

From: [Richard Stallard](#)
To: [Select Committee on Personal Choice and Community Safety](#)
Subject: Bicycle Helmet Legislation should not be watered down.
Date: Monday, 17 December 2018 4:45:25 PM

A partial relaxation of bicycle helmet laws, such as not requiring helmets when riding on a path, is illogical for a number of reasons.

Firstly, a helmet is more likely to protect against serious injury or worse in the minor crashes which are may occur when riding on a path, such as hitting a pedestrian, dog or another cyclist. Falling from a bike, even when stationary, can result in a fatal head injury, as is amply demonstrated by numerous deaths from "one punch" attacks where the victim hits their head on a hard surface. Studies have shown that cyclists involved in serious crashes, usually involving motor vehicles, often die from multiple injuries, such as damage to internal organs, and not just a head injury, so a helmet is less likely to protect a cyclist who is involved in a serious crash.

Secondly, it is rarely possible to complete a bike trip, whether for practical purposes or recreation, which is 100% on paths, as the path network simply does not extend to all residences, shops, workplaces, etc. Virtually all paths involve crossing roads or driveways at multiple locations, so it is unrealistic to say that riding on a path removes the risk of collisions with motor vehicles.

I would also argue against a relaxation in the law just for adults, as it would become harder to get children to accept helmet wearing if they see adults, including possibly their own parents, not wearing helmets.

Although I have chosen to always wear a bike helmet since 1985, I was not in favour of the compulsory helmet legislation when it was introduced in 1992. However, I feel that having endured a generational change of people growing up with the legislation, the majority of people now accept that wearing a helmet is part and parcel of going for a bike ride. Most of the people who objected strongly back in 1992 were of the older generation whose cycling days are now over for one reason or another.

Also, the design of helmets has vastly improved since those days, in terms of being much lighter and better ventilated, so many of the arguments about discomfort, etc. are no longer valid. As well, quality helmets are much cheaper now, even without taking into account inflation since that time.

I strongly feel that any partial "watering down" of the current rules would be illogical and detrimental and would undermine the widespread acceptance of helmet wearing which has been achieved since 1992. Therefore, any change to the current rules should either be "all or nothing".

My background:

During the 1990's and early 2000's, I actively participated in a voluntary capacity in various road safety forums including the WA Bicycle Committee, the Main Roads WA Vulnerable Road User Task Force, the Main Roads WA Bicycle Transport Working Group, the RAC Road User Consultative Committee, and the Victoria Park RoadWise Committee. During this period I was the President of Cycling 4 Pleasure, a recreational cycling club and, subsequently, the Convener of the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, a

cycling advocacy group the paid membership of which peaked at over 1000.

From 1994 to 2004, I did consulting work as BikeSafe Bicycle Planning Consultants for many clients including local governments, Department of Transport and Main Roads WA. Consulting projects included Perth Bicycle Network (PBN) Local Bicycle Route surveys, design of signage for PBN Local Bicycle Routes, developing the first Road Safety Audit Checklist for pedestrian and cycling facilities, and developing training courses about infrastructure for non-motorised transport.

I was also an accredited Senior Road Safety Auditor and carried out numerous Road Safety Audits with an emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian safety.

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Richard Stallard