

Personal choice and community impacts

Mandatory Helmet laws should be removed for riding unpowered bicycles.

The subject of choice around wearing a helmet when riding a bike is one that needs a careful re-examination. Australia prides itself in being fit and active and yet it prevents a large number of people from actively engaging in cycle activity due to the mandatory helmet laws.

Surely this issue is one that government should not get involved in. In the decade or more that this law has been in place, we have not seen any major benefit in forcing people on bikes to wear a polystyrene hat.

There is plenty of evidence in other countries where no helmet laws are in place, that people choose to wear one..

Why can't Australia trust its citizens to assess their circumstances and make that choice for themselves.

Evidence in Europe also suggests that motor vehicles give more space when passing a helmetless rider as they perceive the vulnerability of a person on the bike more keenly.

There is also evidence that women perceive riding a bike as dangerous due to the requirement to wear a helmet, removing the requirement encourages female participation.

Any barrier to participation should be removed, and if it prevents healthy activity such as riding a bike to work, or for transport, the cost to society should be noted.

The impact of reducing the numbers of people using bikes for transport by forcing them to wear a helmet is also increasing the risk to other people who do ride bikes. Safety in numbers. The more bikes on a road makes other road users expect to see them and take them into account when travelling. Being on the lookout for vulnerable road users makes it safer for those not in motor vehicles to use the roads.

We do not have mandatory helmet laws for car drivers or passengers even though there is more risk of head injury ..