

# Minimising Pedestrian-Cyclist Conflict on Paths



Information Note No 8

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## Education and awareness-raising

Conflict on paths can arise from different expectations of users' rights and responsibilities.

There are no user-competency tests comparable to the requirement for a driver's licence for driving a motor vehicle on public roads, which at least provide the basis for a commonly-understood view of how roads should be used.

Road user awareness programs in schools can provide a grounding in the etiquette of path use, but it is often adult pedestrians and cyclists who are involved in conflict on paths.

Information at the point of use or incorporated in maps (see Information Note 7, *Information*) can provide reinforcement, but will be most effective when people already have a reasonable knowledge of the requirements.

The main issues (see *Overview*) addressed by this Information Note are:

- footpath users
- people with disabilities
- young/inexperienced users
- user behaviour: awareness
- user behaviour: operational
- speed
- access and continuity
- path safety.

## Importance of Awareness

Whilst regulations and guidelines exist for a number of bicycle/pedestrian issues, they need to be more clearly observed, understood and followed (see also, Information Note 7, *Information*, and Information Note 9, *Regulation and Enforcement*).

People need to be aware of their own responsibilities when using footpaths or shared paths. They may also need to be provided with 'coping strategies' in the event of potential or actual conflict arising.

Enhanced awareness is likely to require a combination of initiatives, including broad-based user information, in addition to maps and point-of-use information (Information Note 7, *Information*) and appropriate

enforcement of rules (Information Note 9, *Regulation and enforcement*).

### Codes of conduct for path users

A code of conduct aims to provide clear and concise information, in a readily accessible form, to as wide a range of users as possible.

A code of conduct is of limited value unless combined with enforcement and distributed in a clear and simple form to as many people as possible. However, the information in a Code of Conduct can be used as the basis for awareness-raising through other media, such as local newspapers. It can also be used in a targeted way when or where particular conflict issues arise.

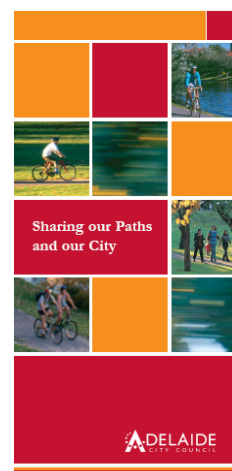
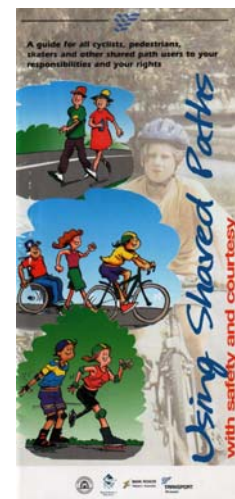
Codes of conduct should be targeted at all users of footpaths and shared paths and communicated to current and potential users. They have a wide use in terms of providing information to support other marketing and encouragement/ awareness initiatives with information.

Codes of conduct have been developed for Western Australia (Road Safety Council 1998) and for the City of Adelaide (City of Adelaide undated). However, the WA Code is no longer up-to-date (after the adoption of the Australian Road Rules).

Road Safety Council (1998) produced a guide for all shared path users on their responsibilities and rights in order to help minimise conflicts between them. It lists the following basic advice:

#### Cyclists

- Keep left and signal
- acknowledge others
- pedestrians have right of way
- ride at a safe and considerate speed
- ring your bell
- ride in single file



- wear a helmet
- follow legal lighting requirements when riding at night.

### **Pedestrians**

- keep left
- be predictable
- be seen
- acknowledge others
- leave headphones at home
- control your dog.

The WA guide also provides comparable information and guidance for skaters, on the basis that whilst not legal on paths, skating is generally tolerated provided skaters are considerate of other path users.

This guide has not been updated to reflect the Australian Road Rules and is not currently in print. However, the approach applied and most of its contents provide a useful model that could be adopted at a local, regional or statewide level.

A Code of Conduct Notice for Cyclists suggested by the Department for Transport (2004b) in the UK provides more detailed advice for cyclists:

- If a feature segregating cyclists from pedestrians is present, keep to the cyclist's side. This will be indicated on blue and white road signs and by cycle logos on the surface.
- When coming up behind pedestrians, always pass them at a safe distance and slowly enough so that you could avoid them if they made a sudden change in direction.
- Remember that some pedestrians may be hard of hearing or visually impaired and hence may not be aware of you. If in doubt, give a gentle ring on your bell or say 'Excuse me'.
- Always respect pedestrians even if they stray onto the cycling side (if there is one); they are entitled to do so. Always thank people who move out of the way.
- Ride at a sensible speed for the situation and ensure you can stop in time. As a general rule, if you want to cycle quickly, say in excess of 30 km/h then you should be riding on the road.
- Use lights at night.
- In pedestrianised areas only ride your cycle if there aren't too many pedestrians about; otherwise dismount and push it.



**Senior Road Users' Handbooks such as the one shown above are a useful tool for raising awareness of other users.**

Particular groups of path users, such as children, seniors or people with disabilities, may have specific needs in relation to path use, including coping strategies for situations where potential or actual conflict arises. Information for these users can also serve as a means of raising the awareness of other path users of the needs and capabilities of diverse groups.

Such information may be disseminated by a variety of means, including local newspapers, user groups and community groups.

### **Using awareness materials effectively**

The principles of shared use and appropriate user behaviour can be identified, but some simple messages and ways of using them need to be developed if they are to reduce levels of conflict resulting from interactions between users on paths. These might include:

- appropriate behavioural guidelines (e.g. cycle notes), given official status and made available to all users through a range of media. Government agencies and cyclist organisations should work together to get the message across.
- awareness campaigns/education that are given the same importance as traffic/road rules, for all shared path users. These should include the many benefits of cycling/walking as opposed to car dependence, but followed up with some simple tips on how pedestrians/cyclists should act toward each other to help increase awareness and consideration. This could also involve targeted campaigns sending out messages such as 'share the path'.
- pedestrian education programs with respect to the Australian Road Rules, especially the one that states that path users must not unnecessarily obstruct other path users.

It is also recommended that the Australian Road Rules be amended to re-introduce the requirement for all path users to keep left on shared paths, in order to match and support the many sensible codes of conduct already in use.

Campaigns and awareness initiatives should focus on community groups and individuals that use these facilities, such as bicycle user groups, walking groups, fitness groups and local schools. It is considered essential that young people (perhaps primary school age) be educated at school about the needs of other users.

It is important that the content of the awareness campaigns also includes information on how to report inappropriate behaviour (see Information Note 9, *Regulation and enforcement*).

Campaigns may be reinforced by the use of media and printed materials available on-site or close to the paths themselves. Kiosks, bike hire places, bike shops and cafes could offer this information. Brochures could also be sent out with vehicle registration renewals as most pedestrians are motorists or have a motorist in the family. T-shirts printed with a message e.g. 'cyclists ring your bell' are another option. Promotional activities such as free bike bells should also be considered.

## References

City of Adelaide (undated). *Sharing our paths and our city*. Adelaide City Council: Adelaide, South Australia. (Brochure). [http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/council/publications/Brochures/Sharing\\_Our\\_Paths.pdf](http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/council/publications/Brochures/Sharing_Our_Paths.pdf)

Department for Transport 2004b, *Annex D : Code of conduct notice for cyclists*. Local Transport Notes on Walking and Cycling, Department for Transport UK. [http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft\\_localtrans/documents/page/dft\\_localtrans\\_028711.hcsp](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_localtrans/documents/page/dft_localtrans_028711.hcsp)

Road Safety Council 1998, *Using Shared Paths with Safety and Courtesy: A Guide for All Cyclists, Pedestrians, Skaters and Other Shared Path Users to Your Responsibilities and Your Rights*. Booklet. Road Safety Council: Perth, WA.