



MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland Government displays callous disregard for cyclist safety

The Queensland Government sent a chilling message to all cyclists this week by its summary dismissal of a road rule change proposed via a petition to Parliament that would require motorists to maintain a minimum safe passing distance of one metre when they overtake cyclists.

Cyclists have expressed wide-spread disgust at the Queensland Government's callous disregard for their safety, a feeling reinforced by the knowledge that similar rules for protecting cyclists apply in a host of other jurisdictions overseas, where it is common that even more space is required of motorists than the one metre sought in the Queensland Road Rules.

CBD BUG spokesperson Paul French commented on the State Government's out-of-hand rejection of the proposal in stating that Queensland Transport bureaucrats had a long history of concocting road rule changes in secrecy that were designed to suppress cycling and other transport alternatives to the private motor vehicle, through ensuring the road rules were as hostile as possible to cyclists and other non-car transport modes.

He said this approach went all the way back to the late 1990's when mandatory helmet laws were enacted without any evidence to support their introduction. The pro-car bias was demonstrated again as recently as October 2009, when almost without warning skating and scooter riding at night on roads with a speed limit of 50km/h or more were banned. This meant people who previously skated to work in the city in the morning from the inner suburbs could not skate home. Paul French said the rules could have simply been changed to require users of these "wheeled recreation devices" to wear safety vests and carry lights, but the usual approach was taken – by banning these alternative to car transport.

Still another example of Queensland's biased and arbitrary road rule decision making was the March 2008 banning of bicycles powered by internal combustion motors of less than 200 watts. This decision, which occurred without any warning to industry or the public, was explained as being made on the basis that such devices were too similar to motor cycles. However, this reason can be seen as an absurdity when it is considered that almost any amateur commuter cyclist can exceed the 200W power output limit over a prolonged period.

Mr French said that "what we see across Australia and particularly here in Queensland is a rigid and unyielding adherence to red-tape processes that are used to prevent change unless it suits bureaucrat bias favouring car use, instead of a focus on the much needed outcome of enabling vulnerable road users to safely share the road.

Too many transport bureaucrats continue to be locked in to a backward looking philosophy that is dedicated to maintaining the ongoing dominance of our roads by private motor vehicles. This inflexibility will only result in more cyclist deaths and the continuing excessive use of cars for personal transport, with all Queenslanders being worse off for it in terms of massive economic, health, environmental and social losses".

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