



Speech By
Bruce Flegg MP
MEMBER FOR MOGGILL



23 May 2013

Queensland Parliament - Private Members Statement

Road Safety, Cyclists

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (3.46 pm): The roads of our cities are for the use of all of our citizens. A recent court decision throws into serious doubt the view held in some parts of the community that existing road laws are adequate to protect cyclists on our roads. Last year, on a notoriously congested, narrow, inadequate and dangerous stretch of Moggill Road, between the Kenmore roundabout and Chapel Hill, a wonderful young life was lost when Richard Pollett, a gifted young musician, was fatally injured by an overtaking truck. The truck was 2.5 metres wide. The lane where Richard's body was found is 3.1 metres wide and is only 3.4 metres wide at its widest point.

What more stark illustration could there be that a metre matters? Under the law in Queensland, a bicycle is a vehicle which has the same right to use the road as every other road vehicle and is therefore obliged to abide by the same rules as every other road vehicle. Richard was doing the right thing by traffic on that road by keeping to the left to make it easy for small vehicles to pass him. He could have legally ridden in the middle of the lane of traffic. The court's decision to dismiss the charges against the truck driver would appear to be through a loophole in the Criminal Code, which states that a vehicle, including a truck, can overtake a cyclist without allowing any particular margin providing the driver of the vehicle has a reasonable belief that it is safe to do so. There is now no question that existing laws do not adequately protect cyclists.

When I was asked to sponsor a petition by Mr David Sharp from Safe Cycling Australia, I did not hesitate to do so. I have always believed that legislation which prescribes a minimum distance when overtaking should be introduced to protect cyclists. A distance of 1.5 metres is good practice and good courtesy. One metre should be the barest minimum allowed by law. It is not safe to overtake if there is not a distance of at least one metre. Over 4,000 people have already signed this online petition, and I urge members and the community to get on board and sign it at the parliamentary website.

Whilst you can get an idiot on a bike, just as you can get an idiot in a car, I cannot stress strongly enough that the vast majority of car drivers and truck drivers are safe and responsible, as are the vast majority of bike riders, who try to minimise the inconvenience caused to traffic.

Whilst the road toll has dropped in the last decade, bicycle deaths in Queensland have not. There are around 6,000 cyclist emergency department presentations per annum in Queensland, most of them children. This is a large human toll. The economic cost to the state is \$450 million annually. If we want to save lives and save the huge human toll of very serious injury, the government and the community need to act. We do need better bicycle infrastructure, particularly in the western suburbs, and I note that the push to legislate is strongly supported by the Amy Gillett Foundation, which is also doing wonderful work for bicycle safety.

(Time expired)