a metre matters: national update

October 2015

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 years\(^1\). 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 starts on 1 November 2015 in the ACT. Drivers will 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 the driver has a clear view of any approaching traffic and that it is safe to do so. An awareness campaign will commence 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
The Foundation has been working hard to build support for the minimum overtaking distance to be adopted in NSW. AGF remains optimistic that the NSW government will announce legislative change by the end of 2015. The Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Duncan Gay, indicated his support for AGF and minimum overtaking distance at the Road Safety Summit in Sydney in August 2015. The NSW community is already familiar with a metre matters which features in the It’s a two way street road safety campaign. The campaign was rolled out throughout NSW over the past few years and is the result of a long-standing partnership between the Foundation and Transport NSW. Australian media identity Charlie Pickering helped to bring the 16 Ride and Drive Rules life by lending his voice to a digital animation released earlier this year.

Media release: A partnership approach for road safety

Queensland
In April 2014, the Queensland Government became the first in Australia to implement a minimum overtaking distance trial. Community attitudes research commissioned by the Foundation shows that the introduction of the landmark trial legislation is widely supported and is changing behaviour\(^2\).

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

\(^2\) Public opinion research into the Queensland minimum overtaking distance legislation commissioned by the Amy Gillett Foundation, Final Report Crosby I Textor Group, May 2015
Almost two-thirds of bicycle riders in Queensland have noticed an increase in the space drivers give them since the legislation was introduced. The Queensland Government backed the trial with a successful Stay wider of the rider campaign. Three-quarters of Queenslanders support the new laws and believe the campaign was effective in communicating the legislation. The first two stages of research were conducted in October 2014 and April 2015, and the next stage is planned for October 2015. 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**

In a landmark decision South Australia will become the first Australian state or territory to implement a permanent minimum distance when overtaking bicycles. To begin on 25th October 2015 the new law is part of a range of safe cycling measures to be implemented in South Australia following recommendations by a Citizens’ Jury. The new laws will require road users to allow at least a one metre gap on roads with speed limits of up to 60kmh, and 1.5 metres for anything above that speed. The introduction will be supported by an extensive Motor Accident Commission led education campaign.

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/hr, and 1.5 metres at speeds above 60 km/hr. This builds on earlier safety measures including the 'Keep Your Distance' campaign, a bike education program for primary school students; cycling related questions on Driver Knowledge tests; and the adaptation of the Foundation's successful It's a two-way street campaign. The Foundation is also an expert member of the Cycling Safety Steering Committee, providing advice to the Road Safety Advisory Council.

Media release: *New Tassie road rules give bike riders safe space*

**Victoria**

The Foundation recently published the most significant and detailed multi-year study into bicycle rider crash statistics ever undertaken in Victoria. The research found that fatalities involving bike riders are decreasing, however non-fatal crashes are increasing. It also shows that the highest proportion of bike rider crashes occur in urban areas yet almost half of all bike rider fatalities occurred in regional areas. A quarter of bike rider deaths were caused by rear-end crashes with more crashes of this type than any other single crash type. The Foundation is drawing on this and other evidence in its contributions to a range of stakeholder consultations currently underway in Victoria, including the review of cycling road rules conducted by VicRoads.

Media release: *Amy Gillett Foundation releases major crash stats study*

**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 Amy Gillett Foundation*

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3 Rear-end crashes were the single crash type that resulted in the most bike rider deaths (26%). Garratt, M., Johnson, M. & Cubis, J. *Road crashes involving bike riders in Victoria, 2002-2012*. Amy Gillett Foundation Report July 2015.