

A metre matters: combining health promotion frameworks to create population level behaviour change and improve cyclist safety in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Population level behavioural change to create a safer cycling environment is an essential yet complex and difficult task. Australia has limited separated facilities for cyclists who typically need to ride on the road with and alongside motor vehicles. Drivers' licence handbooks include a guideline that drivers allow a minimum of a metre when overtaking bike riders but this is failing to protect cyclists. A significant proportion of cyclist serious injury and fatality crashes occur because drivers do not allow a safe passing distance. *a metre matters* is a campaign that aims to create population level behaviour change amongst Australian drivers. This paper evaluates the use of public health promotion frameworks to implement the *a metre matters* campaign. The campaign, developed and delivered by the Amy Gillett Foundation, the national Australian cycling safety charity was launched in 2009 as a bottom-up education and awareness campaign. Public messaging included billboards, a television commercial broadcast nationally, print media, radio and messaging at community events. However, in May 2013, it was clear that more action was critical. A court found a driver who had not provided a safe passing distance and caused a cyclist fatality crash was not guilty and released without charge. Following this finding, the campaign has expanded to include a top down approach that engages supportive politicians to push for legislative change. Successful outcomes to date include a trial of an amended law in Queensland, an Australian Capital Territory Inquiry recommended an amended law, several private members bills and a national petition to the Federal Government. Major challenges continue with reluctance from police to charge drivers with more serious offences and the need to engage with sometimes hostile media. Discussions address the need to model cyclist safety implementation on other successful public health promotion campaigns including anti-drink driving and anti-smoking campaigns.

Keywords: cyclist safety, a metre matters, public health framework, minimum overtaking distance