



## ***Bicycle Network Mandatory Helmet Review***

### ***Opinion of Julie Rudner, Senior Lecturer, La Trobe University***

1. *Do you believe it should be mandatory to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle? (If you believe it should be mandatory at some times but not others please describe when.)*

No

2. *What's your reasons for your answer to question one?*
  - 1) *For distances too far to walk, especially in areas with poor public transport, cycling offers an alternative to car use with regard to achieving longer distances and at a better speed than cycling;*
  - 2) *When bicycle helmets were introduced, the number of people cycling decreased and never returned to previous levels (Pucher et al, 2010: S114);*
  - 3) *A greater proportion of the population is at risk of chronic disease rather than acute injury or death by cycling – which is costly to personal and social health, as well as health costs;*
  - 4) *There are different types of cycles, cycling purposes and infrastructure used e.g.: family cycling on off-road pathways, commuter cycling, mountain and road cycling... not all cyclists will encounter traffic, move with or through traffic. In addition, many cyclists will select to wear or not wear a helmet according to confidence and conditions;*
  - 5) *Although injury might increase due to absolute numbers of cyclists on the road, the greater presence of cyclists will also act as a potential protective factor because drivers will become more accustomed to sharing the road – currently there are issues with harassments (Heesh et al 2011);*
  - 6) *People are often less careful when playing, exercising, driving, as greater trust is placed in the protective gear – supporting concepts of 'risk compensation theory' (Adams & Hillman, 2001)*
  - 7) *Research indicates that drivers drive differently around cyclists depending on helmet use, perceived gender, etc... which suggests*

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Level 4, 246 Bourke Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

234 Crown Street  
Darlinghurst NSW 2010

210 Collins Street  
Hobart TAS 7000

Suite 5, 18-20 Cavenagh  
Street Darwin NT 0800



- drivers are more cautious when they perceive potential greater harm to the cyclist or greater unpredictability (Walker, 2006);*
- 8) *Focusing on helmets diverts attention away from addressing the transport system e.g.: speed limits, inappropriate hierarchy that places drivers and cars before cyclists and pedestrian & and driver's attitudes that are maintained more due to socio-cultural and political issues instead of evidence based on accident statistics and case study evidence from overseas (Fildes et al., 2005 – see below);*
  - 9) *A key issue for parents with regard to children's mobility and cycling is traffic and driver behaviour (Rudner, 2012);*
  - 10) *There are equity issues: lower income people might not be able to afford updating helmets, since helmets must be replaced regularly due to knocking or dropping to be effective & furthermore, poorer people are least likely to be able to pay fines if riding without a helmet.*

Despite the demonstrable safety benefits of reduced travel speeds, Australasian speed zones are amongst the highest in the world. Given this situation, it was decided that any lowering of speed limits likely to lead to significant reductions in road trauma, would still need to leave speeds high enough to be acceptable to Australasian road users, transport agencies and decision-makers.

(Fildes et al., 2005: VI – Austroads Report)

3. *Do you provide consent for your opinion to be made public?*

Yes

4. *If no, are you happy if we say you provided an opinion but didn't want it made publicly available?*

Yes

Signed: 

Date: 12 October 2017

Please send completed form to [craigr@bicyclenetwork.com.au](mailto:craigr@bicyclenetwork.com.au) before 5pm, Friday 13 October, 2017.

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Street Darwin NT 0800

Freecall: 1800 639 634  
[bicyclenetwork.com.au](http://bicyclenetwork.com.au)