



The cops show up

Critical Mass is growing up. There were 400 people on the August ride where last year there were under 200. Last year there were about 5 people working behind the scenes, now there are about 50. Last year we were starting to get an occasional write up in local papers, on this month's ride we have 3 TV channels making mini documentaries about us. It's an exciting time!

CM has become big enough to significantly effect the traffic flow around it, causing domino effects which last for a long time after we have passed. So it is not surprising that the police have taken an interest in us.

The police recognise our right to demonstrate, but they would like us to go through the normal demonstration procedures. This involves filling out a demonstration form which involves nominating an organiser to take responsibility and submitting a route for approval 7 days in advance. We would then be escorted by police who would help with corking and would make the Mass safer, or so they claim.

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NRMA: Better air needs better transport

An NRMA survey monitoring public attitudes on air quality in Sydney found 98% of respondents feel vehicle emissions are a source of local air pollution.

81% of respondents to the survey indicated that walking or cycling for short trips instead of driving would be realistic. One must wonder why they aren't already doing this?

The Open Road, September/October 1997



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SF Mass calms down

After July's fireworks with police, where police and cyclists clashed in the streets and more than 100 cyclists were arrested, the August Mass turned out to be a rather sedate affair. One Web site proclaimed "The old magic is back" while the SF Gate newspaper declared "Bicyclists and motorists keep it civil on SF streets."

The more subdued atmosphere, with only 1,500 attendees compared to the previous months' estimated 7,000, was partly due to two deaths in cycling accidents on city streets during the week leading up to the ride.

By Simon Rumble



Reclaim the streets

Does walking down our main street fill you with dread at the increasing amount of speeding cars and noisy, filthy trucks? Find yourself scuttling for your life through deadly traffic, nearly run off your bike? Concerned about your kid's asthma or your own? Get the feeling your suburb is choking?

Cars kill people *and* economies. Traffic is like sandpaper, grinding the life from our neighbourhoods. The heart of the community, our street, the precious centre of our beloved neighbourhood, is daily rent apart by the chaos of an appallingly planned transport nightmare which kills 40 people a week in Australia.

Only by visiting a city like Venice, totally free of cars, do you really understand how relaxing a busy city can be. Picture a car-free main street. A smooth, quiet light rail running down the centre, a beautiful avenue of trees, luxurious cycleways, widened footpaths, expansive outdoor cafes.

Our politicians, councillors and beurocrats do not have the vision. Let's do it ourselves!

On Saturday November 1, bring rugs, cushions, deckchairs, lounge chairs, sofas, kids play equipment and help transform our street into a vision of what it could be like. Help free our streets of choking traffic, for an afternoon. It's amazing how quickly a street free of cars becomes a peaceful, beautiful place—an instant park, the town square that our city so desperately needs.

Meet at Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Lennox Street Newtown then walk to the site. 1pm Saturday November 1st, 1997.

Live bands, DJs, food, entertainment.

Picture shows the thousands attending the 1996 Reclaim the Streets party in London courtesy

<http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaigns/rts.html>

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So far no deals have been made. We need to determine amongst ourselves what our next step should be. Some of our options are:

- Ignore the police. Do not negotiate. Critical Mass has no organisers and so is in no position to make deals. If police resort to arresting people for running red lights, then obey all traffic laws, ride two abreast, one car width apart and cause some serious traffic congestion.
- Comply fully with police. A ride that has police approval is likely to attract a lot of people who agree with CM ideals but find it too confrontational.
- Negotiate something in between.

It should be noted that the police do have the legal power to force CM to be substantially different to its current form but this would take enormous police resources. The police see negotiation as the most desirable way to resolve this issue. They have not shown any intention to crack down on CM without first attempting to negotiate.

By Cameron Shorter

Meeting with police

A meeting was held with members of the police on Friday 12 September. Seven police officers attended and five people attended the meeting "for" Critical Mass.

We opened by stressing that we were not authorised representatives or organisers of Critical Mass and that we were not in a position to negotiate on behalf of Critical Mass or make any agreements.

The police began by saying for up to 2 years they have been receiving complaints. They said they "don't like people blocking the city off" and that it has got to a stage where something needs to be done.

Next we were asked about the philosophy of Critical Mass and our aims. We explained that CM aims to create a fun, safe cycling environment and to raise awareness of transport issues in a peaceful, non-confrontational way.

Their main points were:

(a) They wish traffic disruption to be minimised. They are receiving many complaints from the public and say it will only be a matter of time before they are requested by other parts of the police and/or the government to do something.

(b) They are concerned about safety and think that someone "will get hurt soon" (my impression was they were worried about cars or trucks getting so irritated that they ram cyclists.) They were also concerned about emergency vehicles getting stuck in the car traffic jam behind the mass.

What the police want:

They want CM to be orderly, lawful and coordinated with police approval. In practical terms this means that someone has to fill out a form and let the police know the route beforehand. CM would also be required to supply marshalls to liaise between the police, cyclists and the public. If all this were to meet with their approval, the police would then escort the ride and take other measures to assist the Mass.

Our response:

- there were no organisers so that no one could sign the necessary forms.
- that we were not able to make any deals.

As a general comment on the atmosphere of the meeting, we felt that it was reasonably positive.

By Sally Basten

This report was edited for space reasons. The full report is available at:

<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/LeftBank/5803/polrep.html>

Police power

1. Police general power

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 CM situation, they can quite simply shut you down by ordering you all to the side of the road. Or they could order you to ride off in small groups etc.

2. Riding two abreast

You probably know that we can legally ride two abreast if we're within 1.5 m of each other. However, the catch is that if there are more than two abreast, **each rider** is guilty of a breach of sec 71 of the General Traffic Regulations.

3. Corking

There's nothing specific in the Traffic Regulations about corking. However, there's is 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.

Michael Chow (mchow@cch.com.au)

Your say

Want to have your say? Come to the next meeting, join the email talk list or contact Brendan Bouffler 9385-1137.

Spooky Mass

Next month's Mass is on the evening of Halloween so be sure to dress up in your spookiest attire. Jack-o-Lanterns instead of bike lights? Plastic fangs and capes won't get caught in your gears. Trick-or-treat the drivers and give them a big fright—cyclists using "their" roads!

Autogeddon returns

See Critical Mass starring in the climax of **autogeddon**, a pre-millennial auto-apocalypse theatre and video assemblage.

Return season for Newtown Festival. Outdoors @ Hub Cinema, Newtown Square. 5th-8th November, 8pm.

Need a lawyer?

Q. If you see a lawyer on a bicycle, why don't you swerve to hit him/her?

A. You might actually need the services of a friendly lawyer sometime.

Ron Gouder and a number of other lawyers at his disposal are offering their legal services to cyclists. Generally, legal advice regarding cycling matters will be given on a pro bono basis, ie there is no charge for the lawyer's time but various costs and disbursements such as legal searches, photocopying etc., if any, will be charged.

The lawyers will also initiate legal proceedings on your behalf or defend you if necessary. All inquiries to Ron Gouder on 9817-1813.

Voices online

To subscribe to the CM lists, send an email with the word **subscribe** as the body to the appropriate address from these:

cmass-syd-talk-request@nccnsw.org.au

cmass-syd-talk-digest-request@nccnsw.org.au

cmass-syd-news-request@nccnsw.org.au



Mass takes over Phillip Street last month
Photo thanks to Simone Fawdon.

Photo shoot

On this month's Sunday Mass we hope to be able to shoot photos to copy an excellent poster from the Dutch Cycling Association showing various forms of transport. Basically each photo shows the room taken up by forty people in cars, buses, walking and on bicycles. We all know which method used the most space...

This month's Sunday Mass is, as always, at 11am meeting at Hyde Park Fountain on 12th October (2nd Sunday of the month.)

What's on

October

Sunday 12th

11am at Hyde Park Fountain to shoot photos for a poster advocating bicycle use.

Tuesday 21st

Critical Mass Meeting

The monthly Critical Mass meeting at the Green Iguana 6 King Street, Newtown. Get there around 6:30pm to have your say!

Friday 31st

Halloween Critical Mass

This month's Mass theme is Halloween so get into your spookiest clothes and head to Hyde Park Fountain at 5:30pm.

November

Saturday 1st

Reclaim the Streets

Party in the streets. Meet 1pm Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Lennox St Newton.

November 5th-8th

Autogeddon

Theatre and video assemblage. 8pm at the Hub Cinema, Newtown Square.