



Cycle Aware Wellington (CAW)

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Windy Wheels newsletter

February 2003

Wise up – ride your bike

Here comes Bike Wise Week – our biggest celebration of biking this summer. Bike Wise Week is 15–23 February. It's the ideal time to promote cycling as a practical, healthy and fun form of transport and recreation. Talk to your mates and get them on their bikes.

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

Wellington: Free Breakfast

Ride to Wellington's Civic Square on Bike to Work Day, Wednesday Feb 19, 7–9 am, and join hundreds of cyclists for a free breakfast. There will be entertainment, guest speakers, prizes and free bike checks from the skilled mechanics from On Yer Bike.

Lower Hutt: Valley to the Sea Cycle Ride

Sunday 23 February, 9am–2pm. Ride the Hutt River trail (east side of the river). Start just south of the main Stokes Valley roundabout. Finish at the Hutt River trail (east side of the river) Barber Grove, Moera.

Kapiti hosts a free breakfast for cyclists at the new Paraparaumu library and at the Paraparaumu railway station, on Tuesday 18 Feb. There is also a family bike ride along the Kapiti Trail on Saturday 22 Feb, leaving the Front Room café, Pekapeka at 2pm. More info: kapiticycling@xtra.co.nz

Porirua is putting on a display of unusual bikes, but no events.

Upper Hutt City Council has decided not to join the party. Shame on them.

Everywhere: Bike Wise Business Battle

The Bike Wise Business Battle will take place during National Bike Wise Week. It is an inter-business, intra-industry competition. There are 15 business sector categories, with prizes awarded to the organisation within each sector whose employees cycle the greatest 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 3 Push Play awards for teams of up to 10 people who cover one of the three specific distances, e.g. Picton to Bluff, 919 km.

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

Forecasting change

Staff at the MetService in Wellington set up a BUG (Bicycle Users' Group) in 2002. Forecaster Paul Bruce said that 13 regular cyclists, out of about 130 employees at the Kelburn office, responded positively to the call for a BUG.

Because the majority of staff are shift workers, several meetings had to be held. These meetings were followed by a wider survey on key issues, such as the best location for cycle storage, size of lockers and a place to dry wet gear.

Paul said that he had been inspired by the information on similar groups set up overseas. "The only real way to get employers to do something practical for cyclists and walkers was to show them that you had the numbers, and that it was in the business's interest to support staff who choose to not use cars."

Paul has been biking up the hill to the Kelburn office for 30 years and says that it has really made a difference to his well being, fitness and alertness. He says that it takes 20 minutes to bike from his home to the office. Sometimes Paul chooses to bike through a park to get that "away from town feeling". Or when he wants a real workout, he rides via the off-road tracks that surround Wellington.

Paul hopes that more staff will join the new BUG, as they are encouraged by more cycle-friendly facilities.

Why start a BUG?

Support for cycling within the organisation can encourage decision-makers to provide facilities for cyclists.

The benefits to the employer

A growing number of employers now recognise the benefits of encouraging their staff to be healthier. Cycling is one way to promote health.

- People who cycle to work regularly are more productive and take less time off sick than non-cycling employees. With fewer staff using their cars, less space is required for car parking.
- Pro-cycling organisations are seen as caring and environmentally aware employers.
- No problem with traffic jams - cyclists arrive at work, on time, more alert and less frustrated.

The benefits to the individual

- Cycling is a good way of staying fit and healthy. Research shows that regular cycling can halve the risk of coronary heart disease.
- Cycling will save you money compared with using a car.
- In the rush hour, it is faster to use a bike than public transport or a car.
- It is easier to park a bike than a car.

More information on BUGs

Sport & Recreation NZ (SPARC) are producing a resource on BUGs, as part of a set of cycle-friendly employer resource, in time for Bike Wise Week. Check their site at www.sparc.org.nz

Also: <http://cycling.gn.apc.org/bugs/bugs.html>

www.ukcycling.net/articles

www.cfe.org.uk/bug.htm

www.spokes.org.uk/bugs.htm

Cycle-friendly Employers provide secure bike parking

Three cheers for **Greater Wellington** (formerly the Wellington Regional Council), which has generous provision for bike parking in its Wakefield St building. In an unusual move, two car parking spaces were removed to make room for dozens of bikes in a caged-off, locked area. Lisa Baudinet from the Council said they were responding to demand from staff. Greater Wellington funds public transport in the region. We applaud their commitment to supporting staff who choose not to drive.

Meanwhile, boo to the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade**. Before designing their new building in Lambton Quay, they asked staff what they wanted. Staff asked for secure bike parking, but this request was ignored. Two bikes have since been stolen from the loading bay at the new building, so staff are choosing not to cycle. We note that the Ministry is responsible for Climate Change policy.

"Climate change is caused by greenhouse gases. The concentration of greenhouse gases has been increasing due to human activity. If we do not take action now the consequences for New Zealand may be severe." Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade website at www.mft.govt.nz/foreign/env/ozone.html

But there's good news. Staff have formed a cyclists' network and it looks like the parking situation will improve.

WCC movements

Rumour has it that Paul Barker, the guy at WCC in charge of cycle provision, has taken to using his bike to get to work once a week. Great start, Paul. It's a long way from Stokes Valley!

Another rumour says that Rawiri Faulkner, one of the WCC Road Safety Co-ordinators, is having success in persuading his department to buy some bikes for Council staff to use for work trips. Watch this space...

Bicycle facilities at the airport

Paul Barker from WCC and Robert Ibell from CAW met with the General Manager of Wellington International Airport Ltd to look at improvements to facilities for cyclists using the airport and getting to and from the city. WIAL will be looking for bike shop sponsorship to provide a bike assembly area and have agreed to put up information and direction signs and to stock WCC's proposed new cycle route map at the airport information counter. WCC will ensure that signage helps cyclist find the tunnel under the runway that links with their soon-to-be-started Kilbirnie cycle facilities. The co-operation of WIAL and WCC is appreciated.

Invitation: Travel Blending Seminar

From the LTSA: On Friday 21 February, the LTSA is hosting a seminar by Liz Ampt, and you are invited to join us. Liz is a specialist in the field of behavioural research, particularly understanding and

facilitating individual change. The complexities of behavioural change as related to transport and community development are her main field of interest.

Liz will talk about her recent work on travel blending. This is a tool that empowers people to reduce the negative impacts of the car by making small changes from which they can benefit and which fit into their lifestyles. This creates broader social benefits including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing air pollution, reducing vehicle congestion, and increasing physical activity through walking and cycling. We believe that this seminar will be of interest to policy-makers, practitioners and researchers interested in road safety generally and in travel and exposure issues in particular.

The seminar will be held in the Training Room, National Archives, 10 Mulgrave Street, Wellington, commencing with lunch at 1pm. There will be an opportunity for questions at the end of the address, which should last about one hour.

This invitation is also extended to any of your colleagues who may have a particular interest in the issues to be covered. RSVP to Judy Beswick on 04-494-8715 (or e-mail jab@itsa.govt.nz) by 14 February with details of those who will be attending.

WCC Road Safety Action Plan

CAW obtained a copy of the proposed WCC Road Safety Action Plan recently. Probably the biggest innovation in the plan is a move to an 'area' approach to road safety interventions. Three of four bits of the city will be dealt with each year. It's not clear what happens to the rest meantime!

We have reservations about the basic focus of the draft plan, particularly the focus on crashes rather than risk reduction, the failure to include cycling interventions (the relatively high cycle crash risk in Wellington is not even acknowledged), and its consultation processes.

CAW will be making a submission on the plan. We'd urge members to make their own. The plan can be found at www.wcc.govt.nz/services/roading/road-safety/ (submissions can be made online) or obtained from WCC - contact Rawiri Faulkner on 801 3717. Submissions can be as short as you want to make them. For assistance contact Robert Ibell on 385 2557, dawbell@actrix.gen.nz

Help wanted - Safe Routes to School

WCC is embarking on a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program which will look at all of the issues involved in children getting to school safely and how these can be resolved through roading changes, signage, educational campaigns etc. There will be more about this topic in next month's Windy Wheels. In the meantime, contact Alan Whiting (alan@whiting.net.nz) for more information.

Models Needed

As a continuation of last year's intersection campaign, WCC have produced a leaflet giving cyclists and motorists advice on negotiating multi-lane roundabouts. They've used one of the Johnsonville roundabouts as the example, and want a few cyclists to negotiate that roundabout for half an hour or so while the press take photos.

If you can help out at 2 p.m. on Tuesday 25 February, contact Robert Ibell on 385 2557, dawbell@actrix.gen.nz. Travel sickness pills will be provided.

Being Cycle Aware Workshop

CAW member David Laing led a workshop aimed at Police, Council and road safety staff on January 29. We discussed the needs of cyclists and went for ride to from Civic Square to Kilbirnie to check out the challenges facing city cyclists. Feedback was positive and we plan to repeat the workshop, and offer the resource material to the rest of New Zealand.

Here's some of the issues for cyclists, drivers and enforcement we discussed.

1. Intersections

- Need to choose lane early
- May need to occupy the centre of the lane
- Need to indicate clearly

2. Behaviour

Intimidating driver behaviour β à dangerous cycling behaviour

Courteous driver behaviour β à safer cycling behaviour

3. Cyclist visibility

Low awareness by other road users of cyclists and their needs.

- Driver education
- Ride predictably
- Signal clearly
- Make eye contact
- Wear high-vis gear
- Use a bell or horn
- Lights at night

4. Keep left

- To avoid being 'doored', it's best to ride 1 metre or more from parked cars.
- Sometimes it's safest for cyclists to occupy the centre of the lane to deter dangerous overtaking, e.g. descending Crawford Rd or Ngaio Gorge.

5. Road surface

debris, rubbish, painted surfaces, raised or sunk service covers a problem for cyclists

6. Cycle lanes

e.g. Oriental Parade, Hutt Road - recreational cyclists prefer to use the cycle lane while commuters or racing cyclists prefer the road.

7. Safe vs legal

e.g. when climbing Ngaio Gorge, cyclists may make the safe choice (ride on footpath) instead of the legal choice (ride on the road).

The Helmet Law Wars continue

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

In reply to Dan Keown's 'Cycling is not a crime...', cycling is no more a crime than driving a car or riding a motor bike, but they are all covered by regulations designed to improve the safety of those activities and reduce the burden on our public health system. The helmet law for cyclists is no different than the helmet law for motor cyclists or the seatbelt law for drivers – ignore it and you risk a fine.

The last time one of us ignored the cycle helmet law we received a warning only. The standard fine is \$55. Presumably you'd have to do something pretty stupid to earn a \$500 fine. (Editor's note: according to a Wellington police officer, taking a cyclist to Court for failing to wear a helmet means four hours' paperwork for the officer.

The scientific community appears to be divided on whether or not helmets work well to prevent serious head injury. Cook & Sheikh concluded they reduce head injuries by 12% (but ignored risk compensation). Scuffham found no association with helmet use and head injury (between 1986 and 1993 when both mountain biking and car ownership were rising sharply). It seems to us that studies based on injury statistics are bound to under-rate helmets as they ignore those incidents where helmets prevent a trip to A&E. When faced with inconclusive scientific evidence, we believe it is reasonable to defer to common sense.

In the mountain biking scene, where crashes are common, damaged and broken helmets are also common. We are not qualified to judge whether or not these helmets have prevented serious head injury. We are confident that, at the very least, we have seen many helmets that have prevented nasty lacerations, minor concussions and partial scalping. The lack of any scientific analysis makes this no less true to us.

Dan Keown believes 'cyclists have voted with their feet' regarding helmet use because cycling has decreased recently. A visit to any mountain bike park would suggest otherwise. Despite the helmet law not applying off-road, well over 90% of riders choose to wear helmets. Presumably they believe these may be of some assistance next time they crash.

The decrease in cycle commuting may be due to the popularity of cheap imported vehicles, urban sprawl, reduced 'free time' or some other influence that has prevailed concurrently with the introduction of compulsory helmet use. It seems to us that motor vehicle use has increased and this, more than anything else, has made cycle commuting less enjoyable and less safe. Note that motor vehicle use has increased despite the seatbelt law which some drivers no doubt believe is ineffective, discriminatory and an unfair law which restricts their right to travel freely.

We have some experience with trying to change the law regarding bicycle access to National Parks. This campaign has gone on for over a decade, with no outcome to date. If Cycle Aware Wellington chooses to adopt a campaign to change the helmet law, it can expect a very long haul, during which they will be ridiculed by many cyclists, transport planners and health professionals. In the extremely unlikely event that the law is changed, CAW may find that the result is even worse publicity when the inevitable happens (i.e. helmetless riders die of head injuries) and no growth in cyclist numbers.

In response to the editors note: It is our experience that helmets are effective. The helmet law is not discriminatory, as restrictive safety rules apply to all road users. Factors other than the helmet law are responsible for cycle commuting becoming less popular since the 1950s.

We believe CAW should concentrate on positive campaigns with positive outcomes: driver awareness, minimum safe passing distances, cycle lanes and parks, and promotion of safe cycling.

Pedal on!
Paul, Simon and Jonathan Kennett

Dr Dan Keown responds

Medical ethics

The Kennett brothers raise the seat belt law. This is a beautiful example to demonstrate what makes a "good" medical intervention (law) as compared to a "bad" law. The ethics of the law were debated keenly along the following points.

Firstly, seat belts were already in cars from 1970, there was no extra cost or inconvenience involved.

Secondly, the inconvenience to individuals of putting a belt on was considered minor and there was no real infringement on liberty. After all car driving is deemed a privilege rather than a right.

Thirdly, theory and study agreed that the benefits to SOCIETY would be large. It was a significant public health issue. It is to society that the benefit must be shown as benefits to individuals contravene their right to choose. If you applied the argument you were protecting individuals you could also ban skydiving, scuba diving, smoking, overeating, watching Jerry Springer, and a whole lot of other things. So SOCIETY must benefit from the law. This was backed up after the law when casualties in the car declined. Unfortunately in the UK this was more than made up for by casualties amongst pedestrians and cyclists as car drivers felt more secure and drove faster.

Fourthly, there were no adverse effects that could be ascertained from the law.

If we apply these rules to cycle helmets we get the following: (Remember this is on-road cyclists; mountain bikers ain't got a law)

1. The cost of cycle helmets in NZ is estimated to have been \$20 million. For a poor man's transport that is a lot of money.
2. It is clearly an infringement on people's liberty. It does not matter whether everyone agrees on this, a significant minority makes the law ethically suspect.
3. The best evidence suggests helmets makes no difference to head injuries requiring admission. (For details, see Appendix below). Even if they did, you would still need to cycle an average of 50 million km before you'd get a death - that is not a major health issue.
4. The adverse effects of reduced cycling (some studies say cycling halves your risk of a heart attack at 60) and increased car use should be obvious to all cyclists. The helmet law has undoubtedly reduced commuter cycling. How many people do you know who took up cycling because of the law? How many do you know who have stopped? Even one is too many.

So ethically this law does not meet any of the requirements.

Sure we could say, "It's no big deal, we still cycle. Why rock the boat when there's other stuff

we can try and get on with?" But what about the principle?

I've got a suggestion. I am going to market an expensive shin guard for mountain bikers. The ones who DON'T take it up will be the risk takers anyway and won't believe in entrusting their safety to a piece of plastic when they prefer to survive on their wits. Before long I will have gained enough data to show they "prevent" serious leg fractures. At this point I recommend it to everyone. I get a high profile "crippled for life" case to hammer home my point and then legislate to outlaw mountain bikers unless they use them. Some people complain but they are de-cried as "lunatics". New data arrives that shows they don't work, but it's too late. Everyone's been sold the lie and nobody cares enough. Sound ridiculous...

Appendix

Benjamin Disraeli famously stated there are three types of lies: "lies, damn lies, and statistics".

The next bit is about statistics and is very boring.

One of my jobs as a doctor is interpreting statistics and evaluating where the possibility of a lie may sneak in. It is not necessary for there to have been any maliciousness, as poor study design or uncontrollable variables will do the same thing.

There are lots of studies on helmets that can be classified into three main groups:

1. The early studies looked at emergency departments and compared people arriving after a cycle injury. The conclusion - wear a lid and you reduce your chance of head injury by 90%. Faults: what type of people voluntarily choose to wear a helmet? Probably safety conscious ones. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of helmets, they may be measuring the effectiveness of the PERSONALITY that wears a helmet.
2. The population studies are divided into the ones before the law and the ones after the law. The problem with the ones after the law is that people stop cycling and these are the ones who refuse to wear a helmet anyway (and probably take more risk). These showed a drop in head injuries of 19% (mostly scalp lacerations). So what are you measuring? A drop in head injuries or a drop in "risk taking" cyclists?
3. This leaves the third group. The one before the law. Scuffham 1997 is the only example. It is set in New Zealand between 1986 and 1993. The population should stay roughly the same as you are not intervening (i.e. imposing a law). You can measure the proportion of head injuries compared with other on road cycle injuries admitted to hospital, this means that even if cycle numbers drop, the ratio should stay the same. You can compare this with the rate of head injuries among other road accidents to make sure the road is not more safe or dangerous. What you are left with is "... no association between serious head injury and helmet use". Why was there no 90% reduction, why was there no 19% reduction? Because the earlier studies were flawed and that piece of polystyrene on your head really does do jack-shit against that 15 tonne lorry that just swerved onto the wrong side of the street and is just about to hit you with a force that is beyond your imagination...

Events calendar

15–23 February, Bike Wise Week, see above

Friday 28 Feb, Critical Mass, 5:30pm, Civic Square

Sunday 2 March, Karapoti Classic Mountain Bike Race, Upper Hutt, 50 km and 20 km events, www.karapoti.co.nz

Sunday 9 March, The Bush Cycle Tour, Mangatainoka Tui Brewery, 100 km, 50 km and 15 km events, www.pahaitua.net.nz/pevents.htm

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