

Personal choice and community impacts

I am a recreational cyclist, enjoying road and mountain bike rides.

I would do more commuting by bicycle if helmets were optional.

When visiting Japan I often rent a cheap bike for riding around town, dressed in normal casual clothes without a helmet.

Many developed countries seem to have much higher percentages of cycle commuters than Australia and only New Zealand has copied our helmet laws. Australia could greatly reduce motor vehicle congestion and promote healthier lifestyles if people could be allowed to cycle in their work or school clothes without having to wear a helmet.

The ski fields are a good example where people use free choice to wear helmets without needing compulsion.

Most sport cyclists will continue to choose to wear a helmet as can be seen in Europe and Japan. However many more will be encouraged to cycle to shops, school and work if the helmet laws are repealed.

In studying accident statistics and cycling participation, we need to look beyond Australia. We also need to segment the effects of helmet laws on commuting, recreational and competition cycling.