by saying they don't want the law enforced. The end result is more public money spent on Road Trauma and Behaviour Modification programs.

Nb I am (depending on who you ask) an actor, with short film and a TV Ad (TVC: TVCommercial) credits.

References

1. Code of Conduct for Training Cyclists
2. CycleSport Victoria and Amy Gillett Foundation submission to Coroner Johnstone's inquest into the death of James Gould.

3. Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) Jan. 2009

Pete Dowe
Road Safety Advocate

