



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

CBD BUG

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Mr Jeffrey Weigh
Chief Executive Officer
South Bank Corporation
PO Box 2001
SOUTH BANK QLD 4101
Via email: vicsouthbank@brisbanemarketing.com.au

Dear Mr Weigh

I refer to the recent installation by the South Bank Corporation (SBC) of signs prohibiting the riding of bicycles along the footpath on the eastern side of Grey Street St, South Brisbane between Little Stanley St and Tribune St.

This letter calls for the removal of these signs as they:

1. cause additional danger for people riding bikes by forcing them to ride on the road, or result in inconvenience for bicycle riders by obliging them to either use another, more indirect route or dismount to continue along the Grey St footpath
2. in light of both evidence-based research and anecdotal observations is unwarranted, and
3. are an ill-considered, over-reaction to vexatious complaints and contrary to the aim of encouraging cycling articulated by Brisbane City Council in its *Active Transport Strategy 2012-2026*, the Queensland Government in its *Queensland Cycling Strategy 2011-2021* and the Australian Government in its *National Cycling Strategy 2011-2016*.

As background for you, the Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group (CBD BUG) is a grass roots volunteer organisation of over 800 members, representing the interests of people riding bicycles to, from and within the Brisbane city centre. It is active in seeking policy decisions at all levels of government supporting people who want to cycle, and in particular relating to improved infrastructure, end-of-trip facilities, integration of cycling needs with other transport modes and a regulatory environment friendly towards people riding bikes. CBD BUG members meet monthly to exchange information and ideas, discuss issues of relevance and determine the direction of policies to benefit CBD cyclists.

We first became aware on 11 April 2016 of new "No bicycle" signs being placed along the Grey St and Little Stanley St footpaths following notification by one of our members.

Because of numerous concerns about the negative impacts of these signs on people riding bikes, on 15 April 2016 we emailed the SBC a list of questions about the process the SBC had followed prior to putting in these signs. The SBC email response to these questions is attached for your reference (Attachment 1). We note this response failed to address the questions posed by the CBD BUG, over-states the pedestrian traffic levels and the general Grey St footpath environment and understates the poor standard of cycling infrastructure on Grey St.

While the SBC may seek to portray the Grey St precinct as a “vibrant, desirable dining destination”, for much of the day it actually has very limited pedestrian traffic. As an example are recently captured images showing just how deserted this precinct is during the weekday morning peak travel period (Attachment 2). In fact, this footpath pales in terms of pedestrian traffic compared to most CBD footpaths, which are commonly shared by cyclists and pedestrians without issues.

Even during the peak dining periods on Friday and Saturday evenings our observations of this area point to there still being insufficient footpath traffic that would render it hazardous if a person chose to ride a bike along this footpath during those times.

As further evidence of the lack of sufficient grounds justifying the closure of this footpath to cyclists I would draw your attention to a paper published by the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q). This research was conducted in Brisbane during 2013 and found cyclists had “few conflicts with pedestrians”. (Source: Trends in cycling patterns and interactions with pedestrians in the city centre, Amy Schramm and Narelle Haworth, Asia-Pacific Cycle Congress, 2013 <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/58550/1/58550Pres.pdf>)

Furthermore, the issue of cyclists being allowed to ride on the footpath under the Queensland road rules was examined during the 2013 Queensland Parliament's Inquiry in Cycling Issues. The conclusion from that inquiry on this issue was that “while the right of cyclists to share footpaths with pedestrians including mobility impaired people has raised some concern from pedestrian groups in Queensland an examination of injury and crash statistics shows there is very little evidence to suggest that cyclists pose a safety risk to any other path users”. Accordingly, the inquiry committee formed the view that it did not support any change to the existing rules regarding people riding bikes on the footpath. (Source: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/committees/THLGC/2013/INQ-CYC/rp-39-29Nov13.pdf>)

We note in the SBC email the claim about near misses occurring on this footpath between pedestrians and cyclists. However, there is no indication of the number of near misses or over what period, the number of complainants, or of any actual crashes. We suggest that given the apparent lack of crashes between cyclists and pedestrians there is no genuine need to close this footpath to cyclists. Additionally, it is not uncommon for people to feel a near miss has occurred regardless of the actual distance between them and a cyclist riding on the footpath because they are either antagonistic towards bicycle riders, an increasingly commonly attitude according to report from the 2013 Cycling Issues Inquiry report; or they among the 48% of people who do not know that in Queensland people are generally allowed to cycle on footpaths (Source: June 2015 RACQ Mobility Survey).

In the SBC email response it is stated that that these signs only require cyclists to dismount while on the footpath and do not ban bikes from the area. However, this ignores the inconvenience and impact on the amenity of people wanting to ride bikes past this Grey St precinct. Brisbane is awash with signs indicating cyclists should dismount at all manner of locations where they should not have to – but are directed to for spurious reasons.

The installation of such signage appears to continue because administrators do not recognise the legitimacy of bike riding as a form of transport, and/or, are ignorant of how cycling would be non-viable if riders observed all of these signs. The lack of understanding by the SBC about the needs of people riding bikes along the Grey St corridor and/or disregard for their safety is highlighted in the Cycling at South Bank Parklands SBC document provided to the CBD BUG which states “Grey Street has dedicated on road bicycle lane which should be used as preference by all cyclists, opposed to the shared footpath”. This bike lane would currently be viewed as unsafe and unsuitable for cycling by approximately 98% of the community – because in not being physically separated from the traffic lane it is not “dedicated”. At the same time in also being situated in the “door zone” it places bike riders at serious risk from motorists opening vehicle doors into them without looking.

Because of the large area of the South Bank Parklands and its very limited through-routes for people riding bikes this area already acts as a substantial barrier to people riding bikes for transport: right on the very doorstep of the city. The expansion of the barrier to cyclists riding past the Grey St precinct will only serve to increase this disadvantage and further reduce cycling serving as a viable alternative to the use of private motor vehicles.

The ability for people to ride on the footpath in Queensland is one of the very few enablers of cycling in an otherwise overwhelmingly hostile road environment. Local, research has revealed that of the people who cycle on the footpath, the majority only do so reluctantly and typically take this approach along roads that riders consider as not providing a safe system for cycling (Source: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/49906/5/49906.pdf>)

Until there is a viable option provided for people to ride bikes safely along Grey St, i.e. an on-road bike lane especially physically segregated from the motorised traffic the Grey St footpath is the only useful avenue for the vast majority of people riding bikes along this corridor. Therefore, the CBD BUG calls on the SBC to remove these signs so people can again legally cycle along this footpath.

In contrast to the Grey St situation, it is recognised the Little Stanley St footpath has a much greater level of pedestrian traffic and has all but been taken over by footpath dining. The combination of this precinct itself being a destination and the crowded nature of this footpath would make it highly unlikely there would be any notable level of people riding along this footpath.

There are certain times when there are many bicycles parked in this area because their owners are engaging in trade with SBC tenants - and are in fact a major customer segment for some of these businesses. Accordingly, it is astonishing the SBC would engage in harassment of these customers who are spending a large amount of money at these businesses.

The issues on the Grey St could have been easily avoided if SBC had simply replaced two or three kerbside car parks with some bicycle parking. This would have resulted in a much reduced need for cyclists to take their bicycles on the footpath - because they would simply ride up to the bike racks, park, and then walk over to transact their business. This begs the question as to why has the SBC been so neglectful of providing proper bike parking and if SBC will now take responsibility for the problems that have been caused by this neglect?

I look forward to your response on these questions.

Yours faithfully

Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CBD BUG
23 May 2016

Cc: Cr Jonathan Sri, The Gabba Ward
Ben Wilson, CEO, Bicycle Queensland