



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

CBD BUG

GPO Box 2104, Brisbane 4001

convenors@cbdbug.org.au

0423 974 825

www.cbdbug.org.au

The Honourable Scott Emerson MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads
GPO Box 2644
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister

This letter seeks your advice about two issues of concern to the Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group (CBD BUG), arising in relation to Queensland's current two year trial of a minimum overtaking distance (MOD) rule for a motorist passing a person riding a bicycle.

Before turning to these issues, the CBD BUG must first commend you for the two year MOD rule trial. Queensland's trial of this rule is a very welcome change. This trial marks a major change in direction for Queensland's road rules which have, until now, been designed to facilitate the motor car as the dominant transport mode for commuters. The era of the motor car as Queensland's major commuting mode is coming to an end, after 60 years of dominance. This is inevitable, no matter what road rules apply, because of long-term increases in energy costs, changes in the nature of employment and evolving lifestyle choices of Queenslanders.

The CBD BUG has two main concerns about the MOD rule's two year trial. The first relates to the public awareness campaign undertaken about this change to the Queensland Road Rules. The CBD BUG is aware that this campaign comprises messages via communication media including: back of bus and taxi, internet, television and newspapers. However, the relatively brief duration of this campaign has limited its effectiveness in creating broad-based motorist awareness of the new rule.

There was already evidence of the lack of motorists' knowledge of the road rules as they apply to cyclists (*Review of the Australian Road Rules and Australian Vehicle Standards Rules: discussion paper*, National Transport Commission, October 2011, page 80, <http://ntc.gov.au/filemedia/Reports/ARRAVSRpaper.pdf>).

Because the MOD awareness campaign was so brief it is unlikely that many members of the community were exposed to the key message sufficient times to influence their behaviour. Queenslanders who were out of the state on even a brief holiday, or interstate residents who were not in Queensland at the time of the campaign would be unlikely to be aware of the change.

Furthermore, the public awareness campaign for this rule trial is not even available on your department's YouTube channel, (<https://www.youtube.com/user/TMRQld>). This has occurred despite your department having briefly screened a television advertisement. You may also be interested to know that your department's YouTube channel does not have any videos focusing on cycling or motorists' responsibilities to cyclists.

CBD BUG members have reported their perceptions that overtaking behaviour by motorists has improved. However, we are aware of the possibility of confirmatory bias in these perceptions; plus there have been plenty of motorists claiming they are not aware of the new rule.

We note the parliamentary committee's report *A new direction for cycling in Queensland* recommended (Recommendation 11) that an integral part of the introduction of the MOD rule should be an "extensive community awareness campaign both prior to, and following the introduction of the new minimum overtaking distance regulations and that this campaign incorporates humanising cyclists in a way the general public can identify with them". The CBD BUG is firmly of the view that the public awareness campaign for the trial of the MOD to date has not met this recommendation in terms of either its duration or the humanising of bike riders that was recommended in the report.

Recommendations 12 and 13 in this report are also relevant to the implementation of the MOD rule trial. We would appreciate advice of the efforts taken by your department to implement these recommendations, which include MOD signs at Queensland's borders, working with motoring organisation such as the RACQ and the Taxi Council Queensland, and seek your assurance that these measures will be genuinely undertaken as part of the MOD rule trial.

The CBD BUG's second concern about the MOD rule two-year trial arises in relation to the trial's evaluation. The methodology to be used to evaluate the outcomes of the current two-year trial of the MOD rule is of critical importance to CBD BUG members.

The committee's Recommendation 2 states that "The Committee also firmly believes that programs aimed at improving cycling participation and safety must be underpinned by robust mechanisms for program evaluation and assessment. The Committee is recommending that the Queensland Government investigate methods for improving the reporting of cyclist incidents and injuries as well as cyclist participation baseline data".

The committee also recommended that TMR should:

- "...address the current lack of centralised data collection and reporting for on- and off-road cyclist injuries and fatalities" (Recommendation 3)
- "... explore mechanisms to encourage and facilitate bicycle-related incident reporting, particularly where safety issues and potential breaches of the Queensland road rules are involved." (Recommendation 4) and
- ".....develop a strategy to better document the incidence of bicycle-related injuries on roads in order to target appropriate interventions more effectively." (Recommendation 5)

The CBDBUG is encouraged by information on your department's website (<http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/tmfranch/roadruleschangesbicycles.pdf>) that independent advice about how the trial should be evaluated will be sought; and that it is expected the evaluation will consider the practicability of the rule, road users' attitudes and perceptions and road safety benefits.

We look forward to contributing to the independent advice you plan to solicit. Because we represent the numerous people riding bicycle riders into and in the Brisbane CBD we have a depth of experience of riding our busiest commuter routes. This experience will be invaluable in informing you on methods of evaluating this critical change to Queensland's road rules.

Yours faithfully



Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CBD BUG
12 June 2014