



Walkers say no to more bikes on footpaths

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Walkers and blindness advocates are alarmed by the government's new Cycling Road Rules Survey, which raises the spectre of more bicycle riding on footpaths.

Cycling groups are campaigning for teenagers up to 16 years old to ride on footpaths, which is a massive jump from the current age limit of 12 years. The VicRoads survey, launched on Sunday, includes this option, as well as others that would see more cyclists on footpaths.¹

"This is very, very concerning" said Dr Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer of Victoria Walks. "We know that walking and cycling are not a good mix for our most vulnerable road users".

"A survey of 1128 seniors found 39 per cent rated bicycle riders on shared paths as a moderate or major constraint to their walking"² Dr Rossiter said.

"Interaction with cyclists is a big issue for walkers with a vision impairment – our 2012 study found more than 24 per cent of collisions and near collisions were with cyclists," said Ms Marianne Diamond AO, General Manager of Advocacy and Engagement at Vision Australia.

"Seniors and others are right to be worried, because cyclists do not necessarily slow down when they share a path with pedestrians" said Dr Rossiter, "in NSW it was found that the average speed of cyclists on footpaths was 21 km/h, exactly the same speed as when riding on a 50km/h road."

Today, Victoria Walks released a position statement – *Footpaths are for Feet* – that highlights the reasons why a change in road laws would be a mistake.³ The statement includes international studies showing footpath cycling is particularly hazardous for cyclists, who have a 1.8 to 16 times higher risk of injury on footpaths than on roads.

"Letting teenagers ride on footpaths might make some parents feel better, but it won't make their kids safer," Dr Rossiter said.

"Imagine a 15 year old racing along a footpath while someone is backing out of their driveway. What motorist wants to be responsible for a teenager lying seriously injured on a footpath?" said Dr Rossiter.

"Our footpaths are not built for cycling but they are critical for many seniors, children, families, those on mobility scooters and the disabled to get around" continued Dr Rossiter "These are our most vulnerable road users, we cannot, and should not, give up on them".

"Older people tend to concentrate on their feet and where they tread, so unexpected surprises, like bike riders on paths can startle them and become a barrier to walking".

"It is paramount that people are safe and *fee/* safe when walking on footpaths, without having to worry about being hit by a cyclist," said Dr Rossiter.

See over for contact details

¹ <http://www.roadsafety.vic.gov.au>

² <http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/seniors/>

³ http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/position_statements/

Further comment

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