



**Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group
(CBD BUG)**

GPO Box 2104, Brisbane 4001

brisbanecbdbug@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/cbdbug/

Mr Sean Parnell
Editor
Brisbane Times
140 Ann St
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Via email: s.parnell@brisbanetimes.com.au

Dear Mr Parnell

Brisbane Times reporting of road crashes

We are writing to express our concern about the way in which you report on road crashes – referring to them inaccurately as “accidents”. This letter has been particularly prompted by your 21 January 2025 article with the headline “Probe into unreported traffic crashes as Queensland road toll doubles” published at <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/probe-into-unreported-traffic-crashes-as-queensland-road-toll-doubles-20250120-p5l5ts.html>.

In the headline you refer to traffic crashes, but in the first and many subsequent paragraphs you refer to these crashes as “accidents”. Too often a traffic crash is reported by the press as an “accident”, as if it were an act of God, and not the result of several, usually avoidable human factors.

We draw your attention to the “Road Collision Reporting Guidelines” released in the United Kingdom on 18 May 2021 and backed by their National Union of Journalists. 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.

We note the Australian Press Council unfortunately does not yet have any advisory guidelines on reporting traffic crashes. However, we understand the Associated Press changed their style guide in 2016 in a similar manner to the UK’s.

Several aspects of the article were disappointingly typical of the reporting we see covering road crashes e.g. “Police are doing everything they can ...” really? How many times have we heard that?

Towards the end of the article you mention the largest increase in fatalities was in the Brisbane metropolitan region, and that a state budget update will be handed down on 23 January 2025. However, we have been unable to find subsequent coverage by you of how that budget update addressed the issue. You also noted in this article that a federal election is due soon. There is an implication in this that road safety is almost entirely the role of state and federal governments. This is despite the fact local governments in southeast Queensland control almost 90% of the road network, where about 60% of Queensland's road trauma occurs. There is a rich vein of reporting in the apparent lack of interest in road safety at council level. Last year the number of people killed on the roads of Brisbane City was the worst since 2007.

We look forward to hearing from you on how you will ensure more accurate and insightful reporting of traffic crashes by the Brisbane Times.

Yours sincerely

Paul French

Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CBD BUG
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Cc: Australian Press Council
Bicycle Queensland
Space for Cycling Brisbane
Queensland Walks