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Industrial Organisation

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Adoption of Minimum Passing Distance Rule in NSW

Background

The Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Melinda Pavey, has announced that following a successful two year trial the Minimum Passing Distance Rule, which applies to all motor vehicles passing cyclists, will be made permanent in order to improve the safety of both cyclists and drivers on NSW roads. This means this Rule is a permanent NSW Road Rule¹.

Ms Pavey made the announcement on 9 May.

According to Transport for NSW, an average of nine cyclists are killed on NSW roads each year and more than 1,900 cyclists are injured. This means cyclists represent about 2.5 per cent of total road fatalities and about 16 per cent of serious injuries.

Ms Pavey said the Minimum Passing Distance Rule requires drivers to leave a safe space when passing cyclists, thus placing safety at the forefront of people's minds.

Key Points

Under this rule drivers who pass cyclists must leave a distance of:

- At least one metre when the speed limit of 60km/h and below.
- At least 1.5 metres where the speed limit is above 60km/h.

Penalties

Drivers, including truck drivers, who fail to comply with this Rule will receive a \$330 fine and loss of two demerit points.

Independent Valuation of Two Year Trial of the Minimum Passing Distance Rule

Ms Pavey said an independent evaluation of the trial of the Minimum Passing Distance Rule, which commenced in March 2016, estimated a 15 per cent reduction in bicycle to vehicle casualty crashes.

"Cycling is an increasingly popular mode of transport and recreational activity, and this rule will help ensure the safety of all road users," Mrs Pavey said.

Under the trial, 81 per cent of cyclists and 69 per cent of drivers supported the rule. This shows that minimum passing distances is helping to build respect amongst road users for each other's space and safety.

¹ The road rules are a framework for safe and efficient movement of traffic on NSW roads.

The independent valuation also found that all stakeholders generally felt the rule was appropriate.

Exemptions to the Road Rules

If drivers cannot pass a bicycle rider safely, they should slow down and wait until it is safe to pass the rider, leaving the minimum distance. To help drivers provide the minimum distance, some exemptions to the road rules apply.

Drivers will be exempt from the following rules, as long as it is safe to pass the bicycle rider with at least a metre of space and they have a clear view of approaching traffic:

- Keep to the left of the centre of the road (two-way road with no dividing line).
- Keep to the left of the centre of a dividing line - broken and unbroken lines.
- Keep off a flat dividing strip.
- Keep off a flat painted island.
- Driving within a single marked lane or line of traffic.
- Moving from one marked lane to another across a continuous line separating the lanes.

Further information is available from the Transport for NSW website, www.roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/go-together/index.html.

Further Information

Please contact Hugh McMaster, tel: 0412 880861, or email hughmc@artionsw.com.au if further information is required.