

a metre matters: national update

January 2016

An update of activities that the Amy Gillett Foundation has led or supported to amend national, state and territory safe overtaking distance road rules

Australia

In 2014 there were 45 cyclist deaths due to road crashes, representing an average increase of 1.4 per cent over the past ten years¹. This contrasts with the positive news that Australia had the lowest rate of road deaths on record since national statistics began in 1925. On releasing the national road trauma statistics for 2014, the (then) Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Hon Jamie Briggs, said that the safety of bike riders was a priority. Minister Briggs commended the Amy Gillett Foundation for its efforts to make cycling safer in Australia.

Media release: [Foundation's safer cycling advocacy praised](#)

Australian Capital Territory

A two year trial of the minimum overtaking distance started on 1 November 2015 in the ACT. Drivers have to provide a minimum distance of 1 metre when overtaking a bike rider in speed zones at or below 60km/h and 1.5 metres in speed zones above 60km/h. To support the amended road rules drivers are allowed to cross centre lines, straddle lane-lines and drive on painted islands, provided that the driver has a clear view of any approaching traffic and that it is safe to do so. An awareness campaign started in mid-October to educate road users about these changes and ensure everyone understands the new rules. The Foundation has welcomed the opportunity to work with the ACT Government, roads authorities, bicycle and motoring organisations, the police and other groups to get to this point. We look forward to a successful trial so that the amended road rules stay in place after the trial ends in November 2017.

Media release: [New cycling rules to be trialled from November](#)

New South Wales

On 21 December 2015, the NSW Government announced a trial of the minimum overtaking distance as part of its [Go Together safely campaign](#). From 1 March 2016, drivers who overtake a bicycle rider must allow a distance of at least 1 metre when the speed limit is 60km/h or less, and 1.5 metres when the speed limit is more than 60km/h. If drivers cannot pass a bicycle rider safely, they should slow down and wait until it is safe to pass the rider, leaving the minimum distance. To help drivers provide the minimum distance, some exemptions to the road rules will apply. The Foundation has been working hard to build support for the minimum overtaking distance to be adopted in NSW. The NSW community is already familiar with *a metre matters* which featured in the *It's a two way street* road safety campaign over the past three years. This makes NSW the fifth jurisdiction to adopt the minimum overtaking distance.

Media release: [NSW says a metre matters](#)

Queensland

In April 2014, the Queensland Government became the first in Australia to implement a minimum overtaking distance trial and backed it with the effective *Stay wider of the rider* campaign. Community attitudes research commissioned by the Foundation over the trial period shows

¹ [Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics \(BITRE\), 2015, Road trauma Australia, 2014 statistical summary BITRE, Canberra, ACT](#)

consistent awareness of, and support for, the trial legislation. In November 2015, two-thirds of Queenslanders agree with the minimum overtaking distance trial. The main reason people elected for their support for the trial legislation was the need for bike riders to be protected in order to make them feel safer (70%). Importantly, 60% of bicycle riders have noticed an increase in the space drivers give them. Governments and organisations across the country are following the trial with great interest.

Media release: [A metre really does matter on Fatality Free Friday](#)

South Australia

On 25 October 2015, South Australia became the first Australian state or territory to mandate the minimum overtaking distance, as part of a range of safe cycling measures being implemented following recommendations by a Citizens' Jury. The amended laws require road users to allow at least a one metre gap on roads with speed limits of up to 60km/h, and 1.5 metres for anything above that speed. The introduction has been supported by an extensive education campaign led by the Motor Accident Commission. A Bike SA survey found that 55 per cent of South Australian bike riders said drivers were respecting the rule to pass riders with at least one metre distance on streets with speed zones of 60km/h or less.²

Media release: [History made as 'a metre matters' becomes law in South Australia](#)

Tasmania

In February 2015, Tasmania introduced new road rules to increase the safety of bike riders. Drivers can straddle or cross a continuous centre line in order to leave a safe space when passing a bike rider, when it is safe to do so. The Tasmanian Government also outlined the safe overtaking distances for a driver when passing a bike rider as one metre at speeds of up to 60 km/h, and 1.5 metres at speeds above 60 km/h. The Tasmanian Government has invested in a two year cycling public education campaign featuring innovative and humorous messages to convey the importance of leaving a safe distance when overtaking bike riders. The Foundation is an expert member of the Cycling Safety Steering Committee that advises the Road Safety Advisory Council and which prioritised minimum overtaking distance as a key message.

Television advertisement: [Distance makes the difference](#)

Victoria

The Foundation is actively involved in a range of initiatives to improve safety for Victorian bike riders including a submission to the Government's update of Victoria's cycling strategy. We encouraged our network and supporters in Victoria to complete an online survey and to participate in community consultation sessions around the state. Other stakeholder consultations in which we are participating include the review of cycling road rules conducted by VicRoads; the *Young Driver Safety Package* and the *St Kilda Road Safe System Transformation*. The Foundation draws on its own research studies and the scientific literature in these consultations, including [Road crashes involving bike riders in Victoria, 2002–2012](#), which is the most recent detailed multi-year study into bicycle rider crash statistics undertaken in Victoria.

Submission: [Amy Gillett Foundation Response to Victoria's cycling strategy December 2015](#)

Western Australia

The number of people riding bikes in WA is above the national participation average and government, industry and community organisations are tracking the progress of the Queensland trial with great interest. The Foundation works closely with WestCycle, the state's peak body for cycling, which supports the introduction of minimum overtaking distance legislation.

WestCycle Strategic Framework for cycling: [Our Bike Path](#)

² Bike SA survey, October 2015