

TRIBUTE TO BEN MIKIC DELIVERED IN NSW PARLIAMENT

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [1.09 p.m.]: On 25 May 2008, with some people from my electorate, I joined in the ride for silence. This is a bicycle ride, and is held in 250 cities worldwide. I rode in memory of Ben Mikic from Mittagong, who was killed at Mittagong on 27 April 2007. I was honoured to meet his mother, Andrea Mikic, and his grandfather, Phil Herd, who is also chairman of the Ben Mikic Foundation for Young Cyclists.

Phil and his wife, Hannah, are here today. The Federal member for Macarthur, Pat Farmer, also rode. Everyone there, regardless of political belief, rode to pay tribute to Ben and to advocate for safer bicycling facilities for all. I thank my colleague the member for Goulburn for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue, and I acknowledge her support for both Ben's family and the Ben Mikic Foundation.

Ben was in year 10 at Chevalier College in Bowral. Three days before the accident he had been accepted into the Illawarra Academy of Sport as a road cyclist. Like me, his passion was the Tour de France. Unlike me, one day he would probably have ridden it. On the day a moving tribute was sung by Sam Brignell and Brad Marks from his class at Chevalier College. This ride was on the background of the recent accident at Brighton. In the year ended 29 May 2008 12 riders were killed on New South Wales roads—four more than in the same period last year. Both sides of the bicycle safety debate would agree that the best form of cycling infrastructure is that which allows cars and bikes to be separate, and which has the connectedness that allows bike use to be preferred for short and medium journeys. I applaud the recent work on the King Street connection in the city as an example of this.

My electorate has some quite good bicycle lanes, with more to come. For example, the planned widening of Camden Valley Way, Cowpasture Road and Hoxton Park Road will allow for an extensive network to join the M7 cycleway and the Western Sydney parkland track. Carl Scully, a former roads Minister, must be acknowledged for his commitment to sustainable bicycle use. On 19 October 2008 legs of the City of Sydney Spring Cycle will commence at Liverpool and Blacktown, as well as North Sydney. The Ben Mikic Foundation has been set up to educate young cyclists and schoolchildren to adopt safe riding practices; to encourage and support promising young cyclists; to work with governments and other stakeholders to ensure that safe cycling is encouraged by increasing cycle lanes on new roads and incorporating them into existing roads, ensuring that all road users, especially car drivers, are able to safely share the roads; and to encourage safe driving and cycling practices.

The Ben Mikic Foundation has appointed a team to put into action a five-point road safety plan. The foundation, in collaboration with the Outdoor Education Group, has developed an education program aimed at young cyclists and

primary aged students on cycling safety. The first program was run at St Michaels in Mittagong where Ben Mikic was school captain. Also in collaboration with the Outdoor Education Group, the foundation is running mountain bike training programs, with the specific purpose of getting youngsters off the roads and inculcating safe riding practices. The foundation will work with the Roads and Traffic Authority and police to escalate road safety awareness for all road users and in particular schoolchildren. The foundation will lobby government to accelerate the building of cycle lanes and other initiatives to create a safer environment for cyclists on Australian roads. It will ask all levels of government to increase investments in making drivers more aware of cyclists and their safety.

The increasing demand for cycling is not a temporary phenomenon and will increase. Bicycles now consistently outsell cars. The recent petrol price rises will increase this trend. As of today, Australia is officially the world's most obese nation. Sadly, Sydney lags behind many cities in both the world and Australia in useful cycling infrastructure. We must do better. Build safe cycling facilities and the people will come. An example of this is the Western Sydney parkland track in my electorate, which I opened last year with the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Local Government. It is the hope of both myself and the member for Goulburn that Ben Mikic's name will be remembered by every urban planner and member of this House. To do so would be to honour him and to improve the future health of our society.

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE (Strathfield—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.14 p.m.]: I congratulate the hardworking member for Macquarie Fields on bringing this hugely important issue to the attention of members today. His work and the work of the Ben Mikic Foundation to improve road safety and awareness of safety issues must be commended. Members opposite often talk about road safety issues. The member for Macquarie Fields is doing something practical and tangible, and it is wonderful to hear about what he is doing. It is now in *Hansard* and everyone in the Parliament will know about it. I thank the member for his contribution and the contribution the Ben Mikic Foundation is making to make cycling safer for young riders.