**Introduction**

Each year on Australian roads, an average of 38 cyclists are killed and over 2,500 serious injuries are reported with many more incidents unreported\(^1\). The majority of these collisions involve a motor vehicle and the cycling road toll contributes to the $18billion cost to society of road trauma\(^2\). For the past eight years, bicycle sales have exceeded car sales with more than 1.4 million bikes sold per year\(^3\). As an increasing number of people ride bicycles for health, recreation, economic savings and transport needs, fatalities and injuries on our roads have the potential to increase.

Inspired by the life of Amy Gillett, the Australian cyclist tragically killed in Germany 2005, the primary objective of the Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) is to reduce cyclist injury and death by promoting a safe and harmonious relationship of shared respect between cyclists and motorists. The AGF is working towards improved cyclist safety by implementing a variety of education, awareness and research programs.

Obtaining a drivers licence is considered a rite of passage for many young Australians. While acquiring the necessary knowledge to safely engage with the road system, the learner licence process provides a timely opportunity to instil appropriate road use, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

Over 373,000 learner permits are issued annually in Australia\(^4\). The current learner driver test is a randomly generated set of questions relating to Australian road rules. Minimal attention is given to car/bicycle related road rules in licence testing, thus not reflecting the growing number of bicyclists using the road. AGF surveys of licensing authorities revealed a high probability that the learner driver will not be asked any questions relating to the car/bicycle interaction.

**Methodology**

To address this, the AGF has developed Road-Right, an innovative national learner driver initiative. The program aims to equip the next generation of motorists to safely interact with bicyclists on our roads. Positive behaviours and attitudes towards this vulnerable road user group will contribute to reducing the number of seriously injured cyclists on our roads each year and may have other pro-social effects such as reducing levels of aggressive behaviour generally.

Road-Right is a web-based education program that encourages learner drivers to answer a series of online questions and scenarios pertaining to cyclists and motorists sharing the roads. All questions are derived from existing licence tests and/or learner driver education handbooks and have been vetted by the State Licensing Authorities. One or more of these questions may be used randomly during the compulsory test that all learner drivers are required to pass to obtain their probationary licence.

Driving schools and in particular the driving instructors, were the main recruitment method used to access learner drivers. Over 30,000 program flyers were distributed, over an 11 month period, to driving instructors, some state licence testing centres, automobile associations who have driver education programs and schools via road safety education programs. The flyer encouraged the learner driver to go to the AGF website at www.amygillett.org.au to participate.

**Results and Discussion**

Results from year one of the program are encouraging. The Road-Right website has attracted over 24,600 entries from learner drivers and approximately one-third are unique entries. Interestingly, only 67% of entries correctly answered all questions. Further evaluation activity will take place in August to assess the reach and outcomes of the program and solicit suggestions for future improvements to the program.

The success of Road-Right can be attributed to a combination of:

- Incentives for entrants, and
- Involvement of key stakeholders.

Getting the incentives right for this demographic is very important. Market research suggests a large proportion of this cohort is strongly motivated by reward for effort. Subjects who correctly answer all questions go into a draw to win instant and monthly prizes. Entrants can enter multiple times, until all questions are answered correctly, to reinforce the Road-Right messages. Youth brands like Oakley, Everlast, Blue Sky Frog, and Hogs Breath Café have provided prize sponsorship. Furthermore, entrants have the chance to win the major annual prize of a Volvo C30 S, courtesy of Volvo Car Australia, a major corporate partner of the AGF.

Strong partnerships were formed with relevant stakeholder organisations to ensure maximum exposure and engagement of learner drivers. The Australian Driver Trainer Association (ADTA) represents over 70% of Australia’s driving instructors and its members teach young drivers correct driving technique and habits. The ADTA has been a strong advocate of Road-Right by distributing program flyers during driving lessons. To acknowledge this support, those instructors nominated by their students were entered into a monthly prize drawn for a petrol voucher. Driving instructors have referred 31% of entries.
Similarly, State Licensing Authorities have been supportive via website links and distribution of program information through testing centres and in-school road safety programs. Further promotion of Road-Right has occurred via State Automobile Associations. Popular youth internet sites, like MySpace and Telstra’s Spread the Good Stuff, have combined to represent approximately 19% of referrals via the internet.

Year two of the program will commence in August 2008, and all existing stakeholders have confirmed their continued commitment.

Limitations
It is acknowledged that Road-Right and its direct impact on mortality or injury rates will be difficult to measure. As reductions in road toll can be attributed to many variables, it would be difficult to attribute a single intervention, like Road-Right, to a reduction in injury and/or fatality of cyclists. Surveys of participants and sponsors offer the only opportunity to evaluate changes in behaviour and attitude.

However, Road-Right can make a unique contribution towards cultural change objectives of programs like “share the road” by offering knowledge gain to address the safety of a specific vulnerable road user group, namely bicyclists.

Conclusion
As more Australians realise the health, environmental, transport and economic benefits of cycling, the need for education and awareness about safe interactions with this vulnerable road user group becomes paramount. Motorists must become more aware and adapt their driving habits and behaviours, and cyclists need to be mindful of their responsibilities when using the road, to ensure everyone gets to their destination safely. Road-Right is making a valuable contribution towards ensuring our next generation of drivers understand the importance of being “safe together” to reduce the road toll.

References
3. Cycling Promotion Fund, Bicycle Sales in Australia report, 2008
4. AGF communications with each State Licensing Authority