

From:
To: [Select Committee on Personal Choice and Community Safety](#)
Subject: Submission to the Select Committee, Personal Choice and Community Safety
Date: Friday, 5 October 2018 10:01:25 AM

Dear Ms Wells,

I have some thoughts on issues to be considered by the Select Committee. Could you please treat this as a public submission for the Committee's consideration.

I'm not a libertarian per se, but do as a (very broad and qualified) rule oppose legal measures which restrict liberty in the name of an individual's perceived 'own good' unless the good thereby achieved is readily apparent and quantifiable. In some cases there exist large question-marks over outcomes and/or inconsistencies versus tolerance for other, comparably harmful situations. My particular concern is bicycle helmet legislation; my objections break down as follows:

1) it is widely contended that helmet laws greatly reduced the numbers of people regularly cycling. It's also often argued that numbers have increased again since then, but it seems a fair bet that a lot of people are still put off - I'm among them! At the minimum, the law should recognise context. I do not believe I should be required by law to wear a helmet in order to (slowly) ride my (inherently safer) recumbent bicycle. 80% of my riding was done on safe cycle paths and the remainder was to and from those paths along quiet secondary roads. I'm not out to set any personal bests and I'm at low risk of collisions involving motor vehicles. Riding can be hot enough work as it is and while I'd use a helmet on busy roads or for rugged off-road riding, it's simply not a reasonable requirement in safer circumstances;

2) if the contention is true, this has obvious implications for cardiac health, cancer, and health in general, as discussed at length in the media and the scientific literature (I'll forgo the usual list of online citations);

3) there are concerns over possible aggravation of rotational injuries resulting from use of bicycle helmets. Cycling helmets aren't built like motorcycle helmets; their soft surfaces enable them to 'dig in' to rough ground surfaces and this can contribute to some of the more severe categories of brain injury. I'm aware this particular topic is very hotly debated and this is only a personal POV, but having come off both bikes and motorbikes, I'm far more confident in the ability of a motorcycle helmet to offer effective protection;

4) given that head injury is the most common form of fatal road trauma, it's an inescapable conclusion that four-wheeler motorists are favoured under the law. A consistent and rational approach would require mandatory helmets for all road users. The current situation selectively coerces people on the basis of their status as a minority.

I would not dream of riding my motorcycle without a proper motorcycle helmet, but the current bicycle helmet laws don't pass my personal test of reasonableness and to the extent there's any expert consensus on the matter, my impression is that it seems to be moving in that direction also.

I applaud the government's decision in 2016 to allow use of Euro-standard motorcycle helmets. As a result of this change I am now wearing a significantly lighter and safer helmet made by a French manufacturer; it also features the best field of view of any helmet I've had and I no longer risk unreasonable consequences from the law.

This change was very much appreciated and I hope to see similar reasonable moves in respect of bicycle helmet rules.

Thanks for your time!

Best regards,
Martyn Griffiths



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