

The Australian Bicycle Council and the National Cycling Strategy

by Fiona MacColl, Executive Officer, Australian Bicycle Council

The Australian Bicycle Council (ABC) is the national body that manages and coordinates implementation of *The Australian National Cycling Strategy (NCS)*.

Over recent years, Australia has seen a significant growth in bicycle ownership and use. Australians are becoming increasingly aware of the convenience, enjoyment and widespread health and environmental benefits of cycling, and, as a result, initiatives to promote and increase this activity have been incorporated into many government agency programs within the portfolios of Health, Road and Transport, Education, Environment, Tourism, Sport and Local Government.

The NCS has been developed as a coordinating framework identifying responsibilities that lie with the various governments at all levels, as well as community and industry stakeholders, to encourage and facilitate increased cycling in Australia. It sets out actions, with targets, timeframes and resources that will ensure the continued growth of this important component of Australia's transport system.

The vision for the ABC and the NCS is 'more cycling, to enhance the well-being of all Australians', specifically through:

- increasing participation in cycling
- improving safety for cyclists.

Safety issues

The NCS has six priority actions, each with various required actions. Enabling and encouraging safe cycling [1] is the fourth priority, and requires the actions:

- Monitor and report on crashes involving cyclists, identifying type, number and severity of crashes.
- Support programs and initiatives that promote safe cycling to school and higher education, addressing both infrastructure and facilities requirements and promotional activities.
- Support developing and implementing cycle proficiency and safety programs for primary and secondary school students.
- Support developing and implementing behavioural initiatives that improve cyclist safety, such as programs to increase the conspicuity and helmet wearing by cyclists, and general compliance with road rules.
- Address cycling safety as a component of Black Spot funded works, including the recent history of crashes involving cyclists at relevant locations.
- Support initiatives, including reduced speed limits, that will support safer cycling by reducing motor vehicle speeds.

- Promote the benefits of cycling, using effective and safe routes, to support the National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010 aim of encouraging alternatives to motor vehicle use to reduce exposure to road trauma.

Current activities of the ABC

The ABC and its jurisdictional members have completed a number of initiatives over the past five years to increase safety for cyclists, both on- and off-road. A major resource that has recently been completed is the *Austrroads Guides* series [2], which have integrated cycling components throughout each of the series guides:

- *Guide to Asset Management* – Part 2
- *Guide to Project Evaluation* – Part 8
- *Guide to Road Design* – various parts
- *Guide to Road Safety* – Part 6
- *Guide to Traffic Management* – various parts.

The ABC has helped to facilitate the development of a national cycle proficiency training program, now called AustCycle [3], that provides a nationally accredited cycle training program for both adults and children, with a particular emphasis on developing road safety skills in participants. Other ABC activities include the development of a research report on *Pedestrian-Cyclist Conflict Minimisation on Shared Paths and Footpaths* [4] with a series of practical factsheets [5] for designers and planners; and endorsement of the Bikeability Toolkit [6] developed by the Bicycle Federation of Australia.

Cycling safety is integral to the promotion of cycling for both pleasure and transport. If cycling is not perceived to be safe, then it is destined to remain a peripheral activity deemed suitable only for the 'road warriors' of society, rather than a mainstream everyday activity or optimal mode of transport.

Future cycling safety plans for the ABC

Further cycling safety resources and collaborative activities will be developed in conjunction with the next *Australian National Cycling Strategy 2011-2016*, due for release in January 2011. As this next strategy is still in draft and as yet not endorsed, the exact nature of the future cycle safety activities of the ABC cannot be specified. However, it is envisaged that future research and resource development of the ABC, under the auspices of the *NCS 2011-2016*, will be along similar lines to the current strategy's outcomes to enable increases in cycling participation by the community.

References

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The Amy Gillett Foundation 'A metre matters' campaign and other initiatives

by Tony Fox, CEO, Amy Gillett Foundation



What is 'A metre matters' and why is it so important? 'A metre matters' is the current national cycling safety campaign run by the Amy Gillett Foundation that aims to improve awareness of cyclists on our roads.

The Amy Gillett Foundation

The Amy Gillett Foundation was formed in 2006 after the tragic death of Australian cyclist Amy Gillett, who was hit by a car whilst training with the Australian Cycling Team in Germany. The objective of the Foundation is to decrease death and injury caused by the interaction of cyclists and motorists, and we have created a number of campaigns and programs to help achieve this.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Foundation was to commission Monash University to compile data on bicycle and motor vehicle crashes, with the aim of better understanding how these accidents occur. Based on police data, this report [1] highlighted a number of pertinent issues:

- The majority of accidents occurred on weekdays (80%) and during peak hour times (56%).
- Most accidents were in daylight (82%) and on dry roads (92%).
- The majority of accidents occurred in situations when motorists should have been aware of the cyclist, with 21% of accidents involving vehicles travelling in the same direction, 28% involving manoeuvring vehicles and 29% involving vehicles coming from adjacent directions at intersections.

This analysis of police data suggested that drivers' lack of awareness of cyclists, and the inadequate space that drivers provide to cyclists on the road, is an important factor in cyclist safety. These findings underpinned the creation of the 'A metre matters' campaign, which asks motorists to provide an extra metre of space on the road for cyclists. See Figure 1. Whilst this campaign requests an extra metre, it is as much about general awareness as it is about specific distance.

With the support of Continental Tyres and a number of media outlets, the campaign has achieved very broad reach to date, including the following national initiatives:

- Television advertising through Channel Ten, OneHD and a number of Foxtel channels
- Cinema advertising through Val Morgan
- Roadside billboards in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane (See Figure 2)
- Approximately 6500 'A metre matters' cycling jerseys distributed across all states
- Wide distribution of merchandise products such as car bumper stickers.



Figure 1. Graphic from 'A metre matters' campaign

As a result of this visibility, the campaign has gained significant support, including a petition to the Queensland Government to legislate a metre as the minimum prescribed distance when passing a cyclist, potential council road signs and various online campaigns supporting the program.

The Amy Gillett Foundation and Monash University PhD scholarship

Research remains the best way of defining what the risk factors are for cyclists on our roads. Whilst there is relevant data and research regarding crash characteristics, very little is known about the causes of these accidents. This is the focus of a research PhD funded by the Amy Gillett Foundation and Monash University, and currently being undertaken by Marilyn Johnson.