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## Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

### CBD BUG

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The Right Honourable Graham Quirk  
Lord Mayor of Brisbane  
GPO Box 2287  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Lord Mayor

This letter is in response to Brisbane City Council's very frequent use of the phrase "1,100/1,200 kilometres of bikeways" to describe the Brisbane bikeway system. It provides a survey of the use of the phrase, a critical analysis, recommendations on "open data" related to this figure, and suggestions for alternatives and improvements. CBD BUG believes that this phrase is misleading, incorrect and counterproductive in regard to cycling amenity in Brisbane. We would like to see Council discontinuing its use of this phrase and to focus instead on more useful metrics of goals and achievements. People want to cycle more, but many are afraid to. Goals for the network need to be more explicit about risks on different roads, what mitigation treatments are required in different risk contexts, and the extent to which these have been achieved.

The phrase has been repeated in such contexts as:

- Brisbane City Council's Annual Report 2012-13<sup>1</sup> where it is listed as "Length of constructed and formed roads: 5690 km, Length of bikeways: 1143 km, Length of paths and walkways: 4324 km"; Annual Report 2011-12<sup>2</sup> with "Length of bikeways: 1070 km" and Annual Report 2010-11<sup>3</sup> where "Council's on and off-road bikeway network [was expanded] to over 1,070 kilometres"
- The Parliamentary Inquiry into Cycling Report<sup>5</sup> includes the paragraph *The BCC claims to provide a city cycleway network of 1100kms, which includes more than 10,850kms [sic] of formed and unformed footpaths and more than 760kms of on and off-road cycleways. It is unclear however if the on-road cycleways figure is limited to dedicated "cycle lanes" or inclusive of bicycle awareness zones and shared lanes.*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/annual\\_report\\_2012-13.pdf](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/annual_report_2012-13.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/annual\\_report\\_2011-2012.pdf](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/annual_report_2011-2012.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annual\\_Report\\_2010\\_2011.pdf](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annual_Report_2010_2011.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/THLGC/2013/INQ-CYC/rp-39-29Nov13.pdf>

- BCC's "Cycling Brisbane" website<sup>6</sup> where it is written "With more than 1,100 kilometres of bikeways and bike paths ... Brisbane is a fantastic place to ride your bike".
- Brisbane City Council Public and Active Transport Committee presentations – for instance, on 5 November 2013<sup>7</sup> when it was stated "Brisbane has an extensive network of pedestrian paths, bikeways and on-road cycle lanes, including more than 1100 kilometres of bikeways".
- Various BCC websites with the phrase "more than 1,100 kilometres" such as those of Graham Quirk<sup>8</sup>, Peter Matic<sup>9</sup>, Vicki Howard<sup>10</sup>, Norm Wyndham<sup>11</sup>, and Julian Simmonds<sup>12</sup>.
- Public and Active Transport Committee Chairman Peter Matic said in March 2014: "Council has over 1,100 km of *dedicated* on-road and off-road cycling paths" (emphasis added).<sup>13</sup>

Sometimes the figure has jumped to "1,200 kilometres" as at Brisbane Marketing's VisitBrisbane.com.au<sup>14</sup> (reproduced in many other places) with "Brisbane is truly a foot friendly city with over 1,200 km of walkways, paths and bikeways." Brisbane Marketing's "Conference Marketing Toolkit"<sup>15</sup> states "The city ... has over 1200 kilometres of bikeways".

However, the Brisbane CBD BUG has completed an analysis of the Brisbane City Council data used to underpin this figure. This analysis clearly shows that Brisbane does not have a bikeway network of this length, because of incorrect and inconsistent approaches to measuring the network.

The CBD BUG has been deliberating on the validity of the claimed "1,100 kilometres of bikeways" for some time now. This has occurred because despite Brisbane supposedly having this extensive bikeway network, the proportion of the total trips to the CBD made by bike has been stagnant for some years at approximately 2%. We would expect the rate of cycling to increase, if the network was of sufficient size and quality to overcome people's reservations about amenity and safety.

CBD BUG recognises that the Brisbane City Council area is very large at 1,338.1 square kilometres and inter-city comparisons need to be made with this in mind. However, we consider that the figure is over-inflated and makes meaningful inter-city comparisons difficult.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://cyclingbrisbane.com.au>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/file/3317>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.grahamquirk.com.au/lord-mayor-encourages-residents-to-sign-up-for-cycling-brisbane/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.petermatic.com.au/news.php?article=3935-Better-Bikeways-for-Brisbane>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.vickihoward.com/velo-vicki-encourages-central-to-sign-up-for-cycling-brisbane/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.normwyndham.org/news.php?article=4004-Better-Bikeways-for-Brisbane>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.juliansimmonds.com.au/news.php?article=3951-Better-Bikeways-for-Brisbane>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/labor-wants-council-to-spend-1m-promoting-cycle-safety-20140323-35bpf.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.visitbrisbane.com.au/Travel/Sights-Activities/Bikeways-and-Walkways.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.brisbanemarketing.com.au/Resources/Convention-Support-Toolkit/pages/Conference-Marketing-Toolkit/~media/Corporate/Documents/CB/PDF\\_brochure.ashx](http://www.brisbanemarketing.com.au/Resources/Convention-Support-Toolkit/pages/Conference-Marketing-Toolkit/~media/Corporate/Documents/CB/PDF_brochure.ashx)

The CBD BUG’s analysis of Brisbane City Council bikeway data<sup>17</sup> indicates the claimed “1,100 kilometres of bikeways” grossly overstates the actual length and nature of Brisbane’s bikeway network. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the various forms of the facilities comprising the network.

**Table 1. The bicycle network in Brisbane City Council area.**

Facility	On / Off-road	Length (Km)	%
Shared pathway	Off	327.8	32.0%
Separated pathway	Off	1.8	0.2%
Bicycle Path	Off	23.8	2.3%
Informal off road	Off	65.7	6.4%
<i>Sub-total off-road</i>		<i>419.2</i>	<i>40.9%</i>
Bicycle route	On	76.9	7.5%
Bicycle awareness	On	303.6	29.6%
Connect	On	19.5	1.9%
Bicycle lane	On	186.6	18.2%
Informal on Road	On	18.2	1.8%
<i>Sub-total on-road</i>		<i>604.8</i>	<i>59.1%</i>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1,024.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 1 shows that 604.8km (59.1%) of Brisbane’s “bikeways network” is actually on-road facilities. Of this on-road component just over half is Bicycle Awareness Zone (BAZ), which makes up 29.6% (303.6km) of the Grand Total

### **Bicycle Awareness Zones and other facilities**

The inclusion of BAZ in the claimed bikeways network length is viewed by the CBD BUG as invalid, with BAZ providing no proven safety for bike riders from the risks presented by motorists. Furthermore, under Section 1.39 of the Department of Transport and Main Roads’ Traffic and Road Use Management Manual “BAZ should only be used after all other options for achieving a formal bicycle facility have been thoroughly investigated”.<sup>18</sup>

The former director of cycling at Transport and Main Roads, Matt Johnson, commented at the Parliamentary Inquiry in October 2013: “[BAZ] is not network; it is not facility. I think there is an overuse of BAZ in circumstances where genuine network facilities should be considered ... It is very disturbing as a cycling advocate and someone who has worked in this space to see BAZ being used as the default excuse and being implied that it is a facility, because it is not.”<sup>19</sup> However, including the BAZ in the “1,100 km” count definitely implies that it is a legitimate bicycle facility. As noted, Cr Matic has even mistakenly referred to “1,100 km of *dedicated* facilities.”

Similarly, the 76.9km of “Bicycle Route” is understood to be comprised of routes marked via now-obsolete blue and white signage, installed principally to guide cyclists along a section of road between two sections of off-road path. These signs also provide no known safety benefit for

<sup>17</sup> <http://data.brisbane.qld.gov.au/index.php/dataset/bikeways-2/>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/busind/techstdpubs/TRUM/1\\_39july2009.pdf](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/busind/techstdpubs/TRUM/1_39july2009.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/THLGC/2013/INQ-CYC/trns-ph4Nov2013.pdf>

cyclists in terms mitigating the risks from motorists, and claiming a section of road to be part of the “bikeways network” simply through having these signs present is misleading.

Much of the 186.6 km of Bicycle Lane routinely provides little amenity or safety for bicycle riders, as these are regularly blocked entirely by parked cars or simply unusable due to being located in the “door zone”. On our point about goals and achievements, CBD BUG would like these substandard facilities to be noted as such and put in a lower category, so that they can be progressively upgraded.

### **Double counting**

Finally, perhaps the most troubling finding from the CBD BUG’s data analysis is that it has been found where both sides of a road have cyclist markings of any description - the length of that road will be doubled in counting towards the total of Council’s bikeway “network”. The most notable example of this approach found by the CBD BUG involves the Victoria Bridge. Through having two apparent bike lanes (one in-bound and one out-bound) plus one footpath usable by cyclists the Victoria Bridge has its length counted three times towards Council’s “1,100 kilometres of bikeways”. Additionally, each of the Victoria Bridge on-road “bike lanes” are vastly substandard, narrowing to less than 0.5 metres in places, compared to absolute minimum Austroads standards of 1.2 metres.

This counting method contrasts with Council’s method for counting the length of its approximately 6,000 km road network, for which the length of each road of course only counts once.

It is highly misleading to quote the length of bikeways and roads next to each other in the Annual Report in this fashion.

Expansion of the network to 1,700 km was planned in the “Brisbane Active Transport Strategy – Walking and Cycling Plan 2005-2010”.<sup>20</sup> This stated: “The Walking and Cycling Plan includes policies and actions for increasing walking and cycling. The plan sets out the expansion of the bikeway network to 1,700km. This requires another 1,150km (265km off-road paths and 885km of on-road).”

The benchmark in the Draft Brisbane Vision 2031 is still 1,700 km.<sup>21</sup> One of the “targets” is “by 2031, Brisbane’s bikeway network will exceed 1,700 kilometres”<sup>22</sup>. With the current metric, this could be achieved simply by painting another 600 kilometres of BAZ yellow bicycle stencils. Existing substandard facilities could be left as they are, with no impetus to bring them up to standard. CBD BUG considers that new projects such as the Toowong to Indooroopilly and CBD to Carindale and Wynnum/Manly bikeway corridors should only be considered improvements to a benchmark if they add to the separated bikeways length. There needs to be a much more critical set of goals and metrics for their achievement than currently exists.

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<http://www.jcu.edu.au/soc/bug/resources/BCC%20Active%20Transport%20Strategy%202005-2010.pdf>

21 <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-strategy/vision-strategy/Brisbane-Vision/our-accessible-connected-city/index.htm>

22 <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-strategy/vision-strategy/brisbane-vision/draft-brisbane-vision-2031>

The “Brisbane Active Transport Strategy, 2012-2026”<sup>23</sup> states: “Our active transport vision for Brisbane is to create a high quality, connected, accessible pathway network which will attract people of all ages to walk and cycle.” CBD BUG has noted that Brisbane has the lowest percentage of female commuters of all eight capital cities at 18% and strongly commends the vision of Council to provide facilities to attract people of all ages. However, this vision will only reach fruition if the bikeway network is connected and separated from motor traffic where the level of hazard warrants it. Many people, especially females, continue to express that they want to cycle, yet are afraid to, and afraid to let their children ride.

Where does this figure of 1,700 km come from? Is it based on any sort of standard or risk assessment? Or is it simply a multiple of the figure when the goal was set, e.g. double? To critically address cycling amenity and safety, one place to start would be to measure cycling desire routes that need risk mitigation. What is the length of that? This would include roads that have no mitigation, and those which need existing facilities upgraded. Then, a goal could be set every year, planning would be much more rational and progress could be measured and communicated much more meaningfully.

*By claiming Brisbane has 1,100km, Council sends the message:*

- *to those that don't and will never cycle, that plenty has already been done*
- *to cyclists, that we are getting a 'good deal' when we're not*<sup>24</sup>

Bikeways such as the Bulimba shared path provide outstanding recreational opportunities. However, commuting safety will always be neglected as long as facilities are sub-standard or non-existent in areas such as around the Mater Hospital, and the Northern Cycleway. CBD BUG suggests that instead of a focus on the total length, Council could be measuring a proportion of what is needed (for example, we have now reached 60% of recreational goals and 10% of commuter goals).

There also needs to be a focus on the connectivity of bikeways – for instance, the excellent facilities of the Bicentennial and Western Freeway bikeways are let down by having sub-standard facilities on Sylvan Road connect them. The CBD BUG is aware of a multitude of examples where cycling facilities start and stop without any connection to the broader bikeways network. The appendix provided with this letter provides just a tiny sample of these.

## **Open data**

Brisbane City Council has committed to “open data”. For example, the “Digital Brisbane” strategy claims that the Council has “a commitment to developing open data access as the resources, budget, and technology opportunities arise.”<sup>25</sup> The Brisbane Datastore website is said to “demonstrate Council’s commitment to transparency.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/active\\_transport\\_strategy\\_2012-2026.pdf](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/active_transport_strategy_2012-2026.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.brisbanecyclist.com/forum/topics/1-100-km-figure-from-bcc>

<sup>25</sup> [http://issuu.com/brisbanemarketing/docs/digitalbrisbane\\_strategy\\_final](http://issuu.com/brisbanemarketing/docs/digitalbrisbane_strategy_final)

<sup>26</sup> <http://data.brisbane.qld.gov.au/index.php/about/>

However, removing the classifications (as in the Table 1) from the bikeway data between the 2011 version (data.gov.au)<sup>27</sup> and 2014 version (data.brisbane.qld.gov.au)<sup>28</sup> worked against this. It made it impossible to determine how much of the new “bikeway” length was Bicycle Awareness Zones and other “on-road” classifications. This has also made academic research more difficult. A paper on CityCycle (submitted) evaluated the use of CityCycle stations by the length of nearby “bikeway” infrastructure depending on the 2011 classification of that bikeway.

Such a classification could also be of great use to app developers seeking to provide the safest route for new cyclists to ride, in the case of a trip planning application. We call for the Council to honour its commitment to open data and add these classifications back into the 2014 web version.

### **Better reporting**

We understand the data on which the “1,100 kilometres of bikeways” claim is based is actually for asset management purposes, and through misinterpretation or miscommunication has been inappropriately used to determine the total length of bikeway network usable by people riding bikes. This needs to be addressed by refocusing the plan on what is needed, so that progressive achievement can be measured and communicated.

Nevertheless, on the basis of the analysis now to hand it is clear the claim of Brisbane City Council having delivered “1,100 kilometres of bikeways” should no longer be used.

It is a regular complaint by less enlightened motorists that cyclists should stay off the road and use the available bikeways. With the apparent overstatement about the availability of these facilities, it should not be surprising that many people question why cyclists do not use the bikeway network and also the value of Council having invested in this allegedly extensive network.

We look forward to your responses on our call to discontinue the misleading and counterproductive description of the bicycle network, and to establish a new, rational, risk-based way of measuring what is required, what has been achieved and what remains to be done.

Yours sincerely

Dr Richard Bean  
Co-convenor  
Brisbane CBD BUG  
11 April 2014

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<sup>27</sup> <http://data.gov.au/dataset/bikeways-briisbane-city-council>

<sup>28</sup> <http://data.brisbane.qld.gov.au/index.php/dataset/bikeways-2/>

## Appendix

The following pictures from around Brisbane all demonstrate infrastructure which is counted in the “1,100 kilometres” figure.

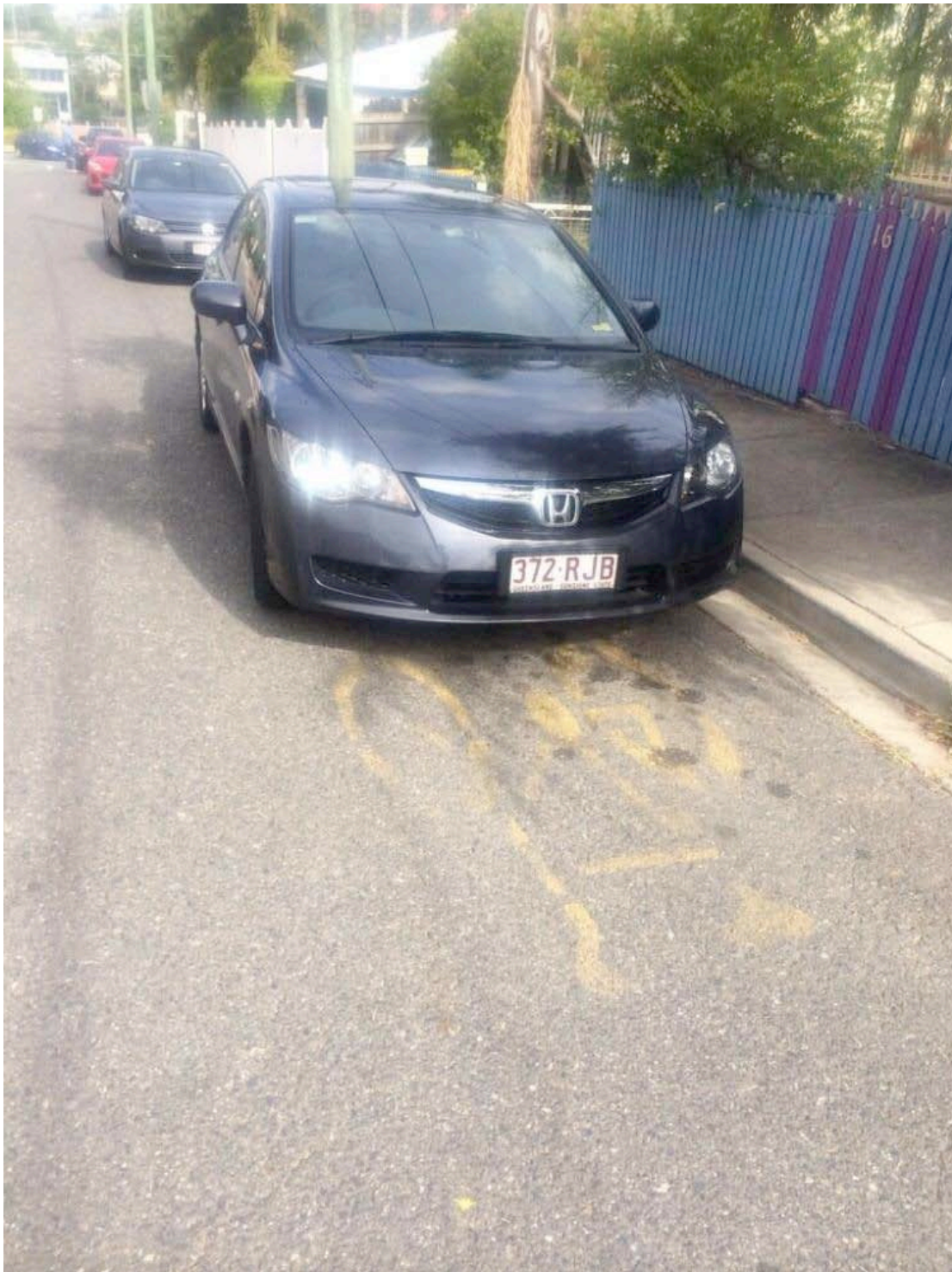


Moggill Road, Taringa. A bike lane disappearing in the middle of a 60 km/h zone.



Bridge Street, Albion. A “bike lane” becoming a “bicycle awareness zone” in a 60 km/h zone.





Albert Street, Woolloongabba. A “Bicycle Awareness Zone”.



Brunswick Street, New Farm. A signed “bicycle lane” with on-street parking. As noted in the Parliamentary Inquiry into Cycling, Queensland is the only state not to adopt the text of Australian Road Rule 187 which forbids parking in signed bicycle lanes.



Kedron Brook Bikeway, March 2014 after rain. Much of Brisbane's dedicated bikeway network is built on floodways.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Also see

- <http://surlesfleurs.tumblr.com/post/77891328841/a-strip-of-paint-does-not-safe-infrastructure>
- <http://surlesfleurs.tumblr.com/post/71907915841/another-example-of-the-kilometres-of-worthless>
- <http://surlesfleurs.tumblr.com/post/70861225259/i-know-lets-build-a-bicycle-lane-and-have-it-end>
- <http://surlesfleurs.tumblr.com/post/67297589019/here-in-brisbane-we-have-some-great-infra-and-some>