

Personal choice and community impacts- Mandatory Bicycle Helmets

To whom it may concern,

I'm deeply concerned the negative impact mandatory helmet law (MHL) has had, and continues to have, on cycling in Australia.

I'm hoping this nanny state law will urgently be reviewed and removed for current and future generations. Cycling should be an everyday activity for everyone just like walking, running or swimming, as it is all around the world. Bike share in Dublin is a great success whereas in Melbourne it is not, thanks to MHL. Its not an extreme sport requiring safety gear!

In itself, cycling is definitely not dangerous. There are many factors to enhance cycling safety if desired, these being infrastructure and driver and rider education . Not mandatory helmets. The image of cycling Australia has been tarnished as a dangerous activity and forcing helmets has hampered casual cycling greatly.

(see attached study, page 11, line 22, http://www.researchgate.net/publication/241529683_Cycling_for_Everyone_Lessons_from_Europe)

The sport, sweaty commuter or MAMIL rider has not been hampered by this law as a helmet is part of their uniform of special shoes, Lycra gear and glasses as they seek speed. And this has further exacerbated the problem as the average Australian doesn't cycle and cant relate to the sport cyclist at all.

Why am I so passionate about having a choice of cycling helmets? Personally, Ive been cycling very regularly over 33 years without a helmet, and without accident or injury. I cycled to school in my younger years, and to workplaces as I got older. Even owning a car and motorcycle, I still prefer to cycle to some destinations for the feeling and efficiency of this fantastic mode of transport. It is the most efficient way to move a human being!

Its economical, good for my mental and physical health. Its important to note I never wear any special clothes or shoes etc. I wear my 'normal' clothes like jeans and a shirt, or business pants and shirt. I don't ride a sport or fitness style bicycle. I ride slowly on my heavy upright bicycle. A helmet definitely gives a false sense of security as I see many helmeted riders riding too fast for conditions. They feel safe with a helmet., when can easily die with a helmet or have horrific injuries!

I don't appreciate being classed as a criminal in Australia because I choose to not wear a helmet in my business attire or casual clothes.

I have no risk to myself or others health or well being, due to my experience and slow speed I cycle. 33 years. How many years do I need to cycle before my opinion matters? I'm not anti helmets, I think they are great for mountain biking off road, down

hill racing, and fast road racing ie cycling over 50 km/hr. However, cycling walking or jogging pace is not dangerous, and does not need a helmet.

Ive been to court once regarding not wearing a helmet, and would go again, simply because I love cycling so much. Without a helmet.

I cycle daily, illegally without a helmet, to my local train station 3 km away, in urban Melbourne. Its flat. How many other cyclists do I see? None. Thousand upon thousands of cars, most with only 1 person in them. At the large train station of Oakleigh (its very flat all around oakleigh) I counted 22 bicycles locked up one day at 4pm on a weekday. Some of those have been there weeks. Its very sad that the bicycle is no longer used by many. They drive. They catch a bus. A friend lives closer to the station than me, but catches the bus as he wouldn't think of cycling with a helmet. Also my wife and parents in laws and many other friends don't cycle due to the law. Very sad.

It shouldn't be like this, and its not all around the world. Why? the nanny state MHL has excluded many people from cycling!

Our motherland capital London has a successful bike share, as there is no nanny MHL. Madrid. Tokyo all cycle much more because no MHL. The country with the most cyclists, has the lowest use of helmets and the lowest rate of injuries. The Netherlands.

A helmet isn't a magic bullet to cycling safety, but the nanny state mentality states it must be this way! why be ignorant?

People compare seat belts to helmets. No. A care weighs 1000kg-3000kg and travels at 100 km/hr. A bicycle weighs 12 kg and traveling 10 km/hr is not going to kill the rider or pedestrian if theirs an accident. Simple physics of forces dictate this.

Another brief comparison id like to make regarding personal choice. People get to choose to swim , surf, fish or walk near water.

Over 280 on average die every year, over the last 10 years. (see lifesurfing australia) Does that mean we need a nanny law, forcing a Mandatory Life jacket law for those swimming, surfing , fishing and walking near any body of water ? Why do they get to assess ocean conditions and skills but cyclists cannot?

Likewise a person can choose to smoke, with no health benefits, or over eat, with no health benefits, but I cant choose to cycle carefully to the milk bar with the wind in my hair at walking pace?

I would like to be involved in any way possible to reverse the MHL law for myself and my children's sake.

Regards

Luke "loves cycling casually without Lycra" Ruskin