



MEDIA RELEASE

Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

CBD BUG

www.cbdbug.org.au

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Cyclists, Trucks and Government/Council inaction!

The Brisbane CBD Bicycle User Group was greatly dismayed to hear of the tragic death of an international student, Rebekka Meyer, at the corner of Stanley Street and Annerley Road in Brisbane on Thursday.

Safety issues in this area generally and at this intersection specifically have been raised publicly for at least the past fifteen years (1999 - <http://www.ericmanners.net/blackspots.pdf> ; 2008 - <http://helenabrahams.com/media99.html> ; 2012 - <http://www.cbdbug.org.au/wp-content/uploads/minutes/2012/CBD-BUG-minutes-20120530.pdf>) by CBD BUG and other groups, politicians, and individuals. Almost all deaths of cyclists in recent times in Brisbane have been caused by trucks. As Paul French of CBD BUG noted at the parliamentary inquiry in August 2013, commenting on the death of Les Karayan, killed by a truck at another point on Annerley Road: "The latest federal government statistics on fatal crashes and deaths involving trucks suggest Queensland's industry is a runaway, and this crash is yet another pointer to the inadequate management of this state's road transport system as a whole and the trucking industry in particular, which, with respect to cyclists, represents wheels of mass destruction." The proposed "solutions" have been piecemeal, local and reactive, instead of systematic - for instance "Watch for Cyclists" signs near the Stanley Street / Annerley Road intersection and Annerley Road Rail Bridge protection beams (after Les Karayan's death).

The BUG notes that it has been approximately a year without news of charges in the Karayan case and the cases of Myles Sparling, a 5-year-old boy crossing the road at Kallangur, and Michelle Smeaton, a commuter in Carindale, also killed by trucks. Australia is patently failing basic safety standards for cyclists. The OECD recently found that of 27 member countries, Australia and Canada were the only two to record an increase in cycling death rates between 2000 and 2011. The solutions are well known: separated infrastructure and lower speed limits so that errors on the part of cyclists or motorists are not automatically fatal errors. Unfortunately, the Brisbane City Council and the Department of Transport and Main Roads have repeatedly shown that they lack the will to implement even basic changes that might improve safety for cyclists. This can be seen clearly at the BUG's correspondence web page concerning a number of projects across Brisbane. Council appears to actively look for ways to avoid implementing suggestions to improve safety, most recently in its response concerning Stanley Street and Dock Street (the "Mater Disaster").

At a state level, the Queensland parliamentary inquiry of last year recommended that car parking be forbidden in bike lanes during peak hour to start bringing Queensland into line with all other states. This recommendation and many others, including one concerning a hierarchy of road users, were rejected while more palatable recommendations such as those on collecting statistics were adopted.

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Brisbane is being left in the dark ages compared to North American and European cities in terms of separated infrastructure for cyclists. Council seems to prefer the cheap option of green paint, "Watch for Cyclists" and "Share the Road" signs rather than the effective option of infrastructure separate from vehicles, such as the best Brisbane example, the Bicentennial Bikeway. The percentage of cyclists in Brisbane who are female, by BCC's own admission, is the lowest of all eight capital cities in Australia at 17% in 2013. Targets for cycling modal share are both abysmally low and missed continuously. Current growth rates of 7-8% per year are off a very low base. The council prefers to promote free "confidence courses" instead of beginning the necessary and effective project of building separate infrastructure; in effect, deflecting blame by implying that low usage rates are caused by a lack of "confidence" in potential users. These programs have never proven effective in international practice, unlike infrastructure programs.

Brisbane needs to learn from leading cycling countries and change "Bicycle Awareness Zone" (BAZ) symbols (proven in peer-reviewed studies to have no safety benefit) into proper separated infrastructure. The BUG is tired of BCC's constant sloganeering about the mythical "1,100 kilometres of bikeways" with its double and triple counting of lanes and BAZ symbols, and the "\$120 million over four years" where this is largely invested in recreational bikeways beside rivers, brooks, creeks, waterholes and flood plains. Brisbane desperately needs to build separated bikeways where people want and need to travel, massively increase investment in these, and start being concerned about action rather than appearances. For instance, the Toowong to Indooroopilly bikeway project had a route identified more than a year ago and no public progress has since occurred. The North Brisbane Bikeway has some sections completely dark at night. Much of its length is along roads used heavily by concrete trucks and other trucks similar to the one involved in the death of Ms Meyer. Although its benefit-cost ratio exceeds any other bikeway project and transport project in Brisbane, it has proceeded at a glacial pace since 2007. Transport and Main Roads and Brisbane City Council have consistently preferred producing glossy brochures instead of taking action on infrastructure.

This has to stop!

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