Communicating the cycling safety message – Everyone has the right to ride in safety for work and play

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Abstract

The Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) is focused on the safety of one road user group – bicycle riders. Bicycle riders are vulnerable road users. We recognise that, to achieve safety outcomes for riders, road safety messages and communications need to address all road users. The four components of the Safe System approach underpin the activities of the AGF including our messaging, programs and campaigns.

In this paper, we will present four case studies of major AGF projects that have been implemented using a wide range of communication strategies. Across the case studies we will discuss: the link between research, policy, advocacy and communications, and our successes and challenges working with: traditional mainstream media; online platforms; social media; partnerships and collaborations with cycling-related, health, safety and transport organisations; cycling events; community groups; local government, and; individuals.

The four case studies are: 1) Manifesto for safer bike riding in Australia, the AGF statement of actions for safe cycling, designed to inform and challenge decision makers to commit to change for cycling safety; 2) a metre matters, this long-running campaign uses a strong visual approach to quickly communicate the need for drivers to allow one metre clearance when overtaking bicycle riders. The direct association with advocacy will also be discussed; 3) Cycle Safe Communities is an online platform that provides AGF messages to the public through co-delivery with local government and community groups, and; 4) Ride Right is a rider focused campaign that targets behaviour and responsibilities for bicycle riders to improve their own safety. Humour is used to grab attention.

Arguably the most important factor in promoting road safety messages is consistency. Repetition of key messages increases the likelihood of cut through in the noisy public space. Further, collaboration with local organisations to repeat the messaging leads to enormous benefits and reaches local communities in meaningful ways.

Keywords

Road safety communication, bicycle riders, bike riders, Amy Gillett Foundation
1 Introduction

In the jigsaw of road safety, the Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) is the bicycle rider safety piece of the puzzle. In this section, we provide an overview of the background of the AGF, discuss how the Safe System approach underpins the research and policy work of the AGF, and outline how it manifests in the communications approach of the AGF.

1.1 AGF background

The Amy Gillett Foundation was born out of tragedy, the death of Amy who was hit by a driver while on a training ride with her Australian cycling teammates in Germany in 2005. Following her death, Amy’s husband, Simon Gillett together with her parents, Mary and Denis Safe, Cycling Australia and friends, all with a shared concern about the lack of safety for bicycle riders on our roads, started the Amy Gillett Foundation.

The singular purpose of the AGF is bicycle rider safety. The mission of the Foundation is safe cycling in Australia and the vision is zero bicycle rider fatalities. This singular focus allows the AGF freedom to prioritise all activities, programs and initiatives by whether they will make a positive difference to bike rider safety.

Fundamental to the activities of the AGF is the Safe System which is used to structure our approach to projects and helps us to take a broad view of the issues that impact cycling safety and the factors that need to be addressed to improve safety for all bicycle riders. The way the AGF uses the Safe System approach is discussed in the next section.

1.2 The AGF and the Safe System approach

All components of the Safe System are essential to the safety of road users, including when they choose to travel by bicycle. When viewed through the lens of bicycle rider safety, often the components of the Safe System approach raise actions needed for road user safety that differ from a traditional driver-centric approach.

Safer People is a key Safe System component for the AGF. The need to promote safer road user behaviour within an imperfect system is critical to ensuring improved safety for bicycle riders. The behaviour of drivers has been a focal point in our work, as it is often the actions of drivers that are the catalyst for a crash and needs to be changed in order to improve the safety of bicycle riders. Examples of behaviour changes needed to improve bicycle rider safety that have been advocated for by the AGF are: greater care when opening a vehicle door, and passing or overtaking a bicycle rider with a sufficient lateral margin. The AGF has been using various levers to achieve these behaviours including education campaigns and calls for regulation changes.

Safer Speeds is another Safe System component that has been focused on by the AGF. The correlation between increased speed and increased injury outcome in the event of a crash is well established (Corben, Logan et al. 2008) and this is particularly evident in crashes involving non-occupant, physically vulnerable road users.

Safer Roads and Roadsides are fundamental to improving cycling safety. There are well evidenced benefits of having a bicycle-inclusive environment to increase the number of people riding, improve individual riders’ sense of safety, and potentially creating a ‘safety in
numbers’ effect (Dill and Carr 2003, Garrard, Rose et al. 2008, Pucher and Buehler 2008). However, viewing the success of ‘safer roads and roadsides’ through the lens of bicycle riders often returns a different result to that of drivers. Many of the existing AustRoads standards are not sufficient to allow safe travel for bicycle rider; improving the physical environment is prioritised by some organisations as the primary way to improve conditions for riding, at the neglect of other Safe System components; and the AGF continues to challenge a vehicle-centric approach to road-side and safety assessment.

Finally, Safer Vehicles are considered by the AGF in terms of both the motorised vehicle and the bicycle. Safer motorised vehicles are needed to minimise the damage to non-occupant road users, while safer bicycles are also needed (e.g. working brakes, adequate bicycle lights). The view of safer vehicles from a cycling perspective also requires all road users to be responsible for the potential harm their vehicle can cause to occupants and non-occupants.

One of the primary tools available to a not-for-profit foundation such as the AGF is public communication. A foundation can communicate with the public in ways that may not be open to government agencies. It can also use the latest in marketing science and practice to maximise the value of spending. The challenge with community wide communication, social marketing and advertising is to ascertain the effectiveness of the intervention.

1.3 Why communication is important and how it works

While the quantum extent of an effect of communication is difficult to determine, there is considerable evidence that it can be effective if done in the right ways. Recent neuro-science experiments (Çukur, Nishimoto et al. 2013) support the idea that brains that are primed to focus on either humans or vehicles will dedicate significant cerebral resources to the task being attended to – to the exclusion of other objects. The safety ramifications of these experimental findings are significant. If communication switches on the attention of road users to bicycle riders, and away from a singular focus on vehicles, bicycle riders safety will be improved.

Communication may not be the only way that this occurs – infrastructure and previous sightings of people on bicycles may also serve this function. However, in Australian conditions where obvious infrastructure is sparse and cycling comprises a very small mode share, the brain’s propensity to be primed to bicycle rider identification is less likely from these sources.

Other developments in the psychology of marketing offer further understanding of how we might use communication to positively change behaviour through communicating approved social norms (Schultz, Nolan et al. 2007). This research describes how the most effective marketing for changing behaviour around energy use referenced what “the neighbours” are doing. This was found to be much more effective than appealing to peoples’ concern for the environment or for the wellbeing of future generations.

In the road safety area, we are likely to see more research that compares communication strategies based on fear or consequences with what is socially endorsed. The latter are likely to be more effective based on the psychology literature relating to energy use and binge drinking. At the current time we need to rollout our communications strategies bearing in mind the empirical findings from these other contexts.
1.4 AGF and communication

The AGF takes a multi-faceted approach to communicating messages about road safety. The tools that are used are largely dependent on the message and the target audience. Communicating messages can be difficult with the saturation of public and private spaces and strong competition for people’s time and attention. Our approach to communication is extensive and takes advantage of as many opportunities as are available to effect change for safer cycling.

The AGF utilises a wide range of communication tools including social media, mass education and communication campaigns, co-branding with corporate partners and a direct approach to key decision makers. The use of personal or electronic methods varies dependent on a variety of factors: the urgency of the message, the complexity of the details needed to convey the message and facilitate other people’s understanding or to move an argument forward, previous knowledge and engagement and the desired outcome.

From the AGF perspective, communication is only effective if it leads to measurable improvements in the safety of bicycle riders, that is, fewer bicycle rider crashes resulting in serious injury or a fatality. While metaphors may be helpful in describing road safety, the least successful is the silver bullet. It does not exist. Changing people’s attitudes and behaviours in relation to road safety is a long, detailed and sometimes challenging discussion that involves many different people about how each of us can move from the starting location to the destination of our journey safely – regardless of what travel mode we choose.

In this paper, we will discuss how the different communication approaches were used in four key AGF activities. Using a case study approach, we have detailed the communications tools used in four programs: Case Study 1) AGF Manifesto for safer bicycle riding in Australia; Case Study 2) a metre matters; Case Study 3) Ride Right, and; 4) Cycle Safe Communities.

2 Case study 1 – Manifesto for safer bike riding in Australia

The AGF is rich in expertise, passion, enthusiasm and commitment to increasing the safety of bicycle riders in Australia. However, like many not-for-profit organisations, the AGF is poor in time and resources. To maximise our efforts in improving safety outcomes, we needed a plan; to help us internally, to focus our intentions and prioritise our actions; and to help us externally, to articulate our strategies and mission concisely to be shared with other people and organisations to inform them of our course of action, to invite them to collaborate and to challenge them to take meaningful action. Our plan is the AGF Manifesto for safer bicycle riding in Australia (see Figure 1).

The AGF Manifesto is an essential communication tool.

2.1 A single, concise document

The AGF Manifesto is a single, concise, ten page document and was deliberately developed as a standalone document. The text was developed iteratively with each revision seeking to further refine the statements included. The ten pages were developed using the AGF colour palette, an immediately recognisable mix of magenta (pink) and bright orange: pink was Amy’s favourite colour and bright orange represents safety. The AGF four-piece logo is
displayed on each page so even if a single page is taken out of context, it can be linked back to the AGF.

![AGF Manifesto for safer bike riding in Australia](image)

**Figure 1**
AGF Manifesto for safer bike riding in Australia

Plain language is used with extensive use of large font sizes, break out text and repetition of the action list of 3, 2, 1, 0. The concept of 3, 2, 1, 0 simplifies the structure of the document and provides logical anchor points for the document and signposts for the reader to follow. The 3, 2, 1, 0 concept is explained in more detail below.

In addition to our actions, the AGF Manifesto is an invitation to others to collaborate with us. As the intention of the Foundation is clearly detailed, it makes it easier for others to determine where there are synergies in aims and approaches. Some of the statements are intentionally provocative and included to deliberately challenge some key stakeholders to do better, to get involved, and take meaningful action to achieve greater safety outcomes for bicycle riders and potentially all road users.

### 2.2 Using the Safe System approach

The Safe System approach underpins the actions of the AGF. In utilising this framework, we are able to comprehensively and systematically assess the issues impacting cycling safety and identify the key issues. The framework helps to structure the gap analysis of the wide and complex range of issues that impact bicycle riders when they travel on road, off-road and interact with other road users. Once the issues that need to be addressed have been identified, we are then able to determine which areas we will target.

The AGF Manifesto is structured using a simple concept of a countdown, that is, 3, 2, 1, 0. These three numbers represent:

- **3** take action on 3 critical factors, safer roads and speeds, safer vehicles, safer people
- **2** work 2gether for safe bicycle riding
- **1** a metre matters
- **0** zero bicycle rider deaths from 2020
The logic of the countdown is that the first three strategic stages are all designed to work towards the end goal of zero bicycle rider deaths from 2020. Across the document are all four elements of the Safe System approach.

Typically, the overarching aim of the Safe System, as it is adopted by jurisdictional agencies in Australia, is a reduction of road trauma by 30 percent over the decade ending 2021. While this may be considered an operational or achievable outcome, at the AGF we believe that the overarching aim should be more aspirational, more akin to the Swedish approach of VisionZero. We consider an aspirational approach to road safety to be vital to achieving significant improvements in safety for all road users and to reinforce this we have included the following quotation from Claes Tingvall, Director of the Swedish National Road Administration:

'We need to understand as a society that we can demand freedom and mobility. And we can demand safety at the same time' (Tingvall 2013).

2.3 Examples of the AGF Manifesto as a communication tool

Two examples of how the AGF Manifesto has been used as an effective communication tool are: 1) with key decision makers e.g. politicians and 2) public presentations.

Key decision makers, for example senior government staff or politicians carry multiple portfolio agendas and priorities, are time-poor and usually have a wide range of topics and issues they need to be briefed on across their day. We were mindful of the style of internal government department briefs when developing the AGF Manifesto and this influenced the document size (it's short) and order of information (background with essential information followed by options for action). The bright colours used in the graphic design make it easy to recognise, recall and if the document is printed, makes it easy to find.

In recent discussions with senior government officials including Ministers and Premiers about issues impacting cycling safety, we have been able to introduce the AGF Manifesto as a touchstone for the meeting. Often it has replaced a more rigid meeting agenda with a line-by-line review becoming the focus of interactive discussions. A recent successful outcome of using the AGF Manifesto with key decision makers has been a partnership with the New South Wales state government to complement existing road safety initiatives with a state-wide cycling safety education and awareness campaign delivered by the AGF, which when delivered will represent the most comprehensive state-based cycling safety campaign in more than eight years.

Public presentations are another example of how the AGF Manifesto is an important communication tool. After the document was finalised, the text was translated into a ‘deck’ of PowerPoint slides presentation. The presentation version draws directly from the AGF Manifesto including speaker notes for each slide. Again the bright, colourful graphics were used, reinforcing the AGF brand.

In addition to the value of the content of the AGF Manifesto presentation deck of slides, this approach has also resulted in greater efficiencies. The slides can be presented by all members of the AGF team to any audience at a moment’s notice. We have practiced the presentation and refined the content and the speaker notes. The slides can also be modified to suit different
circumstances and additional information about AGF work programs and outputs can be included. The slides have been presented in a range of forums and have been presented in short form (7 minutes) and longer form (20 minutes). The longer format includes additional details on specific AGF programs, campaigns or events.

Four recent examples of use of the AGF Manifesto presentation slides were in Adelaide (March 2013), Melbourne (April 2013), Brisbane (July 2013) and Perth (August 2013). In all presentations, the organisers had invited us to present information about what action was needed to improve bike rider safety.

In Melbourne, the deck of slides was presented at the Cycling Issues Forum held by the Institute of Transport Engineers (Australia and New Zealand Chapter). The public forum was to identify issues that directly impact bicycle rider safety and present some of the suggested action that may address these issues. Presenters were from a range of groups including government agencies, cycling advocacy, consultants and bicycle user groups. The AGF Manifesto presentation was delivered in its entirety, fitting exactly into the allocated 7 minutes.

In Adelaide, an extended version of the slides was presented at the Crash Compulsory Third Party Seminar, a forum for lawyers to learn about impending changes to the compulsory third party insurance scheme in South Australia. The purpose of the AGF presentation was to raise the issues of safety for bicycle riders on the road and inform the discussion about the impact of legislative change on outcomes for bicycle riders who had been involved in a crash. At 20 minutes, the longer format meant that additional slides could be added to tailor the AGF Manifesto base slide to the audience and the time allowed.

In Brisbane and Perth, the AGF presented the Manifesto to multiple stakeholder groups including the respective state transport agencies, bicycle organisations, and the RACWA and the RACQ. The presentations clearly outlined the range of action needed, across all elements of the Safe System, to achieve positive safety outcomes for bike riders. Importantly, the Manifesto illustrates the urgent need for behaviour change in a shared on-road environment and that no silver bullet exists. The AGF demonstrated that the whole spectrum of behaviour change elements including awareness raising, knowledge and education, training, legislation and enforcement.

Feedback from all forums was that the presentation was well planned, professional, clear and easy to follow. Post-presentation discussions often jumped straight into the detail of the slides confirming that the messages were understood and easy to recall. The presentations were delivered by members of the AGF staff who are experienced public speakers (MJ and TG) and the use of the deck of slides meant the preparation time was significantly reduced and each speaker could focus on tailoring the presentation to each audience.

The AGF Manifesto is an example of the use of a traditional format to clarify aims and goals. The use of plain language and headline level detail helps to ensure that the key messages are easily understood. Size was a key component, both to maximise readability, the likelihood that the entire document would be read, and the file size to allow for easy email attachment. Finally, translating the AGF Manifesto into a standard deck of slides ensured that every AGF team member could quickly and easily deliver the same message to any audience which improves our efficiencies and consistently reinforces our actions.
3 Case study 2 – *a metre matters*

A minimum safe passing distance applied by drivers when overtaking bicycle riders is one of the core actions targeted by the AGF. It represents the ‘1’ action in the AGF Manifesto. The campaign is based around the simple premise – drivers not hitting bicycle riders – is the fundamental change needed to improve bicycle rider safety.

The *a metre matters* campaign, conducted nationally since 2009 is the longest running AGF campaign. The main message is that when overtaking bicycle riders, drivers need to allow a minimum overtaking distance of one metre. The genesis of the campaign arose from the literature review conducted in an AGF-sponsored research project (Safe Family Research scholarship, MJ), in particular, a report from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau that found being hit from behind was the crash type that resulted in the highest number of bicycle rider fatalities (Australian Transport Safety Bureau 2006). In addition, in a naturalistic study of Melbourne bicycle riders, one author (MJ) identified that vehicles merging from the left, sideswipe and left turn across, all behaviours involving the vehicle overtaking the bicycle rider, accounted for 74 percent of all near crashes observed (Johnson, Charlton et al. 2010). Further, research by Walker in the UK reported that there were discrepancies in the lateral clearance offered to bicycle riders depending on their gender, position on the road and use of helmets, with a male wearing a helmet being afforded the least amount of lateral clearance by drivers (Walker 2007). On the basis of the crash data and the research evidence, the campaign for allowing a minimum passing distance was created.

The campaign was launched in November 2009 by the then Federal Minister for Transport, the Honourable Anthony Albanese, on the steps of New Parliament House.

3.1 *a metre matters* – the education/awareness campaign

Initially, *a metre matters* was an awareness raising campaign. The tagline was developed to convey the action in simple wording, the deliberate alliteration encouraging recall. The graphic logo helped to visually communicate the message (Figure 2).

![Figure 2](a metre matters original graphic (2009))

After three years, in late 2012, additional funding provided the opportunity to revise the graphic. In this revision, several important alterations were made to the graphic. The perspective was shifted from an aerial view to a rear view, the direction of the arrow and the vehicle types, to date a car, were extended to include a bus and a truck (see Figure 3).
This presentation of the message was widely and consistently used in AGF merchandise and public awareness campaigns including mass participation cycling event jerseys, stickers, wallet protectors, backpack covers as well as nationally through roadside billboards and outdoor advertising shells used in public transport stops. A corporate partnership with rental car company Europcar lead to the *a metre matters* message being added to the swing-tags hung on the rear vision mirror of 70,000 rental cars in Australia in November-December 2012 and repeated in March-April 2013 (Figure 4).

More recently, Europcar has developed a rear windsreen *a metre matters* sticker, co-branded with the AGF and 20,000 stickers have been produced. By the end of August 2013, the entire Europcar fleet (12,000) will have the sticker applied with the remainder being used in cycling events and other AGF aligned events including Amy’s Gran Fondo and the 2014 Tour Down Under.

*a metre matters* and the associated graphics are trademarks of the Amy Gillett Foundation.

### 3.2 *a metre matters* – advocating for legislative change
From 2009 to 2012, the focus of the campaign was on education, promoting the message that drivers need to allow adequate space when overtaking bicycle riders. We note that, as at August 2013, six out of eight states and territories (all but Queensland and the ACT) also recommend that drivers leave at least a metre when overtaking bicycle riders. However, in early 2013, the lack of legislative protection for bicycle riders was evidenced and our attention shifted from education to participation in a debate about the desirability of a specific change to legislation.

In 2011, Richard Pollett aged 22 years was riding his bicycle in Brisbane when he was hit by a cement truck and killed. The driver of the truck was accused of driving dangerously and causing the death of a cyclist, however, he claimed that he had thought there was adequate space to overtake Richard safely. The driver was wrong; Richard was hit by the rear wheels of the truck and killed. In May, the Brisbane District Court found the driver not guilty and that it was reasonable that the driver presumed adequate space.

This outcome was evidence that the existing law and the awareness message of the need for a minimum safe passing distance was not enough to keep bicycle riders safe and that there was a case for legislative change. This finding led to a massive campaign to mobilise the public to call for action using social media.

In June 2013, based on the earlier research evidence and a review of current international legislation in countries with a legislated minimum passing distance, the AGF launched an online forum where individuals could have their say and make their views known to elected members of government. The main form of communication in this phase was a form letter available from the AGF website that individuals could add their name to and send to their local member of parliament to change the existing legislation regarding safe overtaking distances from vague phrases like ‘sufficient’ and ‘adequate’ to a specified distance, 1m in low speed zones (up to 60km/h) and 1.5m in higher speed zones (over 60km/h). Support from major cycling organisations including Cycling Australia, MTB Australia and Triathlon Australia helped spread the word. Social media networks were used to forward the call to action to close to 100,000 followers. In total, the AGF was copied in on over 1,000 letters to MPs from the general public.

As a direct result of the pressure from the members of the public, members of the Greens party contacted the AGF to collaborate on the drafting of amendments to legislation. This led to the giving of notice for private members bills in South Australia (a Bill was lodged in June 2013), Victoria, New South Wales, and a Parliamentary inquiry into Cycling Issues in Queensland. Further, a review into cycling-related road rules is being conducted by VicRoads. Nationally, the Greens party publicly supported the need for specified overtaking distances, and the Australian Road Rules Review Board will discuss minimum overtaking distance at its October 2013 meeting. At the time of writing, proposed amendments to legislation are being considered by five states and territories and at Federal level.

*a metre matters* is an example of a campaign that required a mixture of communication tools to achieve success. The combination of public campaigns, familiarisation of the brand, widespread recognition of the message, rationale for the need for change and the use of social media were all necessary components of the campaign. It is difficult to determine the impact of any one communication tool to achieve the success, however, it is clear that no one tool would have achieved this level of success.
One word of caution on social media; social media can be a powerful tool to convey messages including road safety messages. However, it can also become a fool’s paradise and it is important to balance message frequency with factual content, reference to evidence and information sources, relevance and calls to action.

4 Case study 3 – Ride Right

The Ride Right campaign was developed in 2012 with funding from the TAC, to develop an awareness campaign that targeted key road user behaviours important for improving bicycle rider safety. With a small community grant from the TAC ($25,000) a series of messages were created that could be easily and affordably reproduced and would achieve cut through in the information saturated public spaces.

4.1 Tone

Tone was a critical factor in the development of the Ride Right messages. Often road safety messaging in Australia is serious, sombre and focuses on the unsafe outcomes of road trauma. In this campaign, we aimed to connect with bike riders on a different emotional level, namely humour and satire to engage people with the messages. Essentially the messaging was that people take responsibility for their own behaviour. It was important to resist a preaching tone that would be readily dismissed by a sophisticated public audience. The caricatures used invite discussion and some interpretation and avoid a moral tone of blame.

A rigorous approach was used to identify the types of behaviours that would be addressed, mainly the types of behaviour that contributed to bicycle rider crashes. In total, nine Ride Right themes were identified, with a key message and images developed for each theme (Figure 5).

Again the consistency of the messaging is important. One of the clear gaps in communicating road safety messages for bike riders is consistent messaging. In Ride Right, the creative was been developed to enables local groups to use the messages without additional cost, and to ensure the messaging is consistent to increase take-up in the community.

As with the AGF Manifesto, the Ride Right images have also been adapted into a deck of slides with speaker notes that can be easily used by all AGF staff. Two recent examples of the use of Ride Right in the community and to promote bicycle rider safety were in the local government area of Baw Baw in regional Victoria and in an article on The Conversation website.
Research into cycling safety issues in the Baw Baw Shire area had recommended that road safety messages were needed to improve cycling safety in the area (Johnson and Le 2012, Johnson and Davey 2013). One Council action to implement this recommendation was to promote cycling safety in the weeks leading up to the annual Ride to School Day. On one day a week for six weeks, the Council ran a new Ride Right theme and image in the local newspaper and on their website to raise awareness about cycling safety issues and to promote the event. The Warragul and Drouin Gazette circulates to over 10,000 households throughout West Gippsland and the Shire of Baw Baw (Figure 6).
Why do cyclists ride through red lights is an article written for online media outlet The Conversation that reported on the reasons why people sometimes ride through red lights using results from a national online survey (Johnson 2013). Written by an AGF staff member (MJ), the article linked in one of the Ride Right messages, stop on red, including the graphic and a link to the AGF website. This cross-promotion of messaging and linking the primary research with the campaign outcome is an example of how communication tools can be easily linked in an online format to maximise the messaging and extend the audience. To date, the article on The Conversation has been opened by over 34,700 people including over 7,000 (20%) international readers and is the most read article on this site by any Monash University academic.

A different tone, such as humour can be a powerful way to cut through to the public with positive messages about road safety, particularly when juxtaposed with the typical sombre messages. Bright colours and caricatures can capture a wide audience and a series of images makes it easier for local groups to implement a longer campaign, one that minimises the time and expense of recreating graphic designs.

The satirical element of Ride Right was demonstrated to have maximum effect when delivered in a closed, or direct environment with the audience, bicycle riders. When delivered in a mass media format, the element of satire was more likely to be lost in the message. The AGF is currently developing Ride Right MKII, retaining a humorous graphic however with a positive graphical depiction of ‘what to do’ rather than with the satirical graphic depiction of ‘what not to do’.

5 Case study 4 – Cycle Safe Communities

The final case study in this paper is Cycle Safe Communities. This online platform addresses the key communications gap of consistency in cycling safety messaging.

Cycle Safe Communities is a way to reduce reinventing the cycle safety message wheel. Invariably when groups launch a campaign for bicycle rider safety, we observe new and reinvented slogans and images for the same or similar key messages. It was clear to us that this reinvention of the wheel was reducing the impact of the messaging, potentially causing confusion in communities, and costly with obvious creative, development and production costs borne by each individual organisation. Cycle Safe Communities is a way to address these issues.
Cycle Safe Communities is a webpage on the AGF website that provides access to all the AGF bicycle rider safety campaigns and AGF-supported third party cycling safety campaigns and messages. All campaign content can be accessed free of charge for registered and approved groups and organisations (third parties) to use in their local area.

For the organisations that use Cycle Safe Communities to access cycling safety messages, there are numerous benefits:

- reduced costs, as the creative graphics and messaging and media-based applications are already developed and available at no charge to registered groups
- reduced time, the images are production quality and ready for immediate use across multiple media
- leverage, the messages are delivered as joint campaigns of the AGF and the third party. As a communication tool, co-branding immediately notifies the audience that there is a relationship between the organization delivering the campaign and the AGF. Further, local organisations know their local community well and are able to determine how messages would be most effectively distributed, much more so than an external group
- longevity, the redistribution of the creative costs could be used to extend the campaign
- consistency, critical for public cut through and cross-regional relevance

To date, ten local organisations and numerous AGF partner organisations are delivering campaigns from Cycle Safe Communities. Engagement ranges from conducting an entire communications campaign, to accessing and using a single image to purchasing AGF collateral. For example Far North Queensland BikeSafe is delivering an outdoor campaign using prominent outdoor billboards and buses supported by generous contributions from local and business networks (Figure 7).

![Figure 7](a metre matters awareness campaign, bus and billboard examples from Far North Queensland)

From the AGF perspective, Cycle Safe Communities is an enabler. It is an online communications tool, facilitating the delivery by third parties of bicycle rider safety communication campaigns across multiple visual media platforms.

6 Conclusion

The AGF uses a wide range of communication tools to delivery awareness and educational messages for improved safety for bicycle riders, leading to behaviour change. Arguably the most important factor is consistency. With consistent messaging, repeated over and over again, the messages will have a greater likelihood of cutting through the noise in the public space and contributing to social norms. Our experience has been that there are enormous benefits to be gained in collaborating with other cycling-safety focused organisations and greater gains can be achieved through coordinated efforts than one-off efforts.
Across the four case studies presented in this paper we can see incremental gains. We are increasing the relationships with local organisations to increase the awareness of the actions needed through our AGF Manifesto, moving towards legislated change for a minimum one metre overtaking distance, developing a suite of messages thorough *Ride Right* that can be accessed by the whole community through the *Cycle Safe Communities*.

As in all areas of road safety it is difficult to measure success as it is likely that a range of factors improve a safety outcome, as opposed to a single communications strategy. However, communication is a critical factor in that mix and improved messaging, greater consistency and wider distribution will all contribute to improved road safety outcomes.

### 7 References


