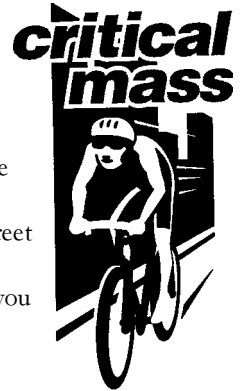


# MASSIVE

August 1998

Critical Mass Sydney

## Critical Mass Parramatta.



Critical Mass spawns a new ride in Parramatta. Rides will be happening on the second Friday of each month to allow all the Mass addicts to make it to **both**. Now of course for the first ever exciting ride, we need a huge presence to kick start the West's bicycle awareness and encourage the RTA to include all of Sydney in bike planning.

The inaugural ride will take place on Friday 11th September, meeting at 5.30pm in the Church Street Mall opposite Parramatta Town Hall.

Bring your Critical Mass T-shirts and flyers, but most of all bring your friends and your bikes. If you are catching the train, remember you will need to pay an extra half fare for your bike during peak hour.

## Reclaim the Streets.

The next Reclaim the Streets party is scheduled for All Hallows Eve, 31st October 1998. For those just tuning in, Reclaim the Streets is a vibrant expression of freedom in our communities where thousands gather to reclaim a city street for *people* rather than cars.

Cars have been the sole users of streets only in recent history. Prior to the dominance of cars streets were used for playing cricket, wandering around the neighbourhood, bumping into friends and neighbours and generally useful places for building community. Now roads divide, with their dangerous hulks of metal streaming along them spewing noxious fumes. Reclaim the Streets is an attempt to take back the streets for their original uses.

A meeting will be held this evening at 7:30pm at St Steven's church hall on Church Street in Newtown to plan the next reclaiming. If you're interested in this exciting activity, head down to the hall and get involved.

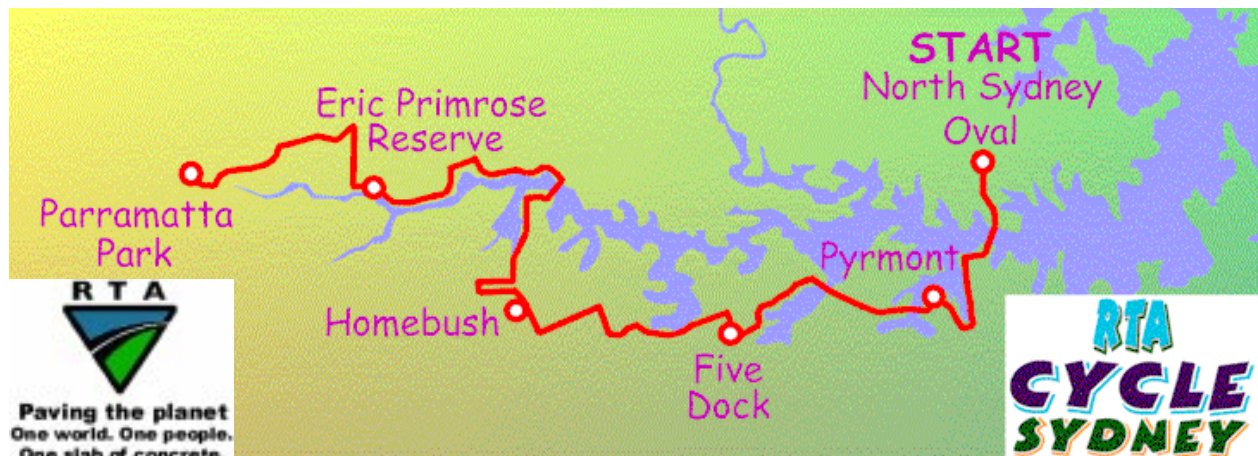


## Your chance to ride over the Harbour Bridge—legally!

The Bicycle NSW Cycle Sydney is on again. An annual huge ride targetted at mainstream Sydney's cyclists to get them out on the roads and encourage cycling. Every year sees many thousands of cyclists hitting the road in this fun day of cycling to Sydney's West. This year the North Sydney start will cross the deck of the Harbour Bridge, just like Critical Mass only officially sanctioned and even sponsored by our beloved RTA, before travelling West to Parramatta Park. Take your blue flags to recreate last November's wonderful ride!

Even better than Critical Mass, you get a free massage at rest stops and the finish and free public transport.

To join the ride on Sunday 20th September, 1998 contact Bicycle NSW (02) 9283 5200 or Woolys Wheels on Oxford Street.



## Critical Mass, Police and Permits.

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Once a month Critical Mass gives cyclists, bladers and boarders the unusual opportunity to ride together en masse and feel safe. Most people riding or walking around Sydney feel threatened and disempowered at least some of the time. Riding along with large boxes of metal travelling faster than you, knowing that if anything went wrong, you would come off a lot worse can become disheartening. Together in Critical Mass we are slow and safe rush hour traffic.

### Critical Mass is a social space.

In contrast to the communication barrier that exists literally between non-motorised and motorised transport, cyclists, bladers and boarders travelling together can talk. They can share their experiences, ideas and dreams. Every month I get the chance to have fascinating conversations with people who I've never met before. Friendships, romances, activist and professional networks all form between people on Critical Mass. Never underestimate the power of getting people talking.

Critical Mass also gives cyclists, bladers and boarders an opportunity to communicate with pedestrians and car drivers. While some of them may not wish to speak to us, many people are fascinated. You see their faces change from amazed stares to smiles as we roll past and if you can stop and chat to some of them and hand them a flyer, the vast majority of people are supportive—'good on ya' is a typical response.



### Critical Mass challenges car culture.

It says that there are healthier, cheaper, socially and environmentally preferable alternatives and that they deserve government funding. Critical Mass along with other movements such as Reclaim the Streets, question the vision of the Roads and Traffic Authority who see roads as the domain of fossil fuel powered vehicles, exclusive of cyclists, skaters and pedestrians. These sustainable transport movements are challenging the government to produce a comprehensive transport plan that will reduce car dependence (as promised) in November.

Any movement that challenges a dominant technology and a dominant culture is ridiculed and marginalised as it attempts to redefine what is normal. So while Critical Mass participants argue that they are 'riding home together' is no more an unlawful assembly than the smog producing rush hour car traffic, some politicians and police find it difficult to accept such arguments.

However recently cyclists, roller bladers and skaters are beginning to see some signs of mainstream acceptance—even the Daily Telegraph has noted that Critical Mass riders have a point. And government is beginning to respond. In March Carl Scully created a high profile position, General Manager, Bicycle Network within the RTA and set in motion a public consultation process about bicycle facilities in Sydney. This process is completed and the RTA and the Minister are now considering the level of funding that they will allocate to building a bicycle network. While progress is being made at this political level, Critical Mass itself is facing internal and external questions about its identity.

### Critical Mass is evolving.

Critical Mass does not cause traffic congestion (rides are often stuck behind slow moving cars), and behaves in a peaceful manner, but Critical Mass riders do put their collective safety ahead of red lights, their sense of spontaneity ahead of organisation. Until now, police have been very tolerant and have adopted an innovative non-confrontational policing strategy which has benefited both the people who ride on Critical Mass and the public in general. Some Critical Mass rides have even been accompanied by smiling friendly velocops (police on bicycles).

However, because Critical Mass is a group of people who get together for a purpose in a public place it is an unlawful assembly. Like it or not, the Summary Offences Act 1988 states that those wishing to participate in any such assembly must apply for a permit. This applies to student rallies, Union marches or protests by Afgans outside the US consulate. Perhaps the law needs to be changed so that people are able to assemble when and where they wish. However, there are in my opinion, reasonable reasons for the law—police have a duty of care towards both the participants in any public assembly and the public at large. In the case of Critical Mass this means they are obliged to accompany the ride in case of accidents or road rage. In a similar way the police would like to know roughly where the mass is going so that if necessary emergency vehicles can be redirected. Given this background, Critical Mass needs to grow and evolve.

### Why a permit?

A permit has been granted to ride tonight to the Newtown Neighbourhood centre at the end of King Street for a sustainable transport party! :-)) The permit was applied for in order to give people the chance to participate in a legal friendly ride. The change in police attitudes has been such that if a permit had not been applied for, the mass would have been regarded as an unlawful assembly and would have been dispersed by the police. Unfortunately a decision had been made within the police force that Critical Mass rides could not continue as they had been.

### What does a permit mean?

That like other public assemblies or marches, police request that if they give directions, participants obey them and also follow the proposed route. Police have indicated that large breakaway groups are liable to face fines or arrests so it is best if we all 'ride home together'. (See section on your rights).

Critical Mass is an amazing community event—its power is in its collective action. I hope that Critical Mass goes from strength to strength and continues to make colourful, vocal statements about the need for cycleways and sustainable transport in Sydney.

## Forum

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There will be a forum to discuss critical mass relations with the police and the whole permit issue after the mass in the main hall of the Newtown Neighbourhood centre - I hope that people who are passionate about this issue will come along and be involved in the discussion.

### **An alternative view**

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My concern about permits is that Critical mass is not a protest. It's an organised coincidence. Cyclist just turn up at a place on the last Friday of the month and ride. No organisers. No organisation to be hijacked for anyone's ends. Getting permits is not in alignment with my reasons for participating in critical mass. I have been consistent in my calls for none of us to have any contact with the police in relation to what the Mass may or may not do. What is happening now is a direct result of Police misunderstanding the motives and communication of those liaising with them. Look guys, just ride. Cut the chat. Get clear with your own intention in participating in the mass. The way we all can win is to keep it simple and straight forward, whether that is on the road or in the courts or on the telly or radio.

Linley Caetan

### **And another view.**

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Last Friday of the month has often found me in town participating in a Critical Mass ride. A ride characterised by good humour, good intentions and good people. Surrounded by fellow cyclists and bladders I don't need to fear being knocked over (as I almost was this morning) by mindlessly aggressive, uncaring, incompetent motorists who seemingly found their licences in a box of Weet-Bix.

Roads existed long before the motor car, and have always been about the free movement of citizens, not vehicles. Critical Mass is all about reminding our society that cyclists are legitimate users of the road system with legal rights and responsibilities.

While fine in theory, those rights and responsibilities can't be exercised unless cycling demand is encouraged rather than suppressed. Otherwise, the number of cyclists will continue to decline and Sydney's traffic congestion and appalling air quality will worsen.

Critical Mass is also about choice; of access to alternate modes of transport. Modes that don't generate the internal combustion engine's cocktail of injurious emissions: benzene, toluene, ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxides, and suspended particles. Modes that don't consume our strictly limited domestic petroleum reserves. Modes that complement rather than degrade the amenity of our urban environment.



John Bignucolo

### **Your rights and responsibilities on Critical Mass**

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Section 2 of the General Traffic Regulations provides that in all cases not expressly provided for by the General Traffic Act and Regulations, any member of the police force may give such reasonable directions to all persons driving, riding etc as in his opinion may be necessary for safe and effective regulation of traffic. This is an incredibly wide power. We saw it in action on the M2 where they can direct all the cyclists to use the left lane. In the Critical Mass situation, they can quite simply shut it down by ordering everyone to the side of the road. Or they could order everyone to ride off in small groups etc.

#### **Riding Two Abreast.**

Cyclists can legally ride two abreast if they are within 1.5 m of each other. However, the catch is that if there are more than two abreast, EACH cyclist is guilty of a breach of sec 71 of the General Traffic Regulations.

#### **Corking.**

There's nothing specific in the Traffic Regulations about corking. However, there's an offence of obstructing traffic, ie wilfully preventing in any manner the free passage of a person, vehicle etc in a public place. Maximum penalty \$400.

#### **Using Multiple Lanes.**

"Regulation 3(1) of the Traffic Regulations (NSW) requires vehicles to keep as close as practicable to the left boundary of the road, **except** where there are two or more lanes for traffic travelling in that direction (in which case you can use any lane).

"Regulation 65 of the Motor Traffic Regulations is in the same terms and applies to motor vehicles.

Regulation 65A however provides that where a multi-lane road has a speed limit is over 80km/hr or has keep left unless overtaking signs, the driver of the motor vehicle should keep left. However this applies to motor vehicles and not bicycles."

### **VeloCity.**

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VeloCity is a fantastic proposal being developed by a coalition of environment and alternative transport organisations (including several critical mass participants), for O'Dea Reserve in Camperdown - the location of the Movement Without Motors festival.

Imagine a facility with: recycled bikes centre fully equipped community bike workshop, experimental vehicles (recumbents, trikes, electrics) workshop and test track, BMX track and skate ramps, bicycle safety and training area locker rooms and showers, library and more.

The working group is currently working on an application to Marrickville Council to take over the lease of this facility, but we need your support, ideas and initiative!

Come along to a meeting on Tuesday night, 7pm, 1st September upstairs at Lolitas on Glebe Point Road. For information call Paul Elliot on 9552 3175.



Mild mannered cyclist by day, on the last Friday of every month a San Francisco cyclist is transformed into **Dildo Man**. And along with the dildoed bike lane crusader, a host of other super heroes have begun appearing at Critical Mass rides world wide. Last month on Melbourne's Mass, Pro Man and even Elvis thought it was worth heading on down.

Next month, inspired by cycling super heroes elsewhere, Super Hero Mass comes to Sydney. Wear your cape and come as a pollution fighting crusader!



## Media workshop

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More people are needed to help with media liason and organisation. We're getting worn out! Set aside some time to work for a better Sydney by coming along to this excellent workshop being run by the Forest Activist Network.

Saturday 29th August, 1998. 10 am-1pm, lobbying with Peter Wright. 2pm—5pm, media with Jane Salmon. UNSW, Room G031, Quadrangle Building, Middle Campus. Contact Kate Walsh at the Nature Conservation Council 9279 2855 for more information.



## Writing letters

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There is no substitute for a personal letter or a witty letter to the editor to get a politicians attention. Over the next few weeks the Minister for Roads and Transport, Mr Carl Scully will be deciding how much money to allocate to cycling facilities as part of the integrated transport strategy. Currently hte RTA spends a paltry \$8million on cycle facilities for the whole of NSW—of this, \$3million is for Sydney. Only with \$100million/year allocated to cycling could the RTA begin to build a comprehensive cycleway network throughout Sydney. So please put pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard! Alternatively, simply writing about why you ride in critical mass helps promote cycling and changes perceptions.

Send your letters to:

letters@shd.fairfax.com.au  
letters@smh.fairfax.com.au  
dtmletr@matp.newsltd.com.au  
ausletr@matp.newsltd.com.au  
ausletr@newscorp.com.au

fax 9282 2151  
fax 9282 3492  
fax 9288 2300  
fax 9288 3077  
fax 9288 3077

## Critical contacts

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**Voicemail of next ride, questions, comments:**  
**Massive Newsletter:**

02.9614.0777  
0412 285 448  
simon@rumble.waratah.id.au  
www.nccnsw.org.au/member/cmss  
cmass-syd-news-request@nccnsw.org.au  
90.9 FM  
cmass-syd-radio@cascade.taz.net.au  
cmass-syd-talk-request@nccnsw.org.au  
www.rumble.net/4linkplan  
02.9209.4357

**Critical Mass Web site:**  
**Email news (max 1 per day):**  
**Critical Mass radio:**

**Email discussion:**  
(send an email with the word subscribe in the body of the message to join the email lists)  
**Four Link Plan:**

## Calendar

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### Media workshop

Saturday 29th August, 10am UNSW Room G031 Quadrangle building, Middle Campus.  
Friday 11th September, meeting at 5.30pm

### Parramatta Critical Mass

Friday 11th September, 5:30pm Church Street Mall opposite the Town Hall, Parramatta.

### Critical Mass meeting

Tuesday 15th September, 6:30pm Green Iguana Cafe, King Street Newtown

### Cycle Sydney

Sunday 20th September, Start at North Sydney to cross Harbour Bridge. Phone Bicycle NSW (02) 9283 5200

### Superhero Mass

Friday 25th September, 5:30pm Hyde Park Fountain.