



## Cycle Aware Wellington (CAW)

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### Windy Wheels newsletter

**December 2002**

#### **Cycling is not a crime...**

*by Dan Keown, M.D.*

Or is it? Cycling without a helmet in New Zealand can earn up to a \$500 fine.

#### *But do helmets work?*

A study published in *Accident Analysis and Prevention* in 1997 by Scuffham on voluntary helmet wearing rates in New Zealand between 1986 and 1993 found no association with head injury despite an increase from 5% to 65% in helmet use. This is the definitive piece in New Zealand on cycle helmet effectiveness.

#### *Why wouldn't helmets work?*

It has been known for 20 years that serious head injury occurs because of the head rapidly rotating around its own axis. Imagine a football spinning on a pole. Add a helmet to this. A helmet will not reduce the forces and may by adding to the weight and volume of the head actually increase them. Helmets will protect against superficial injury but these are treatable and rarely life threatening.

#### *But what's the problem in wearing a helmet?*

Obviously quite a lot. People have voted with their pedals on this one. Cycling has decreased by 20% in New Zealand recently, and in countries where they looked at the figures before and after the law it decreased by an average of 30%. It is known that the fewer cyclists you have in a population, the more dangerous it is for the individual cyclist.

#### *Is cycling dangerous?*

NO! If you cycle regularly you will feel fitter and look slimmer, have lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure and much less chance of a heart attack or stroke compared to a non-cyclist. You would have to cycle 50 million km before your average cyclist would have a death. That's 1 000 times around the world.

#### *What to do?*

For these reason cyclists should encourage more cyclists. We need to encourage councils into creating cycle lanes, work places into providing showers and safe housing (how much land and money do they spend on carparks?), schoolkids to cycle - employ instructors to teach them proficiency, government into punishment of careless or speeding drivers, and people to get out of their cars, walk, run and CYCLE.

And the cycle helmet law? IGNORE IT. Throughout history there have been unfair laws. Cycling is fun, safe and good for you and your neighbours. Wearing a helmet is YOUR choice.

If you receive a fine or harassment, or simply want to get involved with changing the law please contact us at: [changethehelmetlaw@hotmail.com](mailto:changethehelmetlaw@hotmail.com)

Editor's note: The helmet law rears its head again. Most of us take it on faith that helmet use is common sense, but there are some pretty convincing arguments that New Zealand's helmet law is ineffective, discriminatory, and has made cycling more dangerous overall. CAN is writing a submission on helmet standards, that highlights what helmets can & can't do; and will also be asking government's Regulations Review Committee for a review of the law. Your comments welcome.

### **Wise up - ride your bike**

Bike Wise Week is coming up and is running (cycling) from 15 – 23 February 2003. It is the ideal time to promote cycling as a practical, healthy and fun form of transport and recreation.

There are heaps of events running throughout New Zealand from Bike to Work and Bike to School days, to cycle safety and skill sessions.

The Bike Wise Business Battle will take place during National Bike Wise Week. It is an inter-business, intra-industry competition. There are 15 different business sector categories, with prizes awarded to the organisation within each sector whose employees cycle the greatest average distance during the week. Plus, there is an overall prize for the team that covers the greatest distance and one for the team that makes the most commuter trips by bike. There are also three Push Play awards for teams of up to 10 people who cover one of the three specific distances, e.g. Southern Traverse – Picton to Bluff, 919km.

The competition is free and easy to enter. For more information on the Bike Wise Business Battle check out [www.bikewisebattle.co.nz](http://www.bikewisebattle.co.nz). And, for more information on National Bike Wise Week 2003, check out [www.bikewise.co.nz](http://www.bikewise.co.nz).

### **Tawa Roundabout Training**

*by Marilyn Northcotte*

From 12–14 November, Marilyn Northcotte (AKA The Bike Lady) of Cycle Aware Wellington (CAW), in conjunction with Wellington City Council's (WCC) Road Safety program, ran a safe cycling workshop for Tawa Intermediate school. The aim of the workshop was to address the problems that intermediate children might have negotiating the roundabout located at the intersection of the Main Road with The Drive and Tawa Ave. The roundabout was also a part of an ongoing intersection campaign being organised and run by the WCC, CAW and the NZ Police. The WCC also distributed a brochure outlining the proper way to negotiate the roundabout by bicycle and by car, to the wider community. This was organised to happen in conjunction with the programme running at the school.

The course was well supported by the school, in particular teacher Iain Westphail. Iain has a lot of cycling experience and organises and runs many cycling events with the students. Porirua Youth Education Services Officer Constable Iain Brown was also on hand to help out with the traffic theory and intersection simulations as well as the ride.

The course covered safety, bike control and skills, traffic theory road rules, and intersection simulations. This culminated in a road ride that involved the roundabout in question. Much of the programme was based on the old Safe Cycling kit from the LTSA. Eighteen students selected by Iain attended the course over three days. These were capable cyclists and who rode to school on a regular basis. The bikes and helmets were of questionable standard, so the services of CAW's Dr. Bike were called in to service bicycles. Questionable helmets were replaced before the students were allowed to continue in the programme.

The abilities of the students were quite good, and they coped well, as many would not have ridden in a group before. The road ride was successful for everyone and quite challenging as we took the children around some heavily trafficked areas. All in all it was a successful venture for all involved, and I think the students came away with valuable skills and information that they can use in many road situations.

I would like to thank everyone who supported me during this project, most notably, CAW's Education & Safety group, WCC Road Safety Co-Ordinators Rawiri Faulkner and Cristina Van Dam, Iain Westphail from Tawa Intermediate, Const. Iain Brown of the Porirua YES, and Alec Kent from Dr. Bike.

### **Teachers try out cycle skills**

*by Marilyn Northcotte*

On 22 and 27 November the Wellington City Council, Cycle Aware Wellington and the NZ Police ran "Safe Cycle Training for Teachers" courses targeting primary and intermediate school teachers. The courses were designed to help the teachers teach safe cycling to their students. They were attended by 25 teachers from 20 primary schools around Wellington and were held at the Wellington College of Education in Karori.

The courses were a mix of theory and practical exercises that gave the teachers a good overview of how to implement what they learnt back at their schools. The activities included setting up and riding through different skills sessions on the tennis courts and also a ride around the streets of Karori. All of the teachers were given a set of resources.

Many schools don't allow children to cycle to school for a variety of reasons. This does not mean that the skills are not valuable for the teachers, as they are skills that can be utilised at other schools or in another role. Because the school teacher is often the person that children turn to for advice on safety and skills, it is important that the teacher or someone within the school can offer this advice. This is why it is important to run course like this. The cost to the school is minimal, because we want to encourage as many schools as possible to take part. The turn out for the courses was better than last year and it looks like they are growing and getting bigger each year.

Although the weather was a bit indifferent on the 22 November, it didn't stop the teachers taking part in most of the exercises. The response from the teachers was positive. I found the teachers willing to learn and they all had a lot of fun. Overall the courses were enjoyable and worthwhile. The Wellington City Council plan to run more courses and welcome any feedback from the participants or general

public about the course content.

## **CAW lobbies for you**

### **1. Hutt Corridor Plan**

At the December CAW meeting, Brent Efford updated us on this. CAW will make a submission, by 20 December. Copies of the Plan are available on WRC website ([http://www.wrc.govt.nz/pub/view\\_doc.cfm?id=545](http://www.wrc.govt.nz/pub/view_doc.cfm?id=545)) or from their office. CAW's Tech and Planning Group will meet to discuss.

### **2. Road Safety Action Plan**

WCC has issued a discussion document, advocating area-based treatment for safety, and an increase of \$2 million per year for safety. Cycling is hardly mentioned, and left out of statistics. LTSA statistics show high levels of representation for cyclist crashes. The Road Safety Reference Group has already accepted that cyclists and pedestrians are priority areas but that doesn't seem to be reflected in the document. It is proposing 'slow zones' which is good. Robert Ibell will write a submission and circulate it. David Laing will raise the plan's omissions at next the Reference Group meeting.

## **Merry CAW-ristmas**

Your dad doesn't really want a pair of socks from Santa. What he really wants is a CAW membership.

Grab a membership form from your local bike shop or contact Alan as below.

## **Events calendar**

**Friday 27 December**, Critical Mass, 5:30pm, Canvastown, Marlborough

Patrick and friends will hold the inaugural Canvastown Critical Mass, starting outside the Trout Hotel, and finishing inside.

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