

4th July 2013

The Research Director
Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Sir,

Please accept my submission regarding “The enquiry into cycling issues”. I will put my submission in 3 parts and these are:

My experience and background;
My recent encounters as a cyclist;
My suggestions for harm reduction.

1. My Experience and Background

I am a 62 year old male cyclist, a recently practicing specialist in both Intensive Care and in Anaesthesia, currently the Director of Medical Services at Mater Health Services North Queensland, An Associate Professor at James Cook University School of Medicine and Dentistry, father of 3 sons, have 2 grandchildren and am married to Betty who is a cyclist. I have been cycling for the last 4 years but in my thirties and forties also cycled.

I cycle 3 or 4 times a week for fitness and social reasons. The group I cycle with has a core of 8 to 10 people of similar age. In our group there are 3 pilots, 2 retired optometrists, one doctor and other professionals. We are all in professions that understand and value safety conscious behaviour. We have cycled regularly together for several years and are regarded by others in the Townsville cycling community as safe, conservative and careful cyclists. We have cycled for charities (Black Dog and Children's Cancer). We all have quality cycles with high visibility front and rear lighting and wear safety helmets and easily visible cycling clothing. Our commonest pattern of riding is single file and we will only ride 2 abreast when the cycle lane allows enough room and it is safe to do so.

2. My Recent Encounters as a cyclist

In the last two months I have had 4 bad experiences.

The **first** event was when I was cycling with my wife on Dalrymple Road. I was in front of my wife. It was about 5.45 am. The two of us were in single file. A utility came up fast behind us and came as close as possible then just as it passed my wife the passenger stuck their head out the window and roared loudly so as to scare her. They drove off rapidly laughing. Needless to say my wife was very upset.

The **second** event was when cycling on Hugh Street (dual carriageway both sides) where there is a designated cycle lane. The incident occurred at 6 am and I was by myself. A truck was parked in the cycle lane. As I approached to pass the truck, necessity meant I had to join the normal carriage way, I looked behind and gave a signal. A utility in centre lane immediately swooped towards me and then came as close as it could. I said nothing but shook my head to indicate I thought it was dangerous to do that. The utility screeched to a halt 100 meters up the road in the cycle lane, waited for me, called me a "f.....g c..t" as I passed and told me I should not be allowed on the road. He was a large person and I was intimidated so cycled on without comment. He followed me, and again went as close as possible as he passed me, and drove off. I was too anxious agitated to get his number.

The **third** event was on Anzac Day this year about 6 am. I was cycling alone on Golf Links Drive in Kirwan. Before the first roundabout heading south, a car towing a boat passed from behind me so close to me, before the roundabout, that I was hit by the boat, knocked off my bike, and flew through the air to land on the grass verge. My bike was caught between the trailer wheel and the gutter with the bike sustaining \$780 of damage to the rear of the bike. Two other cyclists about 150 metres behind me saw the episode and came to my aid. The driver has since accused me of purposefully running into his boat, will not talk to me and ignores my calls, all despite admitting on the day that he ran me down. Fortunately except for grazes to my body I sustained no major injury but was quite shaken. I have a witness to the event, his admission and now know the driver's address, phone number, and identity. I should have notified the police, but since at the time he seemed reasonable, I did not. I have documentation of the event and a statement from the witness. I can supply these if needed.

The **fourth** and most harrowing event was 2 weeks ago (22 June) when I was one of four cyclists hit by a truck on Shaw's Road in Townsville. I was in a group of 8 cyclists (as mentioned above). My good friend Susan Bell was killed. There is an investigation at present being conducted by the police. I am sure it will show we were cycling and conducting ourselves correctly. I sustained 5 broken ribs, severe blood loss, fractured my scapula and spent 7 days in hospital. I have not yet been able to return to work and am recovering at home. I still have significant pain and impaired mobility. I plan and hope to make a complete recovery. I can provide a copy of my statement to the police if you require it.

3. My Suggestions for harm reduction

Educate drivers to treat cyclists as equal partners on the road and vice versa.

Encourage drivers not to pass cyclists unless they at all times can do so safely

Encourage a safe minimum distance between cars and cyclists

Build, where possible, better cycle lanes and improve the shoulders of our roads

Legislate for a reduced speed at roundabouts (40k)

Encourage the user of bike cams to document and prove the risk to cyclists

Have a near miss reporting system similar to those used by airlines and medical systems

Develop a culture of safety and patience on our roads

Improve the design of car collision avoidance systems

Obviously I am not an expert on road safety, however I do recognise there is a problem. I have personal experience of cycling safety as do all my cycling friends. I have extensive experience in assessing medical risk and in planning to reduce and preventing risk in hospitals. The possible solutions are similar, and in my opinion, do not lie with a blame culture but with better education, reduction of road and vehicle hazard, and changing the attitudes of all road users.

I would encourage you to make a positive difference to improve safety for cyclists,

Yours sincerely,



John Stokes

