May 15, 2005

Board of Directors
Cycle Sport Victoria
Darebin International Sports Centre
281 Darebin Rd
Thornbury 3071

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter forms a response from the Warragul Cycling Club (WCC) to the recent Cycle Sport Victoria Memo's received by the club from the president Joe Ciavola concerning club and combine racing. In responding to the directives outlined in the memo it should be absolutely clear that the following is a carefully considered response to the proposal and not a knee-jerk reaction. The WCC committee and interested members have carefully examined the contents of both memos, taken the time to speak directly with Cycle Sport Victoria and considered the implications both formally and informally.

The WCC has a proud tradition within regional Victoria and has consistently presented itself as forward thinking club that provides its membership with a lot more than the opportunity to race. It prides itself on country hospitality, a friendly and welcoming environment and an attitude that is accepting of all cyclists. This in part explains why such a small community has over 140 registered members. The club has recently taken on a tremendous workload to get its risk management process in place, has secured a strong Ride It membership and is about to embark on an ambitious program to attract 30 new junior members to the sport. It is worth noting that the club has been able to achieve this largely without any assistance from Cycle Sport Victoria.

Whilst the board which represents the WCC membership felt no consultation was necessary prior to issuing the latest directives, we would like the board to carefully consider the following issues the WCC has in connection with the most recent policy directive. These in no particular order are:

1. The arguments for restricting cyclists’ ability to race elsewhere were in no way clarified or articulated to the membership. There were vague comments made about protecting promoters’ interests and the betterment of cycling but simply put there is no justifiable argument presented as to how these changes would achieve either. This proposal lacks for all intents and purposes, a sound and well thought out rationale. There are many ways that CSV can protect the interests of promoters without restricting its members. If the reason is not ‘purely financial’ then please let us know what the other reasons are.

2. The WCC request that CSV in particular outline how this policy addresses the needs of minority groups such as female cyclists (who in general have limited competitive options) and country cycling clubs. We are aware of the intent of the policy to keep club cyclists at club events but limiting the competitive options for members seems counter productive. It may be wiser to invest the energy in helping underachieving clubs develop so that their members do stick around.

3. We shouldn’t need to remind the board that volunteerism in community clubs is an extremely challenging issue. People are being asked to take on more and more responsibility and the tasks are gaining in complexity. It is simply not good enough to present a change to clubs in an ad-hoc manner that has already proved to be disruptive without due consideration of its impact. The second memo aimed at ‘clarifying’ the situation simply highlights that this policy is policy that is made on-the-fly. It
would seem the board is enforcing a regulation that creates significant unrest but is for the 'winter road season only' with more alterations to come. With such a significant change, the WCC would expect management to present a plan that goes beyond the 2005 road season so as to avoid confusion and more unrest when the next ad-hoc plan arrives.

4. Joe mentions that this policy will be for the betterment of cycling with a more manageable future. We would like the board of management to explain how asking already stretched volunteers to spend more time preparing, photocopying and sending additional paperwork to that which is already sent to three different authorities (Police, Shire, Vic Roads) for approval will make things more manageable? The WCC would like to know who at CSV will be going through this documentation, what feedback will be provided to the clubs as a result and how submitting written applications to CSV to host its races (all of which will now have to be combine races) will make cycling more manageable? On top of this we are now going to have to ask the volunteers to prepare a report of results and send it to an already stretched CSV within seven days. On this matter, the WCC wants to know if CSV are going to be spending such a significant time wading through written applications from all of its clubs, cross checking which ten clubs are listed where, issuing approvals and examining the reports/attendance list of all races in the state within seven days of each event, how will it find the time to be able to provide clubs with much needed assistance on risk management (this section of the folder is still empty), Ride It programs (the information flow is minimal), commissaire training, junior facilitation, volunteerism, grant writing and help with event planning and reporting? All of which are far more important things CSV could be doing to help clubs grow the sport of cycling. As far as the WCC can see this is not better management, it is control without reward.

5. The WCC committee will be expecting CSV to provide a written response to these applications to confirm the paperwork was received, read and approved within seven days of its receipt.

6. The WCC will now have to enter a period of political positioning in order to retain its current membership. It is clear that this new proposal will result in the formation of alliances that may help some clubs grow stronger through resource sharing at the expense of others. Currently we have over 20 members who regularly race in Melbourne whilst playing an active role in the WCC. In order to satisfy these important members, the WCC will be forced to nominate strong Metro clubs in the hope that they reciprocate and allow our members to join in. Whilst Warragul is close enough and has access to quality circuits we still have a chance of being listed in the Metro club's top ten, but why would any metro club list La Trobe, Leongatha and other clubs further away? Their members, like Warragul members (not mentioned in the Bendigo list) will become alienated and excluded, destined to race in races with no more than 10 people in a bunch and never being able to drop in on another club for a ride. It becomes a policy of exclusion when a WCC member on holidays near Bendigo cannot go for a ride with the locals despite having paid for the licence to do so.

7. There is nothing better when cyclists from other clubs come and race at Warragul. This provides what can otherwise be predictable racing, with diversity and excitement that ultimately adds to the motivation and makes all of the preparation worthwhile. It is impossible to predict where these people will come from. Regardless of whether or not anyone actually turns up, the WCC will be forced to play the game, apply in writing to CSV, nominate ten clubs and hope they haven't excluded anyone.

8. As many members will now see no benefit in an open licence, and take out club only membership ($30 difference for open), will this impact upon revenue for CSV or is this additional change only for insurance costs? What is stopping any member from any club turning up to any race and purchasing a one off licence for $15.00?

9. The WCC has been made aware of a back-door clause that will allow individuals to submit a letter to CSV requesting an exemption. The fact that the board are allowing exemptions to this policy...
indicates two things: a) The policy is not enforceable and b) It is an ad-hoc way of dealing with an ill-conceived policy (if the policy was not flawed, why would you need an exemption option?).

10. Because an option to apply for an exemption exists, and to save the submission of well over 40 individual letters (the rest will likely become club-only members), the WCC is requesting a blanket exemption from this policy on behalf of its fully licensed junior, open and masters members. We do so for all of the reasons mentioned above and on the grounds that the WCC cannot offer its members the diversity and quality of racing they deserve and indeed have paid for (up to $200). We do not have enough large races, crit races, track races or female only events to satisfy the competitive needs of the membership and the club is in no way concerned about its members attending races at other clubs.

Finally, the WCC request that the board reconsiders this policy before the WCC has to continue undertaking the additional work it has created. We are at a loss to see how restricting the ability of cyclists to cycle does anything for sport, especially at the grass-roots level. We are not a big club but we are over-represented, we ask that you reconsider the position and explore other avenues for looking after promoters of open events (increase entry fees for non-club participants, increase the number of nominated clubs to 15, blanket exemption for females and country members, encourage promoters to host open events that appeal to the broader membership, find out why more people turn up to club run events and shun the open events –prize money is not the answer).

We look forward to your response.

Regards,

Dr Justen O'Connor
President of the Warragul Cycling Club

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or mail to

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