

Truck drivers on bicycles: insights from the first year of vulnerable road user training for heavy vehicle drivers on major projects

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Abstract

Sharing Roads Safely is a driver training course focused improving safe interactions between heavy vehicle drivers and vulnerable roads. Based on the best practice program from the United Kingdom (CLOCS), Sharing Roads Safely was adapted for the Australian context by the Amy Gillett Foundation in collaboration with Rail Projects Victoria and in consultation with stakeholders from across the construction and logistics sector. Piloted in September 2018, the program is now being conducted regularly (industry rostered days off) and includes three modules (online, facilitated workshop, walking and cycling (on-road)). This paper details the content of the course and feedback from drivers and insights from the first year of course delivery.

Background

Heavy vehicle activity in Victoria, particularly in areas of inner Melbourne, is increasing to unprecedented levels to support over 40 major transport projects currently being built (Major Transport Infrastructure Authority, 2019). These projects, valued at \$38 billion, are estimated to increase heavy vehicle movements by one additional truck movement every three minutes for five years (Ross, 2018). This increase raised concerns about public safety, particularly in the urban areas where there are an increasing number of vulnerable road users that is people walking, cycling and riding motorbikes.

In anticipation of the increase in interactions between heavy vehicles and vulnerable road users, the Victorian State Government formed three working groups to focus on action to improve safety in relation to heavy vehicles safety (Truck Standards), traffic management and planning, and behaviour (Engagement and Behavioural Influence). The program that is the focus of this paper, Sharing Roads Safely, is an outcome from the behaviour working group.

***Sharing Roads Safely* – developing an Australian program**

The Amy Gillett Foundation was commissioned by Rail Projects Victoria (RPV, then MMRA, Melbourne Metro Rail Authority) to develop a comprehensive training program focused on vulnerable road user safety for heavy vehicle drivers. The aim of the program was to ensure that all drivers engaged in Metro Tunnel related projects would have the knowledge, skills and attitude required to recognise, assess, management and reduce the risks that their vehicle may pose to vulnerable road users including pedestrians, cyclists and motorbike riders.

The development of the program was undertaken in several stages. First, was a comparative review of existing courses. This desk-based analysis was completed and included the following courses: Safe Urban Driving (as part of the UK program CLOCS), Victorian Bus and Truck Drivers' Handbook (VicRoads), Safe Heavy Vehicle Driving Behaviours (Sydney Metro) and two existing driver training programs delivered by the AGF to Toll drivers (Sharing the road safely with cyclists and Sharing the road safely with bike and trucks). In addition, one program from New Zealand (Share the Road) was also review in discussion with course delivery providers. The review included the course administration, an overview of all course components and a detailed analysis of the content and activities related to all three vulnerable road user groups.

Following the review, and in consultation with staff from RPV and industry stakeholders, specific adaptations required for an Australian audience were identified including changing to language, terminology (e.g. change 'Changing streetscapes' (UK) to 'Helping our cities grow') and inclusion of local content (e.g. Australian road rules).

Next, the program content was developed based on three sequential modules. Based on the AGF's experience delivering driver training to Toll and to expedite the training process, an online component was developed (Module 1). This 20-minute course provided an introduction to the Safe System approach, established the importance of vulnerable road user training and included information and practical advice for key scenarios (e.g. safe passing distance, very vulnerable pedestrians and filtering for motorbike riders). Drivers are required to answer knowledge check questions throughout the course and four final test questions.

Module 2 is a classroom based, facilitator-led workshop. Across two hours the drivers participate in a mix of discussion and interactive activities that covers five topics:

- Introduction and ice-breaker: includes an opportunity to drivers to discuss their experiences on the roads with vulnerable road users
- Helping our cities grow: a short review of the online module and a reminder that everyone has a responsibility for road safety and the course is not about blame, but about making sure that mistakes do not cost people their lives
- Vulnerable road users: discussion about vulnerable road users, very vulnerable road users, how to avoid locations with a high number of vulnerable road users
- Sharing our roads: practical actions and advice about key scenarios when driving involving pedestrians, cyclists and motorbike riders
- Vulnerable road user safety equipment: activity based discussion on key safety equipment being added to trucks during the major projects

In addition, at the request of the industry stakeholders, two original pieces of film were created. These short videos tell the stories of fatality crashes that involve vulnerable road users and a heavy vehicle. In the first video, a truck driver and his supervisor discuss the day he was involved in a fatal crash with a motorbike rider. In the second video, the family member of a cyclist killed in a crash with a truck talks about the circumstances of the crash and the long-term impact of that crash on the cyclist's family.

Module 3 is an on-bike component that includes a short skills test, then an on-road bike ride along a designated route. This experiential component literally puts a driver in the bicycle seat. Their exposure to the experiences of a cyclist and a pedestrians helps to solidify the online and classroom content. Following the ride, drivers return to the classroom for a debrief and discussion.

Driver experience

All drivers complete a feedback evaluation at the end of the day. To date, the response has been positive. At the end of the training, drivers report that they have a better understanding of issues faced by vulnerable road users (60%) and a third would consider cycling to improve health and fitness.

Safety outcomes

We will continue to monitor the safety outcomes of drivers who attend the course. Evidence from the UK program, has shown a 47 percent reduction in casualty rate after implementing CLOCS (CLOCS, 2018). Over time we will be able to evaluate the safety outcomes for drivers following their participation in *Sharing Roads Safely*.

References

- CLOCS Construction Logistics and Community Safety (2018). Accessed 28 February 2018 at <https://www.clocs.org.uk/>
- Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (2019). Victoria's big build. Accessed 28 February 2019 at <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/about>
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