Cycling Safety in Australia

NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY FORUM | TONY ARNOLD
The Australian Bicycle Council and The National Cycling Strategy
The National Cycling Strategy

Primary goal of the National Cycling Strategy is to:

*Double cycling participation*

The economic benefits of cycling have been calculated as:
- $1.43 per kilometre cycled, per person
- **$14.30 for every commute of 20 minutes each way**

The link between cycling and safety:

*Doubling participation improves safety*

Safety in numbers (Smeed’s Law) dictates that increased participation will lead to greater safety. This may be due to either/and/or:

• Increased driver awareness of bicycle users.
• Increased social pressure on cycling behaviour through norms.
• The demographics of bicycle users changes from a risk-taking minority to a main-stream cross-section.
• More people cycling means better infrastructure is built.

*Either way, safety improves…*

The link between cycling and health:

**Doubling participation improves health**

Even without the “safety in numbers” effect, population health is improved because health benefits outweigh the negative affects of road trauma.
How Safety Affects Cycling Participation
Concerns about safety top the list of barriers to cycling for transport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason not to ride for transport</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe road conditions</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed/volume of traffic</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t feel safe riding</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of bicycle lanes/trails</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination too far away</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No place to park/store bicycle</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 more reasons…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Heart Foundation, Cycling Promotion Fund, *Riding a bike for transport*, 2011
How Safety Affects Cycling Participation

Actual Safety vs Perceived Safety

People are bad at judging actual safety and rely on cues to determine how safe an activity is.
Actual Safety vs Perceived Safety

Who *feels* safer?   Who *is* safer?
Who actually *knows* whether they are safer?
Ensuring that bicycle users feel safe is the key to increasing cycling (and capturing the benefits).

We need to improve actual safety and we don’t want to discourage the activity by making people perceive it as unsafe, risky, strange or difficult.
WHAT CAN WE DO?

Safe Systems Approach
More than 75% of cycling fatalities in Australia in 2013 involved a second vehicle.

Source: BITRE Australian Road Deaths Database
Safe Roads/Infrastructure

• Build a bicycle network that is separated from motor vehicles

Good infrastructure improves **actual safety** (which is a primary goal for safety practitioners)

The related improvement in **perceived safety** has an even greater effect on cycling participation by making people *feel* safer.
Safe Systems Approach

Safe Speeds

- Lower speed limits.

i.e.

40 km/h school zones.
40 km/h limits in town centres.

Many places in Europe have already moved to 30 km/h.
Safe Systems Approach

Safe Vehicles

A better way to encourage compliance while encouraging cycling is to hand out (or fit) free bells and lights. This is also a good opportunity to share behaviour change messages.

Photo: City of Sydney.
Safe People
All road users break rules. Bicycle users are no different. Some road users threaten safety more than others.
Safe Systems Approach

Safe People

A 2013 study by the University of Adelaide’s Centre for Automotive Research showed that: “In 79% of cases the driver of the vehicle was deemed to be at fault for the crash.”

Source: University of Adelaide Centre for Automotive Research, VL Lindsay, Injured cyclist profile: an in-depth study of a sample of cyclists injured in road crashes in South Australia, 2013.
Safe Systems Approach

Safe People - Improving behaviour

• Teach drivers to care for pedestrians / bicyclists.

Source: *Metre Matters* (Amy Gillett Foundation), *Look Out, People About* (City of Sydney)
Safe Systems Approach

Safe People – Improving competence

• Teach riding skills (particularly to children).
Safe Systems Approach

Safe People – Marketing

• Normalise and legitimise cycling.
• Show ordinary people in ordinary clothes.
• Show the human side by showing faces, smiles and eyes (remove sunglasses).
• Show a range of riders: young, old, male, female.

To improve cycling safety and to action the National Cycling Strategy...

Encourage cycling participation...

If a program may discourage cycling, consider other options.
Thank you...

Tony Arnold – Executive Officer
Australian Bicycle Council
tarnold@austroads.com.au
02 9283 3389