



## **Surgeons warn cyclists to ‘keep a lid on it’**

**Thursday 13 August, 2015**

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has slammed a report published in *The Australian* that quotes doctors as saying mandatory bike helmet laws have discouraged adults from riding for fitness.

Each year, around 40 cyclists die each year on Australian roads and around 4,800 are hospitalised.

Chair of the RACS Trauma Committee Dr John Crozier says there is a wide body of research that conclusively proves that wearing bicycle helmets saves lives and reduces the severity of trauma arising from bicycle accidents.

“Since the introduction of mandatory helmet legislation in the early 1990s, there has been a sustained positive reduction in the number of bicycle-related head injuries,” Dr Crozier said.

“By contrast, there is no scientific evidence to support the claims of dentist Andreas Schwander, pathologist Andrew Parker, and doctor Lisa Parker, who say that making bicycle helmets mandatory has had a population-wide impact on health because people don’t want to ride their bikes.

“On behalf of the people who all-too-often are called on to heal horrific head injuries as the result of a simple accident, we say ‘put a lid on it’ and keep safe.”

Dr Crozier said it was also disappointing to see Senator David Leyonhjelm quoted in the article as saying, ‘It’s not a threat to other people if you don’t wear a helmet; you’re not going to bang your bare head into someone else’.

“Does Senator Leyonhjelm also think we should abandon mandatory seatbelt legislation, because it’s not a threat to anyone else if you crash and die as a result?” Dr Crozier said.

“Head injuries are a serious health issue for individuals, their families and the community, and often have long-lasting effects on those who do recover.

“As a society, we should do all we can to prevent and lessen the severity of head injuries, and Government should take the same stance.”

Dr Crozier believes that while these doctors claim mandatory helmet laws for cyclists are having a detrimental impact on rider numbers and population health, a spike in the number of head injuries might have a more significant impact on rider numbers.

“I cannot imagine a parent saying to their child, ‘No, don’t wear a helmet, I am sure you will be fine’. I cannot imagine how they would feel getting a call from the hospital saying their child has suffered brain damage from an accident.

“We urge the Government and anti-mandatory helmet legislation advocates to take a more responsible attitude towards ensuring cyclists are not injured or killed as a result of riding without a helmet.”

**Media inquiries: Amy Kimber, RACS Policy & Communications Officer  
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## **About RACS**

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

[www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)

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