

Response – Road Safety Strategy for New South Wales 2012-2021

The Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Road Safety Strategy for New South Wales 2012-2021 (the Strategy).

1 Basis for Review

In reviewing the draft Strategy, we support the Safe System approach as the design framework for the Strategy.

Further we believe that one of the tenets required to achieve a safe system is a strategic focus on the most vulnerable road users. By vulnerable road users we mean; the young and the old, people with disabilities and people using modes of transport such as cycling, walking and motor cycling who are particularly susceptible to impacts from large-mass, fast-moving vehicles as well as crashes caused by road design, engineering, individual skill and decision making issues. A fuller definition and exposition of the position of vulnerable road users is set out by Haworth (Haworth 2006).

By adopting the viewpoint of the most vulnerable users, there will be a consequent increase in safety for all users. This approach is consistent with the approach being taken in the countries that lead the league tables in road safety.

1.1 Terminology to clarify cyclists

Throughout the draft Strategy, there is reference to drivers and riders. It is assumed that this refers to motorcycle riders, as distinct from cyclists. It would help to clarify the strategy if the terms motorcyclist and cyclist (or pedal cyclist or bike rider) were used instead of rider.

1.2 Vulnerability of cyclists

Specifically, the focus of the AGF in this review has been about the inclusion of cyclists as a vulnerable road user group and addressing cyclist safety issues in relation to road safety in NSW over the coming ten years.

Based on Nationally available data, while Australia has been successful in reducing overall rates of road traffic fatalities and serious injuries, the benefits have not been equitably distributed across all road user groups. Over a ten-year period, there was a downward trend in overall road transport fatalities, but no comparable trend in cyclist deaths (Department of Infrastructure Transport Regional Development and Local Government 2009).

Over the period 2000 to 2007, serious injury rates for cyclists (per 100,000 population) increased by 47% nationally, while for all other modes (motorcycles aside), rates either remained steady or declined (Henley and Harrison 2009).

This trend is reflected in NSW with the popularity of cycling increasing while cyclists continue to be overrepresented in serious injury crashes.

2 Road Safety Data

The draft Strategy employs the measure of casualties to assess road safety over time. We recommend longitudinal data collection that enables greater capture and information value of data relating to bike rider serious injuries.

We suggest that an appropriate indicator would be a measure of the *rates* of cycling and other road users across participation (participants, trip frequency) as a relative measure of incidents (serious injuries, threat to life injuries) and deaths (not exhaustive). Not only would this create a more complete indicator for the level of safety of the NSW road transport network for vulnerable road users, it would allow identification of the specific impacts of improvement in safety for different user groups within the road transport spectrum.

The AGF supports that improved data parameters, collection and validity/reliability particularly relating to analysis of serious injuries is an existing identified priority for the Centre for Road Safety.

3 Safer Roads

Road treatments and infrastructure are critical to the safety of both experienced and inexperienced vulnerable road users including bicycle riders.

Some key elements that require further attention under this area are:

- Prioritisation and consistent application of road treatments and infrastructure, including intersection design treatments; and intensive awareness and education communications into the community relating to such treatments
- Establishment of preferred or principal cycling networks connecting cyclists to city, suburban and regional destinations, combined with community education about such networks to educate all road users. The networks may comprise shared routes and dedicated cycling routes
- Review, establishment and communication about roads not suitable for cycling, including roads where cyclists are prohibited
- Impose criteria such that all road infrastructure funding incorporates inclusion of bicycle infrastructure at the time of design and of new and upgraded infrastructure

- Review safety barrier and shared path “bollard” designs from a bicyclist perspective incorporating learnings from motorcyclist studies (Grzebieta R.H., Jama H. et al. 2009). Location of safety barriers and the use of un-shrouded W form beams may be implicated in prevention and severity of bicyclist crashes.

4 Safer People

The acceptance and normalisation of all road user types, and education and skills of both drivers and cyclists is critical to the safety of all road users.

We submit that there are serious inequalities in the way different road user groups are represented in key educational and official settings that have a direct negative impact on the safety of vulnerable road users such as cyclists. Despite the year on year rise in cycling participation, cyclists are frequently marginalised as a minority or ‘alternative’ road user group.

4.1 Driver licensing and education

Driver education is a key component of cyclist safety.

The behaviour of motorists towards bike riders has a critical impact on cyclists’ safety, as well as a person’s willingness to ride a bike. In recently released research from the Monash University Accident Research Centre (Johnson 2010), it was found that in 87% of incidents between cars and bicycles, cars drivers were at fault and most did not know they acted in a reckless manner.

Licence testing should reflect the rights of all road users and use questions which develop a shared road culture and not imply road ownership by one type of vehicle.

Review of road rules to address common situations where drivers place cyclists at risk would also bring about improved awareness and culture change.

We recommend that:

- The licensing system be reviewed such that motor vehicle license holders are assessed on their awareness of cyclists and associated road rules, such as the inclusion of a minimum number of cyclist related questions in Learner Driver testing
- Regular ongoing license testing be introduced rather than lifetime licensing
- The Strategy support behaviour change and information programs to assist in normalizing cycling such as the ‘A Metre Matters’ campaign, Look before Opening dooring campaign.
- Review of road rules and associated penalties to improve the safety of vulnerable road users will also increase the emphasis on “sharing” versus “owning” the road.

4.2 Cyclist education

The ability to ride a bike safely and with sufficient base-level skills has significant benefits for road safety.

Observations of bicycling skills and behaviours in the community suggest that there are a wide range of unsafe behaviours in common usage.

Despite the old saying 'it's like riding a bike', bicycling is actually a learned skill which can deteriorate with lack of use. There is a significant need for bicycling education and training in the Australian community to allow more people to ride bikes, keep bike riders safe, realise the benefits of increased levels of participation in bicycling, and to instil safe road user behaviour in children who will become our future generation of motorists.

The recently developed national bicycle training program, AustCycle, is the only truly national grass roots bicycle educational safety and skills program in Australia. It provides an accredited curriculum endorsed by the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme for the acquisition of bicycle riding skills. It runs under a licensing model that is designed to allow an extensive rollout via accredited Providers across the country.

AustCycle requires the collaboration of government departments responsible for education, health, recreation, transport and the environment to support comprehensive rollout and accessibility to the adult and school-aged children cycling community. The funding of bicycle training is critical to ensure that future generations have the skills required to be safe on the road while bicycling.

We recommend that:

- Cycling knowledge and education be introduced to maximise the safety knowledge, skills and behaviours of bike riders
- The Strategy commit to supporting AustCycle to deliver bicycle training and educational opportunities to all school-age children throughout NSW.

5 Safer vehicles – non-occupants

A significant gap in vehicle safety is safety features that protect non-occupants. As mentioned, vehicle safety improvements have improved vehicle safety for the occupants, however there exists insufficient promotion and enforcement of vehicle safety improvements for non-occupants including cyclists and pedestrians e.g. review of window tinting standards, rear view camera technology, blind spots associated with wide roll bars at the front/side windows, and collision reduction technology.

Such measures need to be supported by the NSW Government and promoted in consumer awareness campaigns.

6 Safer speeds

The draft Strategy correctly identifies speed as a factor that is strongly associated with crash incidence and severity.

One of the most effective injury prevention strategies for cyclists and pedestrians is lower vehicle speed. For road users who lack vehicle crash protection, human tolerance to injury by a car is compromised if the vehicle is travelling at more than 30 km/h. While most unprotected road users survive if hit by a car travelling at 30 km/h, the majority are killed if hit by a car travelling at 50 km/h (World Health Organisation 2008).

We recommend:

- The implementation of a uniform 40km/hr speed limit in residential streets noting that 30km/hr is a key element of bicyclist and pedestrian safety in countries with relatively low injury rates for cyclists and pedestrians (Pucher and Dijkstra 2000; Pucher J, Dill J et al. 2010)
- The implementation of a 40km/hr speed limit in CBD and shopping strips/zones (recently introduced in Brisbane) is another key element
- A reduction to 80km/hr in rural single lane roads.

Thank you for consideration of this submission by the Amy Gillett Foundation, responding to the draft Road Safety Strategy for NSW. We would welcome the opportunity to respond to any questions you may have in regards to our submission.

Yours faithfully,



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