

# New cycling rules

**Whether you travel on two wheels, four wheels or more, we all need to get along and share the road safely.**

That's why the Queensland Government has introduced new rules to protect all road users. It's in everyone's interest to follow these new rules and stay safe.

## What are the new rules?

### Minimum passing distance for motorists

From 7 April 2014, by law, motorists must stay wider of the rider by giving:

- a minimum of 1 metre when passing cyclists in a 60km/h or less speed zone; and
- 1.5 metres where the speed limit is over 60km/h.

From this date motorists can cross centre lines (including double unbroken centre lines), straddle lane-lines and drive on painted islands to pass cyclists, provided the driver has a clear view of any approaching traffic and it is safe to do so.

These new road rules will initially be trialled over two years.

This law is the first of its kind in Australia and will road-test the impact the rules have on saving lives.

### But what if I can't give a metre?

The purpose of this new rule is to give some clarity around a distance most people already provide when passing cyclists. The aim is also to make drivers more aware of cyclists.

On the road though, you may sometimes find yourself in a situation where you are unsure of what to do.

Always apply common sense, obey the rules and remember:

1. Check your surroundings and the cars around you
2. If it is safe to do so, indicate and pass the cyclist at the minimum distance
3. If not, slow down and wait until it is safe to pass.

## Fines for cyclists

Responsible cycling means following the road rules.

To encourage safer behaviour on our roads, cyclists who break the road rules will pay the same fines as motorists.

Fines will also be increased for rules that are specific to cyclists.

Cyclists who follow the road rules will not be affected by these changes.

## How did these new rules come about?

A Queensland Parliamentary committee inquiry was conducted to determine how to improve interactions between motorists and cyclists, and the safety of cyclists on the road.

The inquiry received numerous submissions from cycling and motoring groups and members of the public and made 68 recommendations to improve cyclist safety.

The Queensland Government has committed to review all the recommendations. While this happens, the new minimum passing distances and equal fines for cyclists (relating to recommendations 8, 9, 14 and 31) have been expedited.

These changes will bring immediate improvements from 7 April 2014 to the safety of cyclists on Queensland roads.

*Turn over for some Frequently Asked Questions...*

# Minimum passing distance

## 1. Why is a minimum passing distance being trialled?

Many cyclist fatalities on the road are caused by cyclists being hit from behind by a motor vehicle travelling in the same direction. Cyclists have less protection than motorists and are more likely to be injured if a crash happens, so they need adequate space when interacting with vehicles.

Introducing a minimum distance for passing cyclists will help to reduce confusion about how much space is safe when passing a cyclist and raise awareness of cyclists' vulnerability on the road.

## 2. Does the minimum passing distance apply to all motor vehicles?

Yes, the rule applies to all types of vehicles, including cars, motorbikes, heavy vehicles and public transport vehicles.

## 3. When does the minimum passing distance apply?

The rule applies whenever a motorist is passing a cyclist travelling in the same direction.

This includes when you are travelling alongside a cyclist in your own lane on a multi-lane road. It does not apply when you are travelling in opposite directions or on opposite sides of the road to a cyclist.

## 4. If I do not give the appropriate minimum distance, what penalties will I receive?

Motorists who break the rule will receive three demerit points and a fine of \$330. A maximum fine of \$4,400 can apply if the matter goes to court.

## 5. How is the passing distance measured?

The passing distance is measured from:

- the rightmost part of the bicycle, or the person on the bicycle; to
- the leftmost part of the vehicle, or something projecting from the vehicle, such as a mirror.

## 6. How will the new rule be enforced?

The Queensland Police Service will enforce the minimum passing distance as part of its ongoing role in enforcing road rules.

## 7. Can I cross centre lines to pass cyclists?

Yes. To pass a cyclist, as long as you do so safely, you can:

- Drive over centre line/s on a two-way road – **new rule**
- Straddle or cross a lane line (including a continuous lane line) on a multi-lane road – **new rule**
- Drive on a painted island to pass a cyclist on a multi-lane road – **new rule**
- Cross the centre of the road where there is a broken centre line or no centre line.

## 8. Why are motorists now allowed to cross continuous centre lines to pass a cyclist?

Continuous centre lines are used where it is unsafe for a vehicle to pass another vehicle travelling at a similar speed. They are often used at risky locations such as sharp corners.

Bicycles travel at slower speeds than vehicles, so motorists can pass them more quickly, and may cross centre lines safely (provided there is no oncoming traffic or other hazards). The road rules already permit vehicles to cross continuous centre lines to avoid an obstruction, such as a broken down truck.

The road rules about continuous centre lines are therefore being updated to make the existing provision clearer and help motorists comply with the minimum passing distance rules. The update will not compromise road safety.

Before you cross continuous centre lines to pass a cyclist, you must still ensure that it is safe to do so, and watch for oncoming traffic and other hazards.

**You must not cross continuous centre lines to pass another motor vehicle.**

## 9. What should I do if I can't give the minimum passing distance because of oncoming traffic or other road conditions?

You must slow down and wait until road conditions change, then safely pass the cyclist using the minimum distance.

You may cross or straddle lane lines, centre lines or a painted island to pass a cyclist, provided you can do so safely.

## 10. Does a cyclist need to observe the minimum distance when passing motorists?

Cyclists are expected to keep a safe distance when passing other traffic.

However, the minimum passing distance applies to motorists passing a cyclist, not cyclists passing motorists. This is because of the greater risk faced by cyclists when motorists pass them too closely. Cyclists do not pose the same risk to motorists.

## 11. What if I've stopped and a cyclist pulls up beside me within the minimum passing distance?

If you have stopped, for example at traffic lights or in a line of traffic, and a cyclist stops beside you within the minimum passing distance, you have not committed an offence. When the traffic starts moving let the cyclist ride ahead, and only overtake the cyclist when you can safely leave the minimum passing distance.

## 12. What happens when a cyclist passes me in my car, bus or heavy vehicle with less than the minimum distance?

You have not committed an offence. The minimum passing distance applies to motorists passing a cyclist, not cyclists passing motorists. This is because of the greater risk faced by cyclists when motorists pass them too closely. Cyclists do not pose the same risk to motorists.

However, cyclists are also expected to keep a safe distance when passing other traffic.

### 13. What happens if I need to pass two cyclists riding beside each other?

You will need to apply the minimum passing distance to the cyclist furthest to the right.

Cyclists can ride side by side on a road as long as they are not more than 1.5 metres apart.

### 14. Do I have to indicate when passing a cyclist?

Yes. You must:

- Indicate right long enough to warn other road users you're about to change direction to pass a cyclist
- Indicate left when you have passed the cyclist and are moving back to your original position on the road.

This applies whenever you change direction to pass a cyclist, not just when you have to cross centre or lane lines.

### 15. What happens if a cyclist is riding around an obstacle and I need to pass them?

You must always leave the minimum passing distance between your vehicle and the cyclist. If this is not possible, it is as simple as waiting until the cyclist has finished the manoeuvre and it is safe to pass them.

### 16. As a cyclist, whereabouts on the road should I ride?

On a multi-lane road, you can take up any part of the lane space.

On a road that is not a multi-lane road you should ride as near as practicable to the far left side of the road.

### 17. Does the minimum passing distance apply when I am passing a bicycle travelling in a bicycle lane?

Yes. You must keep the appropriate minimum distance when passing a bicycle to your left in a bicycle lane.

### 18. Does a minimum passing distance apply elsewhere in Australia?

No other Australian state or territory has a legislated minimum passing distance for a motorist passing a cyclist yet.

### 19. How will the trial be evaluated?

The rule is being introduced as a two-year trial. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will seek independent advice about how the trial should be evaluated. It is expected that the evaluation will consider the practicability of the rule, road users' attitudes and perceptions and road safety benefits.

## Equal fines for cyclists

### 1. As a cyclist, what changes to fines do I need to know about?

From 7 April 2014 fines equal to motorists' fines will apply for cyclists who disobey road rules.

Common offences include:

- Failing to stop at a red traffic light – \$330
- Disobeying a 'No U-turn sign at an intersection – \$88
- Failing to stop at a 'Stop' sign at an intersection – \$330
- Exceed speed limit in a speed zone by less than 13km/h – \$146

Penalties will also be increased for rules that are specific to you as cyclists.

Common offences include:

- Carrying more passengers than on a bicycle is designed for – \$110
- Failing to give way to pedestrian on a footpath or shared path – \$110
- Failing to display a light at night or in hazardous weather conditions – \$110

### 2. Why are the fines being increased?

As legitimate road users, cyclists must obey the same road rules as motorists. The Queensland Government is committed to providing a safer environment for all road users.

Last year 13 cyclists lost their lives on Queensland roads. Cyclists who don't follow the road rules put themselves and other road users at risk.

### 3. If I commit an offence on my bicycle and hold a driver's licence will I accumulate demerit points?

No, demerit points will not be accumulated, however the fine will be the same amount as it would be for motorists.

### 4. Is there a minimum age limit for a cyclist who commits an offence to receive a fine?

No. There is no minimum age limit to receive fines for an offence from the Queensland Police Service.

### 5. Are any other road users affected by the changes to the fines?

Yes. Riders of animals and drivers of animal-drawn vehicles will also have to pay the new fine amounts if they disobey the road rules.

### 6. Are fines for motorists and cyclists equal elsewhere in Australia?

Some states have already introduced equal fines for motorists and cyclists, and others are considering introducing them.