INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF ROAD SAFETY BEHAVIOURS ON VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

Organisation: Yarra Bicycle Users Group

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Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee:
Inquiry into the impact of road safety behaviours on vulnerable road users

Submission by Yarra Bicycle Users Group, May 2023

Yarra Bicycle Users Group[1] is based in naarm Melbourne in the inner suburbs of Abbotsford, Alphington, Burnley, Carlton North, Clifton Hill, Cremorne, Collingwood, Fairfield, Fitzroy, Fitzroy North, Princes Hill and Richmond. We advocate and promote cycling, lobby for cycling infrastructure, low emissions transport and work towards a safe, comfortable, fit for purpose bicycle network for everyone aged eight to eighty, as age should be no barrier to riding a bike.

Since 2008 Yarra Bicycle Users Group Radio[2] has broadcast a weekly half hour radio program and podcast on 3CR Community Radio[3], sharing hundreds of bike moments, interviewing hundreds of guests, promoting rides and cycling events, alongside raising awareness about active transport campaigns and advocacy that simply won't heard anywhere else in mainstream media.

Since 2020 to the present, road user behaviour has anecdotally and statistically[4] changed directly, and sometimes, indirectly, to lengthy interruptions from Victoria's covid-19 lockdowns then subsequent economic and social pressures[5].

The final week of submissions to this inquiry is also UN Global Road Safety Week[6]. In this same week, in Melbourne's west, a truck collided with a school bus at Eynesbury with horrific results[7]. To that, the Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee must act upon this inquiry.

From a cycling perspective, too many vehicle drivers now appear to ignore soft controls:

- Not observing vulnerable road users position in the road environment, eg, driver inattention and/or distraction,[8] [9] [10],
- Moving erratically[11] or speeding inappropriately to gain on or pass cyclists,
- Ignoring intersection traffic signals and directions[12],
- Intimating both pedestrians[13] and cyclists on who has right of way and,
- Aggressively not giving cyclists enough minimum passing distance, which is now law in Victoria[14].

[1] https://www.yarrabug.org/
[2] https://www.3cr.org.au/yarrabug/
[3] https://www.3cr.org.au/
[4] https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/statistics/lives-lost-year-to-date
[5] https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/project/behaviour-change-impacts-of-covid-19/
[6] https://www.who.int/campaigns/un-global-road-safety-week/2023
[7] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-19/exford-school-bus-crash-community-rally-fundraising-support/102364588
[8] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-04-15/driver-wanted-as-fitzroy-north-cyclist-in-hospital/102227292
[9] https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/news/west-gate-tunnel-project/response-to-footscray-road-cyclist-fatality
[10] https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/cyclist-dies-after-collision-with-truck-in-cbd-20220517-p5am7k.html
[11] https://www.racv.com.au/royalauto/transport/cycling/bikespot-survey-results.html
[12] https://7news.com.au/travel/victoria-traffic/yarraville-truck-drivers-flouting-night-and-weekend-curfew-in-melbourne-c-651766
[13] https://7news.com.au/news/vic/young-female-pedestrian-hit-on-melbourne-road-in-critical-condition-c-10525056
[14] https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/accused-driver-to-face-charges-after-hit-run-on-cyclist-in-noble-park-20230419-p5d1rj.html

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The 2020 announcement of VicRoads Pop-up bike lanes program[15] was literally a breakthrough in how road authorities can assist build safe, inclusive and equitable infrastructure[16].

Unfortunately the program itself was underfunded and weakened by the Department of Transports own lack of commitment, combined with opportunistic wedge politics[17] at local council level across Melbourne[18].

The programs and data already exist to create a safe inclusive road environment in Victoria, the Principal Bicycle Network[19] has existed in theory for decades and more recently the development of Strategic Cycling Corridors[20] prove that the solution exists.

What is required immediately is ongoing annual budget allocation and the political will at State Government level[21].

Solutions with step change to decrease inappropriate road user behaviour:

- Change Victorian driver licence questions to include awareness of vulnerable road users like pedestrians, micro-mobility users and cyclists[22],
- Change the road hierarchy, refer to the recent UK The Highway Code[23] changes,
- Multimodal transport mix[24], the best throughput for moving people is public transport not a increased reliance upon cars,
- Build appropriate pedestrian infrastructure and separate bike lanes[25], as studies repetitively show, more people will walk and ride[26] when it is safer and convenient for them to do so[27],
- Commercial ebike and escooter operators to improve geofencing solutions and end of trip corrals to be placed in car parking spots paid for by the operators, not on public footpaths[28]
- More enforcement of the minimum passing distance laws[29],
- Make all non arterial urban roads a maximum of 30km/h[30]

Often authorities attempt to make vulnerable road users responsible for their own safety by neglecting to invest in infrastructure or penalising inappropriate behaviour of larger, faster road users. The Victoria Government and local councils can do more in this space to protect vulnerable road users.

Thank you,

Chris Star
On behalf of Yarra Bicycle Users Group

[15] https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/traffic-and-road-use/cycling/pop-up-bike-lanes
[16] https://www.3cr.org.au/yarrabug/episode-202102011000/talking-about-heidelberg-road-pop-lanes
[17] https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/pop-up-bike-lanes-ripped-up-stalled-despite-cycling-upswing-20210506-p57plz.html
[18] https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/news-and-media/removal-and-changes-to-pop-up-bike-lanes
[19] https://vicroadsopendata-vicroadsmaps.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/vicroadsmaps::principal-bicycle-network-pbn/about
[20] https://dtp.vic.gov.au/getting-around/walking-and-cycling/strategic-cycling-corridors
[21] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-22/how-paris-will-become-100-cyclable
[22] https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/european-commission-proposes-updated-requirements-driving-licences-and-better-cross-border-2023-03-01_en
[23] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code
[24] https://www.goget.com.au/blog/multimodal-transport
[25] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S136984782300061X
[26] https://bicyclenetwork.com.au/our-campaigns/fair-go-pop-up-lanes/
[27] https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/social-affairs/why-cycling-lanes-should-be-fast-track-cities
[28] https://streets-alive-yarra.org/e-scooters/
[29] https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/road-users/cycling-safety
[30] https://30please.org/