

**Submission  
No 5**

## **RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS FOR THE WEARING OF HELMETS**

**Name:** Mr Mohinder Singh

**Date Received:** 24 October 2024

Dear Members of the NSW Parliamentary Committee,

I am writing to respectfully propose the introduction and approval of a helmet exemption for Sikh motorcyclists who wear turbans. This submission highlights the significance of the turban in the Sikh religion and legislative precedents set by other jurisdictions, supporting the passage of a similar exemption bill in New South Wales.

#### Background and Religious Importance of the Turban:

In Sikhism, the turban (Dastar) is a mandatory article of faith, symbolizing self-respect, equality, and spirituality. It is not merely a head covering but a crown that every practicing Sikh wears daily. The turban is integral to the Sikh identity and is worn with deep cultural and religious significance. Removing it in public or replacing it with a helmet conflicts with Sikh religious practices.

#### International Precedents for Helmet Exemption:

Australia would not be the first country to provide this exemption. Several Western nations and international jurisdictions have legislated helmet exemptions for Sikh motorcyclists wearing turbans, including:

1. United Kingdom: The Motorcycle Crash Helmet Act 1976 exempts Sikh riders from wearing helmets. This exemption recognizes the religious significance of the turban in Sikh faith.
2. Canada: Provinces like British Columbia and Alberta have implemented similar exemptions. In British Columbia, this law was introduced in 2019, and in Alberta, it was established in 2018, both acknowledging the turban's religious significance.
3. Northern Ireland: Sikhs who wear turbans are exempt from helmet laws, recognizing the turban's religious importance since 1989.
4. India: In certain regions, Sikhs who wear turbans are exempt from helmet laws.
5. Malaysia: Sikhs who wear turbans are also exempt from helmet laws, acknowledging the turban's religious significance, although enforcement may vary by state.

By adopting this exemption, New South Wales would join a growing list of countries that have acknowledged and respected the religious freedoms of the Sikh community without compromising road safety.

#### Request for Consideration:

I respectfully request that the Parliamentary Committee consider this proposal to provide helmet exemptions for Sikh motorcyclists in New South Wales. This exemption would apply specifically to Sikh individuals wearing a turban, allowing them to practice their faith without interference and demonstrating a commitment to religious diversity and freedom in our state.

In conclusion, I urge the Committee to consider the religious significance of the turban for Sikh Australians and the international precedents supporting helmet exemptions. Allowing Sikh motorcyclists to ride with their turbans would uphold their religious rights and reinforce Australia's reputation as a multicultural and inclusive society.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your favourable response and am available for further discussion or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Mohinder Singh