

Issue 143, July–August 2001

BISA's mission: To promote cycling for transport and to represent all cyclists at the local, state, and national levels by working collaboratively with other interest groups and governments.



AGM guest speaker Kym Dorrestyn describing European cycling facilities

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Pedal Update

Peter Carter, Editor

No, we're not late: remember the new timetable for this journal and *Australian Cyclist*.

Items in this issue look at the effects trucks have on our roads, both the roads themselves, and the community with financial and social and personal costs. Seems to be an industry off the rails, as it were.

We also have another look (the right one this time) at urban speed limits. Every time I ride in town I see more reasons why that whole area should be a 40 km/h zone. Something to keep working on.

As well, we have news of a success in having a council do the right thing by enforcing its no parking rules in bike lanes, and a brief report of the Cycling for Pleasure 25th Anniversary celebration. On the other hand, Harry Owen is still mired in the mud in the South Road underpass: some action needed there.

So it's winter. So what? Still good cycling weather.

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President's Report

Terry Leach

I write this report at what I hope is the end of a horror stretch on our roads. The last two weeks have seen an incredible number of collisions involving trucks, and I've just heard about that shocking hit-run that resulted in a cyclist dying.

As a firefighter I witness first hand the carnage on our roads, I've been to two fatalities in the past month alone. It makes me both very sad and very angry. Road safety initiatives can only do so much. It's hard to see how any program could prevent the sort of incomprehensible indifference to human life as that hit-run.

These events made me very susceptible to a poignant story that I received over the Internet this week. A man was collecting some clothes for his wife, and took an item of clothing she had been saving for a special occasion. He thought the occasion was special enough, his wife was being dressed for her funeral. The message in the tale was to treat each day as special, to take the opportunity for joy often, and not to neglect the truly important matters, the people we love. We often won't get forewarning that time is up. It's hard to believe it can't happen to you when it just happened to the person you're cutting out of a mangled car.

On to cycling matters...

I attended the launch of the Coastal Park a couple of weeks ago at Henley Beach, which will eventually see a continuous network of on and off road paths along the entire suburban coast line. It's great to see state and local governments co-operating to integrate their service delivery.

Adelaide City Council has given cycling lanes a profile with green lanes popping up on areas where cars tend to infringe on the lanes. Unfortunately, I witnessed many cars still infringing on the lane over the Albert Bridge next to the zoo on Frome Road, despite the clear visual indication. I've spoken with staff at the ACC regarding the need to also provide tactile line marking (marking which makes a thrumming noise when driven over). Hopefully this will soon be installed. Other locations for the green lanes are Brougham Place and Le Fevre Terrace.

ACC is also constructing a bike path between Barton and Park Terraces, paralleling the bus link, as well as doing some work on the southern end of King William Street. While this last treatment is not ideal, it should see a defined space between angle parked cars and the traffic lane.

I attended a meeting of the Road Safety College to provide input into their deliberations on

the implementation of the National Strategy in SA. The key message that I promoted was that lower speed limits and better enforcement of those limits was the best way to help vulnerable road users, and that all road users are vulnerable. Sandra Kanck was in attendance, and seemed interested in the idea of reduced fines for a reduced tolerance as a way to reduce speeds. There was also broad support from attendees for a better road funding model that would recognise the true cost to the community of road freight, so that more freight would go by rail. Given the performance of the road freight industry in June, we hope that this issue will gain more political support.

I also attended the Ride To Win program awards program, which has been very successful this year, with participation up by nearly 250%. Next season should be even better, with some country councils and nearly all metro councils being involved. Many thanks to the staff at Life. Be In It for managing such a successful event on our behalf, and also to the many BISA members who are workplace co-ordinators.

Wishing you enjoyable and safe riding.

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No truck with trucks

Terry Leach

Recently I read in the *Sunday Mail* about the trailer that left the prime mover on the freeway, seriously injuring four people in an oncoming car. If they had died a media frenzy would have erupted. But they were ‘only’ injured, so it was a bit of a two day wonder.

A response to the article in the Letters section the following week was some woman being overly sensitive and insensitive at the same time. She was complaining that the journalist reporting the accident had described the victims — all in their fifties and sixties — as ‘elderly’. The correspondent and her husband were in that age group and objected to the description.

Four people lying seriously injured in hospital through no fault of their own, and she is worried about a damn adjective! What has our society become that we can become so blasé, so blinded to the reality of a tragedy.

The following morning I attended a fatality involving a car and a semi-trailer. No prizes for guessing which driver died. I was lucky to be relieved from duty before the extrication occurred, and was spared the trauma involved.

I can’t speak specifically about the circumstances of that case, as charges have been laid. But a frequent scenario is a truck driver falling asleep after driving while fatigued. If this is proven a driver would probably face a relatively short custodial sentence. The victim’s family will complain that the sentence is a joke when compared to the life that was ended. But the general community can rest easy that they are being protected, and that the guilty are being punished. If only.

The reality is that at least two lives ended in any such incident. Truck drivers involved in fatalities are usually just your average blokes trying to earn a living, not murderous thugs. Victims of the industry as much as the people who died, but their suffering will last a lifetime.

An industry in a purely competitive environment has driven wages down to the point where many drivers need to drive unsafe hours and pop pills to stay awake, while the large corporates sit back and count the increased profits from reduced transport costs. Drivers involved in fatalities may suffer guilt, post-traumatic stress, the trauma of jail, the difficulty of a criminal record and a general lack of sympathy for their circumstances.

If the trucking industry was required to pay for the horrific toll it takes on the community, it would go out of business. If it was required to pay for the damage it causes to the road pavement, then customers would send more by rail, as it would be more competitive. Studies have clearly shown that there is a subsidy by car drivers and short haul rigid-body trucks to the heavy transport industry. The heavier the vehicle, the greater the subsidy, the greater the risk to the community. A transport system that allows, requires, someone to drive a 40tonne rig for 12 hours at 100km/h, passing oncoming flimsy cars within two metres, is designed to take life. This is particularly so when you have limited enforcement of the already inadequate controls, and low wages that require non-compliance for drivers to make a living.

We need to separate people and freight in our transport system as much as possible, and that means that interstate freight should go by rail. But the road transport industry is very good at lobbying. The fact that the Road Transport Association found it necessary to sponsor John Laws to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars indicates how much they need to suppress and manipulate public opinion.

The politicians seem unwilling to take on the road transport lobby, more so now with the threat of One Nation. The RAA tinkers around the edges of the system, seeming to see the RTA as a kindred spirit, an ally to help extract more road funding from the government. The commercial media are unwilling to address this issue, given that the perpetrators of this system are major advertisers. And hardly anyone listens to shows such as Background Briefing on Radio National when they covered this issue in depth some months ago.

We need a better model. We need to start by guaranteeing owner-drivers a decent wage, which would immediately shift some freight to rail. We need to move away from one driver doing interstate runs, to drivers taking one rig four hours from his base, and taking another one back. We need to recognise sleep patterns, and not allow them to drive through the night. We need a funding model that removes the subsidy from the heaviest freight. We need a compensation model that would force the cowboys out of the business by higher insurance premiums. Once we get that far, the restructured rail freight would have the volumes necessary to invest in better infrastructure so that they are time and price competitive.

We would also then have greater fuel efficiency, less greenhouse gasses, and less fuel imported. So what can you do? Writing to your state and federal representative, expressing your concerns, would be a good start. Help provide the political will to reform our transport industry.

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Cycling For Pleasure Group celebrates 25th Anniversary

Alan Marriage

On Sunday 24 June the Cycling For Pleasure Group, South Australia's oldest recreational

cycle group, celebrated the its 25th Anniversary with a Progressive Lunch Ride. On a bright winter day they had soup at Mitcham, main course at Brighton and finished with dessert and cake at Glenelg.

The President read a letter of congratulation from the Bicycle Institute of SA and complimented the Club on still following the principles of the original founders of Cycling For Pleasure. The ride programme of moderate to medium rides includes historical tours and visits to places of special natural interest. He expressed his satisfaction that the club had introduced so many people to the pleasures of recreational cycling to improve their health and to provide them with a new social framework. With an 80% membership attendance on the day, the club has a bright future. He then cut the cake for everyone to share.

Yet another Cycling for Pleasure experience.

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Speed Limits

Philip Hewitt

The *Australian Cyclist* (Feb/March) contained an informative article about speed limits by Michael Yeates. Speed limits were also mentioned in *Pedal Update* and I feel compelled to add a few more lines about road conditions in Adelaide.

Currently the ‘built up area speed limit’ is 60 km/h. Other speed limits operate when sign posted, i.e. 10 km/h in shared use zones, 25 km/h in school zones, 40 km/h in local area precinct schemes and 80 km/h on some main roads.

There is a South Australian Parliamentary Joint Committee on Transport Safety considering Traffic Calming Schemes (Suburban Speed Limits) at the moment and submissions have been made by various bodies and individuals to:

- retain the built up areas speed limit of 60 km/h and continue using 40 km/h local area precinct schemes (often referred to as the residential speed limit), or
- introduce a general urban speed limit (GUSL) of 50 km/h with main roads signposted at higher speed limits.

On 7 December 2000, the Honourable RB Such introduced the Road Traffic (Speed Limits in Built-up Areas) Amendment Bill. It is now anticipated that this Bill will be withdrawn and replaced with the Australian Road Rules (Speed Limits in Built-up Areas) Variation Bill 2001. This latter Bill sets the default speed limit as 50 km/h in the Adelaide metropolitan area (instead of 60 km/h) on all roads not signposted with a speed limit.

The impact upon transport in the Adelaide metropolitan area will vary dependent upon the speed limit. For instance, if a 40 km/h speed limit were to be introduced as a GUSL, there is a real possibility that main roads would be signposted with their current speed limits of 60 km/hr or 80 km/h. This would provide very little safety benefit to cyclists using main roads.

If a 50 km/h GUSL were introduced, a number of the inner metropolitan main roads that are narrow and congested or running through shopping precincts (e.g. parts of Unley Road) may also default to the 50 km/h speed limit. If this should occur there would be real benefits for

cyclists and pedestrians on these roads.

A reduction of the GUSL to 50 km/h would create a large speed differential to main roads with an 80 km/h speed limit. Dependent upon the connection of these main roads to the surrounding streets, it may be desirable to reduce these speed limits to 70 km/h, again providing safety benefits for cyclists.

A 50 km/h GUSL would allow the continuing use of 40 km/h local area precincts where congested or dangerous road conditions exist. Some examples would be Jetty Road in Brighton, Glenelg and Largs Bay or local streets providing major pedestrian or cycle links to shops, community facilities, schools or public transport (e.g. roads in the Adelaide Hills often have no constructed footpaths, or the footpaths are in disrepair or obstructed by vegetation forcing people to walk on the road).

The 199596 Austroads study into Urban Speed Management in Australia had a number of recommendations. Three important to this discussion are the:

- reduction of the GUSL to 50 km/h,
- retention of local area precinct schemes of 40 km/h, and
- reduction of the tolerance set on speed detection devices.

The last recommendation is important. Many drivers know that they can drive up to 10 km/h faster than the speed limit without receiving an offence penalty. It is possible that a reduction of speed limits from 60 km/h to 50 km/h and a reduction of speed detection tolerance from 10 km/h to 5 km/h would reduce average speeds from 65 km/h to 50 km/h on main roads. This would provide real significant safety benefits to pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle occupants.

It is important for speed limits to be considered on a ‘whole of network’ approach to maximise the effectiveness of the new speed limit hierarchy and tighter speed detection measures. The new conditions for using roads must be adequately explained to the community to ensure everybody understands the benefits and their responsibilities to share the road with all other road users, not just other drivers.

Apology

Terry Leach

In the previous edition an article was incorrectly included, and attributed in error to Philip Hewitt. This error occurred during the attempted conversion of a file into a suitable format, and in the process another file was accidentally forwarded to the Editor. BISA apologises to Phil, and regrets any embarrassment caused. The correct article is included in this edition.

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Still ankle deep in mud!

Harry Owen

The June–July issue of *PU* (No 137) had a short article on the flooding of the South Road underpass adjacent Sturt Creek. The underpass provides safe cycle access to the Veloway and

is used by residents of the nearby housing development to access public transport. In the next issue of *PU* (No 138) was a letter from the Transport Minister, Di Laidlaw MLC explaining how Transport SA was negotiating with the City of Marion ‘to enable permanent rectification works to be undertaken’.

So what’s been achieved by the combined might of Transport SA and Council since the temporary work on 15 June 2000? A sign has been installed indicating a) the path gets flooded and b) the mud is slippery! This isn’t quite what I expected from the ‘permanent rectification works’.

When it rains and for several days afterwards I, and other cyclists, have to cross South Road because the path still floods and is left thick with mud. At least we have speed on our side, unlike the pedestrians who have to run across eight lanes of 70 km/h road or walk more than a kilometre to get to their bus stop using the nearest light-controlled crossing.

This is a good example of what makes cyclists sceptical of politicians’ rhetoric. In 1858 the stink of sewage in the Thames was so offensive that it drove Members of Parliament from the House of Commons and Government was forced to act. I wonder if things would be different here if the Minister or decision-makers in Transport SA or the City of Marion or their children had to cross South Road at this point?

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A cyclist makes a stand

PL Sampson

It was suggested to me to contact you regarding my recent success in managing to reduce the amount of errant parking in William Street Mile End, the main feeder off Sir Donald Bradman Drive connecting to the Westside Bikeway.

Since late last year I have been contacting council (West Torrens) to try to get this road’s bike lane (active 4–6 pm) policed. As a commuting cyclist, I use this road daily, and rarely ever get to use a clear bike lane. Council said the signage was wrong and had to fix this prior any parking fines, and this took a few months.

After seeing a near miss with a cyclist in this street (a fork lift on the road: unloading in the bike lane) I enlisted the help of Bike South, who contacted council several times, and in fact visited the area with the council’s bike co-ordinator. As this is an industrial area, you get many trucks parking here, including tow trucks that park across the bike lanes regularly, forcing cyclists to the centre of the road: until recently.

Council is now enforcing the No Parking 4–6 pm, and booked 15 vehicles in the first week, including large trucks.

It took a bit of tenacity to get this bike lane policed, and it was pointed out to me that many cyclists do not actively stand up for their rights. You get run off the road, cut off by a bus, or harrassed, and do nothing, and this does nothing to help other cyclists. I believe all cyclists should stand up for their road rights, including reporting to police where necessary, and perhaps this may help attitudes towards cyclists. I hope this encourages other cyclists to make a stand on cycling issues in their area. It may seem like trying to turn the Titanic in the

Torrens, but it won't turn if you don't start.

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Cool Communities

Every home makes a difference

A new project is under way to reduce greenhouse gases in the community. The project, called Cool Communities, will provide information and resources to help ordinary families cut emissions and save money.

Cool Communities is a joint initiative of non-government environmental community groups from each state and territory and the Australian Greenhouse Office.

The aim of the program is to work with communities in each state and territory, developing practical ways to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Initial funding for the project is two years.

A community might be the residents of a local government area, members of a local community organisation (such as a church, sporting group or residents association), people living in public housing, households interested in renovating, etc.

While the focus will be on actual reductions of greenhouse gas emissions, the project will also identify ways in which relevant policies and programs can be improved so as to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The formal launch of Cool Communities is expected in July 2001, followed by national advertising calling for expressions of interest from communities who'd like to be involved. Prior to this, Cool Community Facilitators will be making contact with key groups and stakeholders.

The Conservation Council of South Australia is running the Cool Communities project in South Australia. The Council is keen to hear from:

- Community groups that may wish to become involved
- Existing or planned greenhouse gas reduction programs that may help Cool Communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information, please contact:

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The fallacy of availability

Peter Carter



BISA member Dr Paul Jewell addressed a recent meeting of Skeptics (SA), looking at the need for critical thinking and skepticism in a democracy. One example of his ‘fallacy of availability’, the notion that something ought to be done because it is agreeable or easy to do, was the compulsory helmet legislation. Governments wanted to improve safety for cyclists, and helmet legislation was easy. Has it increased bicycle use and improved safety?

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