

**Submission
No 6**

RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS FOR THE WEARING OF HELMETS

Organisation: Panthers Bhangra

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 underscores the religious significance of the turban in Sikhism and references legislative precedents set by other jurisdictions, advocating for 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 practicing Sikhs wear daily. The turban is integral to Sikh identity and is worn with profound cultural and religious significance. Removing it in public or replacing it with a helmet is inconsistent with Sikh religious practices.

International Precedents for Helmet Exemptions:

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

United Kingdom: The Motorcycle Crash Helmet Act 1976 exempts Sikh riders from wearing helmets, recognizing the turban's religious importance in the Sikh faith.

Canada: Provinces like British Columbia (since 2019) and Alberta (since 2018) have introduced similar exemptions, acknowledging the turban's significance.

Northern Ireland: Since 1989, Sikhs wearing turbans have been exempt from helmet laws, recognizing their religious rights.

India: In several regions, Sikh motorcyclists are exempt from helmet requirements due to religious considerations.

Malaysia: Sikhs wearing turbans are also exempt from helmet laws, although enforcement may vary by state.

Adopting this exemption would place New South Wales alongside these progressive regions that have respected religious freedoms without compromising road safety.

Request for Consideration:

I respectfully request that the NSW 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 turbans, allowing them to practice their faith without interference. It would also underscore the state's commitment to religious diversity and inclusion.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I urge the Committee to reflect on the religious significance of the turban for Sikh Australians and the international precedents supporting helmet exemptions. Granting this exemption would respect Sikh motorcyclists' religious rights while reinforcing Australia's reputation as a multicultural and inclusive society.

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

Yours sincerely

Panthers Bhangra