

References

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Cycling safety in Victoria

by staff of VicRoads, compiled by Juliet Reid, Project Manager, Cyclist and Pedestrian Safety

The Victorian Government is currently making a substantial investment of an additional \$115 million over 12 years towards cycling infrastructure in support of the *Victorian Cycling Strategy* [1], which was launched in March 2009. The strategy has a vision for cycling as a safe, readily available, convenient and preferred transport option for Victorians. It aims to develop and improve bike paths, lanes and other facilities, as well as running campaigns to promote road rules around bicycles and the shared use of Victoria's roads.

Improving cooperation between cyclists and other road users is a key element in increasing road safety for cyclists. The *Victorian Cycling Strategy* includes a priority action to reduce conflicts and risks for cyclists, in the short term, by:

- clarifying the road rules and communicating them more effectively to road users
- building positive attitudes and mutual respect between cyclists and other road users
- developing a guide for local communities to help them conduct bicycle safety campaigns and activities
- conducting a traffic compliance campaign around road rules related to bicycles.

A strong commitment has been made towards road safety with the state government's *Arrive Alive: Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2008-2017* [2] aiming to drive down the road toll by 30 per cent by 2017. This includes comprehensive measures to improve the safety of cyclists on Victorian roads.

Key issues for cycling safety

The key road safety issues to be addressed include the following:

- **Education and awareness.** There is a need for relationship building among all road users, in particular for improved recognition of cyclists as legitimate road users.
- **Speed limits.** Studies [3] show that lower speed limits significantly improve safety for cyclists.
- **Infrastructure.** Cycling facilities can be improved to encourage other road users to give cyclists plenty of space on roads or to separate cyclists from other road users.

- **Vehicle safety.** Vehicle design can be improved to reduce the severity of injuries sustained by cyclists in collisions with other vehicles.

Current activities relating to cycling safety

Victoria has many activities in place or in the planning stages to improve cycling safety. They are described below.

Cycle network

The Principal Bicycle Network (PBN) is a VicRoads network of cycle routes that provide access to key destinations within the Melbourne metropolitan area. The PBN is one of a number of cycling networks that make up the cycling infrastructure of metropolitan Melbourne.

A review of the PBN is underway to investigate new cycle routes with consideration given to cyclists' preferred travel routes and the SmartRoads planning tool. The review focuses on targeting inexperienced cyclists who may be more cautious road users. There is also an increased emphasis on separating cyclists from motor vehicles where possible, as well as minimising on-road dangers by taking measures such as reducing traffic speeds.

Space for cyclists

VicRoads recently endorsed profile line marking, which can be placed on the outer edge of a cycle lane to remind drivers to keep clear. Trials in inner Melbourne successfully enhanced cyclist safety [4] and led to an increased use of these locations.

Safer paths

VicRoads is preparing guidelines for new and existing off-road paths. The guidelines will determine the optimum widths of the paths according to volume of cyclist and pedestrian traffic.

Cyclist crashes

VicRoads recently commissioned a study entitled *Factors in Cyclist Casualty Crashes in Victoria* [5]. Analysis of police crash

data, hospital admissions and presentations, traffic infringements and coronial data found the following:

- The two most common types of severe crashes were ‘right through’ crashes (occurring mostly where a vehicle approaching from the opposite direction turns right in front of the cyclist) at 13 per cent and ‘intersection cross traffic’ crashes (where a vehicle cuts across the other vehicle approaching from the adjacent direction) at 9.9 per cent.
- Crashes occurring while emerging from driveway (mainly drivers emerging – 79.7 per cent) and off the footpath (mainly cyclists – 93.6 per cent) accounted for 16.1 per cent of cyclist fatal and severe casualty crashes.
- Only 59 per cent of cyclists were wearing a helmet in cyclist fatalities investigated by coroners.
- Twenty-seven per cent of cyclist fatalities investigated by coroners involved heavy vehicles.
- Only 42 per cent of children aged 0-9 were wearing a helmet in fatal and serious injury crashes reported by police.
- Police reported cyclist serious injury and fatal casualties increased annually by 9.5 per cent and cyclist traffic crashes resulting in hospitalisation increased annually by 10.6 per cent.
- Cyclists seriously or fatally injured were more likely to be aged 30-39 years.

Safe cycle

‘Safe cycle’ is an annual initiative of VicRoads and the Victoria Police to reduce bicycle collisions and injuries by raising awareness of bicycle safety issues. The 2009 campaign, which focused on using bike lights, wearing helmets and obeying traffic lights, proved successful. Only 4 per cent of cyclists were issued with a penalty notice during the campaign, even in areas with increased levels of surveillance.

Resources available

In addition to the Victorian Cycling Strategy described earlier, there are numerous resources available to promote and improve bicycling safety in Victoria. These are listed below.

- *Code of Conduct for Training Cyclists* [6] is a brochure developed in partnership with the Victoria Police and the Cycling Promotion Fund to encourage safe riding by cyclists, particularly when riding in groups.
- *Bicycle Helmets – Don’t Ride Without One* [7] is a brochure developed by VicRoads to promote the safe use of cycle helmets.
- The *Victorian Cycling Strategy Report Card* [8] provides details of the first year’s progress in achieving the Victorian Cycling Strategy initiatives.
- *VicRoads Cycle Notes* [9] are a series of design standards for cycling infrastructure intended for engineers, planners and cycling enthusiasts.
- *Bike Ed* [10] is a resource for schools to undertake bicycle training. It contains five modules ranging from ‘Getting started’ to ‘Riding on-road’.

- *Bike Ed Challenge Guide* [11] gives students an opportunity to test their bike riding skills in activities based on the Bike Ed program.

Future plans relating to cycling safety

To continue to improve cyclist safety, VicRoads is planning to undertake a market segmentation project. The goal is to identify the different types of cyclists to help subsequent communication with cyclists on road safety messages. The three key stages of the project are as follows:

- identifying target groups for segmentation
- developing key safety messages for the different segments
- developing specific tools to communicate the messages to the various segments.

Once the cyclist segmentation project has been completed, VicRoads will develop two campaigns. The first is a ‘Look out for cyclists’ campaign, which will clarify road rules related to bicycles and communicate these to road users. The second aims to build a better relationship between cyclists and other road users, with a focus on responsible cycling and driving and on strengthening the understanding of cyclists as legitimate road users. In the coming months, VicRoads will also develop a bicycle safety community guide to assist local communities in conducting campaigns that focus on cycling safety.

References

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