

Safer Local Roads – Bicycle NSW Recommendations

Bicycle NSW recognises the need for improvements in safety on local roads and we have prepared suggestions that, for a relatively low investment of resources, could make a significant positive impact on road safety in NSW.

Small changes to reduce hazards and confusion

Some NSW road rules and road markings create confusion for all road users and hazards for bike riders, but straightforward amendments could make local roads safer.

Roundabouts present a hazard for bike riders when:

- bike lanes suddenly vanish, in the hope drivers will allow a rider to merge into the traffic flow and negotiate the roundabout. Many drivers will not allow a rider to merge, and riders get stuck or hit.

Solution: Lane markings for merging car lanes provide clear instructions to drivers, and these need to be applied to bike lanes to give riders right of way to merge.

- Rule 119¹ requires bike riders to give way to any vehicle leaving the roundabout. This is impossible to do safely as the car could be indicating behind the rider's back whilst they are in the roundabout, and the rider needs to focus on the road ahead and vehicles beside them.

Solution: This rule needs to be removed so that rule 114² applies, and the driver behind is required to slow and give way to the bike rider ahead of them in the roundabout. This is less confusing, safer and easier for the rider to comply with.

Door zone bike lanes

Many of the bike lanes in NSW that riders are supposed to stay in on local roads, are immediately adjacent to the driver's side door. Too often drivers fling their door open without looking, injuring a rider in the lane, or pushing them in front of a car travelling behind them.

Solution: If fully separated cycling infrastructure cannot be provided, we recommend the bike lane and car parking be reversed, so that parked cars protect the bike lane, and if a passenger 'doors' a rider they are pushed onto the footpath.

NSW Road Rule 74³ and dual bike lanes

The NSW Road Rule 74⁴ does not provide for bicycle path users crossing a road to have the "right of way" over traffic in the road. When side streets intersect dual direction bike lanes, drivers wishing to cross should give way to riders, and should be alerted to look both ways – unless signals are provided.

Dual direction bike lanes are a relatively unusual feature of NSW roads, and often have a more diverse ridership – with more families and newer riders. Installing shared environment intersections and four-way give way treatments creates confusion as to who has right of

¹ NSW Government, NSW Road Rules 2014, [Online 26/8/2020]
<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2014/758/part9/rule119>

² NSW Government, NSW Road Rules 2014, [Online 26/8/2020]
<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2014/758/part9/rule114>

³ NSW Government, NSW Road Rules 2014, [Online 26/8/2020]
<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2014/758/part7/div3/rule74>

⁴ Also January 2020, Technical Direction 2020-03 Shared environment intersection treatment

way. This ambiguity is likely to lead to errors, collisions and actually introduces a hazard for all road users.

Lack of intersection priority even at minor streets makes the operation of separated paths unattractive and potentially dangerous to riders wanting a cycling journey with fewer stops and consistent speeds, resulting in a disincentive to cycleway use.

Solution: Change the Road Rules to allow for the possibility of a true priority separated bike path, subject to implementation guidelines such as exist with pedestrian crossings, to encourage use of paths and so help keep users safe.

Road Rule 129 - Keeping to the far left side of a road

NSW Road rule 129 requires everyone to drive as near as practicable to the far left side of the road, except motorbike riders. This forces bike riders to ride in the area of the road with storm water grilles that trap tires, debris, crumbling road shoulders and reduces their ability to avoid potholes, oil slicks and obstructions. This contributes to single rider crashes on local roads.

Solution: Where a bike lane is not present, bike riders should be treated the same as motorbike riders and allowed to choose the safest part of the lane to ride in.

NSW Police are the key to safer roads

Currently bike riders are treated like car drivers when crashes occur, police do not need to attend the scene unless the rider is killed or it's a hit and run, and they currently don't get involved in crashes where riders aren't admitted to hospital. We deal with cases where riders sustain life altering injuries, crashes keep occurring in the same place, drivers with a history of persistent dangerous behaviour around bike riders.

Solution: To make roads safer we need NSW Police to take reports when riders are hit by drivers, to investigate all crashes where a motor vehicle driver hits a bike rider, and to take action, especially where there are repeated issues. Their evidence gathering and advice to Council traffic committees, the Centre for Road Safety could be game-changing in terms of improving safety on local roads in NSW.

Bicycle NSW appreciates the efforts being made to improve local road safety, and the opportunity to contribute to making NSW better for all bicycle riders.