



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

CBD BUG

GPO Box 2104, Brisbane Qld 4001

brisbanecbdbug@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/cbdbug/

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Mr Terry Ryan
State Coroner
GPO Box 1649
Brisbane Qld 4001

Via email to: State.Coroner@justice.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Ryan

Road traffic crash inquest reporting terminology

We are writing to urge the Queensland Coroner's Court to adopt using the words "crash", "incident" or "collision" instead of "accident" when reporting findings into inquests about traffic crashes.

Too often a traffic crash is referred to in reports by the Queensland Coroner's Court as an "accident". Our concerns arise because the term "accident" implies an act of God and an event that could not have been prevented. Not the result of several usually avoidable factors that lead up to a collision.

A word search of 16 of the Queensland Coroner's Court inquest reports into road traffic crashes released between 2017 and 2021 shows "crash" and "incident" was used about one third of the time while "collision" was used 15% of the time. We urge the Coroner's Court to in future only use these terms to provide more clarity and objectivity without any loss of meaning, instead of the term "accident", which was used in these reports 21% of the time.

We draw your attention to the "Road Collision Reporting Guidelines" that were released in the United Kingdom on 18 May 2021 and backed by their National Union of Journalists. Although aimed primarily at journalists, in our view the following Point 2 applies to coronial inquest reports. "Avoid use of the word 'accident' until the facts of a collision are known. Most collisions are predictable and before an enquiry or court case the full facts are unlikely to be known. It is particularly important to avoid the word when someone has been charged with driving offences. Using 'crash' or 'collision' instead leaves the question of who or what is to blame open, pending further details."

You can find details of the exhaustive process by which the guidelines were developed and more explanation of the rationale here: <https://www.rc-rg.com/guidelines>. Australia is no different to the United Kingdom in these regards.

It is our understanding that Associated Press changed their style guide in 2016 in a similar manner. We have not been able to find reporting guidelines or a style guide for your organisation. If you have reporting guidelines, we encourage you to incorporate the "Road Collision Reporting Guidelines" into it.

As background to this letter, the Brisbane CBD Bicycle User Group (CBD BUG) is a grass roots volunteer organisation of more than 800 members, representing the interests of the very large number of people riding bicycles to, from and within the Brisbane city centre. We actively seek decisions at all levels of government supporting people who want to cycle, 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. While the CBD BUG focuses on issues affecting people riding bikes for transport, we also strongly support initiatives enabling people to more often walk and use public transport.

We look forward to your content on traffic crashes being more appropriately reported in the future.

Yours faithfully



Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CBD BUG
4 July 2021

Cc: Bicycle Qld
Space4Cycling Brisbane