

06/04/2010

G'day all,

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/victorian-employers-chamber-of-commerce-calls-for-bike-licenses/story-e6frf716-1225849400870> - copy below.

Usually it's a motoring group or a frustrated newspaper editor drumming up a story. This time it's a Chamber of Commerce calling for bicycles to have licences and rego.

I'm surprised by this. I would expect Chambers of Commerce to want -

- reduced government taxes,
- reduced government employees,
- their own employees to be off sick less
- to encourage more people to get out of cars so that their business vehicles / delivery trucks don't get caught in so much traffic congestion and
- people to have more disposable income to spend on their local businesses.

But then I guess like most people, many business people are unfortunately ignorant of the broad benefits to the community of cycling, especially as a alternative transport mode to the car that most people have become such slaves to.

Cyclists pay for roads through Council rates and other taxes.

When are people going to realise that REGO DOES NOT PAY FOR ALL OUR ROADS! Rego is only a State tax that covers only part of the cost of STATE MAIN ROAD construction and maintenance.

"Firstly in Australia, motorists' registration fees contribute only partially to providing and maintaining roads. The cost of providing this infrastructure amounts to some \$7 billion annually. The annual registration fee revenue amounts to a much lower \$3.8 billion." -

http://www.vote4cycling.com.au/cms/uploads/benefits/information_sheet5.pdf.

I wonder if that \$7B included Council roads or was it only State & Federal main roads & highways? I wonder if it included the administrative cost of all the public servants working in rego offices & police checking rego details?

Besides that, most roads are actually COUNCIL roads and are paid for by EVERYONE who pays COUNCIL RATES - even cyclists pay council rates (either directly as land owners or via rent.). Many less confident cyclists only ride on relatively quiet Council roads and rarely go on the busy State roads anyway.

Cycling actually reduces government costs.

Health savings & benefits.

A Federal Government health report last year showed that CYCLING SAVES the Federal Government \$222.8M/yr (plus more for the States?) because of the health benefits of cycling. I wonder how much sick time costs small business could save if their workers cycled more and gained health improvements? Tony Abbott, Anna Bligh & Kristina Kennally who ride bikes and appear in good health should be aware of that one & are probably examples of it compared to

some polities, comedians & business people seen on TV that obviously don't ride bikes and have weight / health issues.

Other studies have also shown that people who ride to work are more alert and productive. My personal experience is that cycling to work gets my blood flowing and wakes me up each day. When I have had to drive to work on some major construction sites, I've needed more coffee, been less alert and got sick more often.

Road costs, road space and "free" parking.

"The NSW RTA valued the net benefit of cycling at 28.7c per bicycle kilometre in urban areas. Even with the relatively low levels of cycling in Sydney (less than 2% of all trips), the estimated economic benefit to Sydney was \$81m per year. (NSW RTA, 2003)."

This is probably just for RTA's Main Road construction and maintenance. I doubt it includes the health & other savings. I doubt they included the cost of local Council roads either. But RTA recognises that if people cycled more and drove less, then we wouldn't need so many traffic lanes and such wide pavement. So capital costs & the amount of land needed for roads could be reduced. Did you realise roads & car parking takes up about 40% of land in our cities! Bikes only need 1/10th the area and weigh far less (say 60 to 120kg including adult rider) don't cause any wear & tear on roads - it's cars (1,000 - 3,500kg) and trucks that cause the damage requiring most road maintenance. Road pavement thicknesses are designed to suit trucks axle loads, not cars. And it's the trucks that are the main road pavement killers & pot hole causers because of their high axle loads. Cars mostly only wear down the surface a bit.

Chambers of Commerce should be aware of the very high cost of providing "free" car parking in commercial & retail developments. Imagine the savings to businesses if more people rode bikes so less car parking was needed in developments? Or if existing sites could redevelop some of their massive car parking lots to retail space. America is now doing that already as people shop more locally and drive less to the big box stores. America, who started the car-centric development we suffer today, is now finding that their national vehicle mileage is actually dropping.

Queensland Transport (QT) -

http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/Home/Projects_and_initiatives/Plans/South_east_Queensland_principal_cycle_network_plan/

"For every car trip replaced with a bike ride, the community saves 60 cents per kilometre." - QT

Based on the average of 20,000km per year, every motorists should be paying \$12,000/yr in rego & fuel excise. But they only pay about \$600 in rego plus \$2-3,000 in fuel excise depending on the mileage. And then business gets rebates & deductions on that anyway and end up paying next to nothing for the whole car if they have good tax accountants!

"Motor vehicles are major sources of street level, urban air pollutants. Air quality related illnesses cost the SEQ economy as much as \$500 million per year." - QT

I wonder how much of that is in business sick time? It's been estimated that air pollution related illness kills 5x more people than car crashes. Mostly car exhaust & by the way, concentration levels are actually higher inside the car than outside it - very appropriate! - Uni of Sydney report & others world wide. For Sydney alone it's variously reported that somewhere between 600 & 2,600 people/yr die from air pollution related illness but it's very hard to quantify. According to news reports recently, there are now established links between air pollution & asthma. (I would have thought that was obvious but anyway.) Reminds me of the court cases about smoking and asbestos. Any lawyers ready to sue the oil & car companies?

"It takes two lanes of a given size to move 40,000 people across a bridge in one hour by using modern trains, four to move them on buses, 12 to move them in their cars, and only one lane for them to pedal across on bicycles."

-- Ivan Illich, *Energy And Equity*, 1974, p.62 -

A few of us once did a rough check on that and it's not far off the mark. Not only do bikes use much less space in our tight CBDs but -

- bike riders can't go on strike like train / bus drivers,
- heat waves causing power blackouts / failed railway lines don't stop bike riders (Melbourne heatwave train failures each summer),
- cracked bridges (Brisbane Riverside Expressway) / failed roads / car crashes (Qld M1 & most freeways) causing traffic jams don't hold up bike riders,
- bike paths are not a target for terrorists (Russia, England & Japan subways),

Bike facilities are far cheaper and the most reliable. So on which system are your employees most likely to be able to reliably get to work each day?

Traffic congestion & road rage.

I hate getting stuck in a car in traffic congestion! No wonder drivers suffer road rage being stuck behind all those other cars & trucks while sucking in exhaust fumes.

" BIKE OR BUS. Less SMOG, less NOISE & fewer cars to get in the way of MY car."
- T-shirt.

But rather than put up with traffic jams and whinge about bikes – encourage those who can to leave the car at home so they don't block your way!

Traffic jams are one of the reasons I like riding to work - I go at my pace, never get held up, get my exercise in the same time as travelling and can laugh along the way at everyone stuck in their tin cans stacked up in neat little rows :-)

User pays.

Although it would actually work against both cyclists and motorists, I'd happily pay say \$10? rego when purchasing a new bike to go towards State & Federal roads just to shut motorist up. (Yearly bike rego has failed as shown by many countries that have tried in the past, probably because of the administrative costs & policing difficulties.) But remember I already pay state & federal taxes that go towards road & car subsidies and I already pay rates for Council roads. Also remember that bike lanes act as a safety buffer / break down lane for motorists - so we'll share costs there in my system below.

I'm a fan of user pays. Rather than our current system of funding roads from general revenue that leads motorists thinking that they actually pay for and OWN the road through a tiny amount of rego but bikes don't, lets make it simple – you use it, it'll cost this much per km.

Unlike the VECCI system of just a rego fee & licences for bikes, lets have a real user pays system, I want the government to charge motorists what it really costs all of us tax payers to provide for cars.

- So that's at least \$0.30/km (NSW RTA \$0.287/km in 2003) just for travelling on roads to cover construction and maintenance. (\$3,600/yr for 12,000km) The best way could be to

- put electronic tolls on every main road and highway. Could also charge more for more expensive sections of road that way.
- Charge the trucks a huge rego or toll as per above based on weight & distance because road pavement design is based on truck weight and numbers. If roads didn't have so many trucks then construction would be much thinner/cheaper and maintenance would be far less. Yes it would cause consumer goods to cost more but that would be offset by the reduced taxes / subsidies and lead to a level playing field to achieve real transport efficiency. (We'd all be better off if freight was on rail for long distance & the railways were run efficiently.)
 - Charge drivers far more than they do now for traffic fines to cover the cost for the police patrolling the highway for all those rule breaking motorists (drunk, talking on phone, speeding, failing to indicate, failing to give way etc.) that make the roads so dangerous & the crashes caused by such poor driving. Cyclists & pedestrians would still have to pay fines like they do now but they would be lower because if they get it wrong they tend to kill themselves rather than other innocent people like car drivers do. (1,600 car crash deaths per year, the majority of which are innocent people killed by car drivers. The occasional pedestrian is very rarely killed by bikes. I've never heard of a car driver killed by a bike rider but there are if I recall correctly about 40 bike riders / yr killed colliding with cars and a report showed that in up to 75% of cases it's the drivers' fault. Although police often don't realise it because they are usually not experienced bike riders who know the issues. The thing I hate about motorists complaining about bikes breaking road rules is the hypocrisy - there are some people in all types of road users that break rules, not just cyclists.)
 - Also charge car insurance by the km for the cost of SES, emergency wards, hospital beds, rehabilitation (hidden in the health budget), disability pensions (hidden in social welfare budget) & compensation etc for crash victims (20,000/yr) especially the huge number that are permanently disabled (brain damage, spinal injury, loss of limbs or eyes) and never return to fully productive life.
 - Bring in a fuel tax to cover the cost of health care, death and loss of productivity for air pollution sufferers (again hidden in the health budget & sick leave costs).
 - Bring in a "fat tax" on both poor food and car travel to cover the cost of heart problems & diabetes contributed to by people eating poor food and not getting enough exercise because they drive everywhere instead of walk or cycle for transport.
 - School parking tax - I would especially charge for parking for parents who drive their kids to school because this is a major cause of our traffic congestion, leads to kids developing poor travel behaviour & increasing childhood obesity levels. Walking or cycling to school have been shown to improve child fitness, behaviour & attention in class. Plus it teaches them "mobility independence". It is in the child's best long term interest, to be learn to walk and cycle instead of just be driven everywhere and depend on "mum & dad" (or the government later on). Since parents don't seem to teach their kids road rules etc, money from some of these taxes should go into cycling and walking education for all primary school students (like Europe) so they learn the road rules & the consequences of poor road behaviour from an early age.

Try reporting a car rego and see how you go.

"Mr James said while motorists could easily be reported for traffic offences by their registration plates, cyclists were often able to escape without being identified"

People often say bikes should have number plates so people can report them. Get on your bike and try seeing / remembering car number plates during an incident, especially if you're been hit, to report the driver to police! Try getting police to do something when they have got "more important things to do". In the case of being hit by something thrown from a passing car there is the problem of proving which car & who in it threw the object. (On my commuter bike, I now use a rear facing hidden video camera & a helmet cam and call out the number plate of offenders so it's voice recorded if the vision isn't good enough.) Then there is still the problem of "proving beyond

reasonable doubt" who was the driver. (How many business car owners pay the higher fine so they don't incur points!)

And lets be honest here – how much damage do motorists actually receive from bikes? Very little unless the bike rider also suffers damage. I've had a frame & wheels bent and received various cuts, bruises & dislocated thumb. But while riding, I've never so much as scratched a car or touched a car driver. Do a Google news search for "bicycle". Every day there are news reports of cyclists being killed by car drivers, many of them hit & run, but in the last 3 years I've never seen a report about a bike rider crashing into a car and killing the driver!

Even if bikes did have number plates, think about how many drivers have annoyed you but how often have you actually written down their details and followed it through with a police complaint? Most people wish they could do something about bad drivers but it's rare for people to actually act on it and get a result. Even with number plates, most poor bike behaviour, just like most poor driver behaviour still wouldn't be acted on.

Unregistered cars and unlicensed drivers.

One of the road safety organisations (can't remember off hand who – got the details at work not home) estimate that about 5% of cars / drivers in Qld are unlicensed or unregistered. Bikes are only 1% of traffic in most parts of Australia (except Melbourne). So there are 5x more unlicensed / unregistered vehicles than cyclists on the road! They "haven't paid to use the road" & don't have insurance. And the police may not be able to track them down if you report them. They are also several times more likely to crash into you than a legal driver (or a bike!). Drivers & VECCI should be more concerned about them than the much smaller bikes.

I don't know why motorists worry about bikes hitting them - it's the other drivers that cause the most damage, can kill you and are more likely to be uninsured! And in the event that a cyclist does hit a car, many cyclists are members of cycling clubs or state organisations like Bike Victoria, Bike NSW & Bike Qld - and those members usually do have third party property insurance. <http://www.bv.com.au/join-in/114/> "Membership of Bicycle Victoria provides support for your bike riding through benefits such as **insurance**, free legal advice, Ride On magazine and more."

Kids tricycles & tagalongs?

By the way VECCI – does your proposal include rego on my 6yr old's favourite tricycle that she won't give up yet even though she also has a little bike? How often will she have to renew her bike licence and do we have to employ another public servant to ask kids like her the questions or will she have to learn to read big words first and use an over-priced government computer system?

I have a tandem bike (wife & I) plus a tandem tagalong (2 kids) plus a dog trailer. Under your proposal do my wife, kids and dog have to have licences or only me since I'm steering the whole thing? Can I register it as one vehicle or do I have to register the 2 trailers separately? Since it's like a B-double truck do I have to get a B-double bike licence and since I'm one of only a very few people in Australia with such a long bike, who has qualifications to test my skills on it?

Debate?

VECCI, I agree with your call for debate - I'd love to get the real story to become better known to the general public to end this ridiculous argument between motorists and cyclists. But I suggest you do some real research before making silly suggestions for rego & licences that only serves to inflame the redneck issue (refer to the other news item below about a 53 yr old woman pushed off

her bike by 2 teenagers in a Commodor), discourage people from cycling & encourage them to stay in their cars where they cost your businesses more money in so many ways.

Ask the European businesses - they realised long ago that cycling is good for business. (Well, except the politically subsidised car industry & big oil.) Before making business decisions, most business people do research and make investment decisions based on facts and at least educated guesses. I doubt many of your members make business decisions for emotional reasons while frustrated stuck in car traffic. Before you raise issues like bike rego & licences again, you can start your research at -

<http://www.vote4cycling.com.au/benefits/?IntCatId=14>

<http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au/>

<http://www.bv.com.au/>

(But don't do it on the Blackberry while driving - even talking while driving significantly reduces spacial awareness and increases the risk of crashing - "Sorry mate - didn't see you" because they were not concentrating on driving.)

Peak oil

You might also like to consider the issue of oil supply Vs demand Vs price and the possibility of another world recession. Oil is back over \$80/barrel and petrol prices are rising again. High oil prices caused by excessive demand are NOT good for business. Car use increases oil demand, bike use does NOT. So bikes are better for business. You would be aware of course that Bass Strait's oil supply is decreasing & a recent news report said that it only has about 10 years supply left. That's not good for our balance of payment figures or Victorian business.

Don't like bikes - support bike lanes to get bikes "out of your way"!

If drivers don't like bikes getting their way then they should support bike lanes because cyclists are legally required to use bike lanes (but not bike paths which often only suit slower type riders.)

Regards

I Cummings
Civil Engineer

A commuter cyclist for 27 yrs who spends more money on local products supporting local business & less on mostly foreign oil supporting Arabs & foreign oil companies.

PS. When is the government going to get those pesky pedestrians registered and licenced to pay to use the road corridors? They never watch where they are going, don't keep to the left of the footpath, suddenly cut across in front of you when you don't expect it, are always running red walk signals or crossing in the wrong places. They should have number plates on their butts so they can be reported to police. They haven't paid to use all that expensive footpath & the space it takes up. They are a hazard to motorists and could cause car crashes & car drivers to die. They should also be forced to wear a helmet because they often hit their head on the windscreen or fall on the road and hit their head!

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/victorian-employers-chamber-of-commerce-calls-for-bike-licenses/story-e6frf716-1225849400870>

Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce calls for bike licenses

A MAJOR business lobby group wants cyclists to be licensed and have their bikes registered before riding on the road.

The Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry is calling for a debate on the issue and is running an online poll on its blog site.

Spokesman Chris James said cyclists were increasingly riding on roads with motorists and should be treated in the same way with an appropriate licence, road rules education and a registered bike.

"There's no reason why one category of road users should be more special than the other," he said.

Mr James said cyclists should pay a "nominal" registration fee, which would go towards maintaining and upgrading the roads they used alongside motorists.

"Cycling is good for health, it's good for the environment and it's good for traffic congestion," he said.

"But they are using public roads without any form of fee. It's become a mainstream mode of commuter traffic and because of that, it's an issue that demands some attention."

Mr James said while motorists could easily be reported for traffic offences by their registration plates, cyclists were often able to escape without being identified.

But Bicycle Victoria CEO Harry Barber said most cyclists already had car licences and a call for registration was inappropriate.

"The idea of a plate on every bike when people have dozens of bikes and kids' bikes - it would be a nightmare," he said.

Mr Barber said most Melburnians who commuted to work by bike on roads were doing the right thing.

He said Bicycle Victoria supported better education for cyclists.

"They've got to learn the rules, they've got to learn the etiquette," he said.

"We know that there are Grand Prix drivers and others who behave like idiots behind the wheel and we know that there are some people who behave irresponsibly on their bikes."

Roads Minister Tim Pallas said he did not support the idea of registering bikes.

"There's not one country in the world that has in place a licensing or registration system for bikes," he said.

"We're about encouraging people to look at cycling as a viable transport option."

Cyclist 'knocked from bike' on freeway

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/cyclist-knocked-from-bike-on-freeway/story-e6frf7kx-1225849529807>

- Wayne Flower
- From: [Herald Sun](#)
- April 04, 2010 3:40PM

A WOMAN has been seriously injured after being pushed off her bicycle by an idiot in a moving car this afternoon.

The 53-year old Berwick woman claims she was riding her bicycle west on the Princes Highway at Officer just after noon when a white Commodore travelling in the same direction changed lanes and slowed before the front seat passenger leant out of the window and pushed her.

The woman fell from her bike onto the road as the Commodore sped off.

Police said it was lucky the woman was not run over by a following 4WD, which stopped and the driver rendered assistance.

A short time later, two men aged 19 and 18, both from Cranbourne, presented at their local police station claiming there had been an accident.

The pair were subsequently arrested and are currently assisting police with inquiries.