

Motorcycle route safety review: Inner Melbourne

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Abstract

The Victorian “arrive alive!” Motorcycle Safety Strategy (2002 – 2007) aimed to reduce motorcycle rider and pillion passenger deaths and injuries. Crash data analysis identified an issue with road safety for motorcyclists, with implications for infrastructure, within the (then) RoadSafe Inner Melbourne Community Road Safety Council (RSIMCRSC) boundaries, which encompasses the Cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Yarra. In response, RSIMCRSC instigated audits seeking to identify hazards on the ten routes with the highest rider and pillion serious injuries and deaths. The routes audited encompassed significant lengths of arterial roads. The RSIMCRSC motorcycle safety subcommittee managed the project. The convenor is a community representative and an experienced motorcyclist. An experienced motorcyclist on a motorbike conducted the audits. The audits, which include video footage, photos, crash data, key issues and hazards, recommended remedial treatments and changes to maintenance programs. Vicroads and the three local councils accepted and implemented most of the recommendations. In 2011 a Vicroads analysis of ten years of crash data (before and after the audits) identified for the ten routes:

- an 11 per cent reduction in rider and pillion serious injury crashes, contrasting to a 20 per cent increase across the three local government areas, and metropolitan Melbourne, and
- an 85 per cent reduction in rider and pillion fatalities, contrasting to a 25 per cent reduction in the three local government areas, and an eight per cent reduction for Metropolitan Melbourne.

The development of a communication about generic hazards for motorcyclists in the inner Melbourne area is being finalised.

Introduction – The Vision

In 2004, when this project commenced, the (then) RoadSafe Inner Melbourne Community Road Safety Council (RSIM CRSC) encompassed the Cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Yarra. It was one of 24 CRSC that covered Victoria and delivered programs to address local road safety issues in their local area. In 2010 a government review of RoadSafe resulted in the new Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program (VCRSPP), with the Inner Melbourne group transitioning into the new Road Safety Action Group Inner Melbourne (RSAGIM).

Membership of RSAGIM is similar to RSIMCRSC, with local government engineers and community engagement staff, police from the Melbourne, Yarra and Port Phillip highway patrol units, and community members volunteering their time and energy representing residents or particular road safety stakeholders (such as motorcyclists).

The RSIM motorcycle safety subcommittee reviewed crash data along routes with the highest crash injury and fatality rates for motorcyclists, with particular interest in routes that crossed between the boundaries of the Cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Yarra.

Crash data identified that between September 2000 and August 2004 within the three council areas were: 17 rider fatal crashes, 361 rider serious injury crashes, and 19 pillion serious injury crashes.

Rather than a focus only on “black spots” or intersections, the motorcycle safety committee agreed that a motorcycle route safety review would be undertaken. Funding was sought from the (then) Make Motorcycling Safer” initiative, with the involved three local councils also contributing funds.

Methods

Crash data analysis and consultation with the three councils identified the following routes to be included in the motorcycle safety review:

- Elizabeth Street (Bourke to Victoria Streets)
- Queensberry Street (Swanston to Curzon Streets)
- Victoria Street/Parade (Peel to Hoddle Streets)
- Swan Street (Hoddle to Burnley Streets)
- Johnston/Elgin Street (Yarra River to Swanston Street)
- Wellington Street (Victoria Parade to Johnston Street)
- Hoddle Street/Punt Road (Dandenong Road to Eastern Freeway)
- St Kilda Road/Brighton Road (Commercial Road to Glen Huntly Road)
- Dandenong Road (Westbury Street to Upton Road – westbound only)
- Montague Street (Westgate Freeway to Normanby Road – south bound only)

Analysis of motorcycle casualty crashes data for the agreed routes identified:

Table 1. January 2000 to December 2004 – 244 casualty crashes

Type	No.	%
Vehicles – same direction	68	28
Vehicles – opposing direction	62	25
Off path on straight	37	15
Vehicles adjacent direction	29	12
Manoeuvring	23	9
Pedestrian	13	5
On path	6	3
Off path on curve	3	1
Overtaking	2	.8
Passenger and miscellaneous	1	.4

The audit for each route was undertaken by an experienced motorcyclist, on a motorcycle. The auditor rode each route in each lane (where appropriate). The audits were undertaken between 10 am and 2 pm on various days. The audits included video footage and at a later stage, photos were taken of the identified hazards and issues.

Issues and Actions

The Motorcycle Route Safety Review [1] identified the main hazards as:

- No line delineation
- Poor/uneven pavement on road surfaces
- Crack sealing along centre of lanes
- Two lanes merging into one over a short distance and without sufficient warning
- Sunken pit lids in lanes
- Slippery pit lids in lanes
- Oil build up on road surfaces on the approach to signalised intersections
- faded line marking.

Recommendations included:

- right turn issues – implementing fully controlled right turns at signalised intersections/closing medians
- Elimination or better management of pit lids – cooperation with other authorities and understanding of responsibilities – including identifying new products
- Oil – cleaning protocols and re-sheeting, car and truck vehicle maintenance improvement
- Rider visibility – education for riders and drivers

The RSIMCRSC Motorcycle Route Safety Review report was tabled with the City of Melbourne, the City of Port Phillip and the City of Yarra, and Police operational staff for the relevant traffic management units. Council engineers subsequently tabled the report with Vicroads. The report was also tabled with the (then) Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council (VMAC).

Most of the routes identified were declared roads, meaning they are the responsibility of Vicroads to manage and to maintain.

The involved three councils accepted some of the recommendations from the review as they affected roads under their management. Vicroads accepted most of the recommendations. Vicroads implemented the recommendations over the next three years.

Results

In 2009 RSIM CRSC commissioned a follow-up review to identify the audit recommendations that had been implemented, and when this occurred. The review identified that most actions had been completed, or were scheduled in the 2009/10 works programs [2].

In 2011 Vicroads analysed ten years of crash data (before and after the audits) and identified for the ten routes that comprised the Motorcycle Route Safety Review:

- an 11 per cent reduction in rider and pillion serious injury crashes, contrasting to a 20 per cent increase across the three local government areas, and metropolitan Melbourne, and

- an 85 per cent reduction in rider and pillion fatalities, contrasting to a 25 per cent reduction in the three local government areas, and an eight per cent reduction for Metropolitan Melbourne.

Further analysis of the data is underway.

The final part of the project commenced in 2012. The Motorcycle Route Safety Review eliminated or managed some hazards and risks for motorcyclists on some major roads within the three involved council areas. In development is a resource that acknowledges the constantly changing and organic nature of the road and road environment, a communication for motorcyclists about the endemic categories of hazards, risks, and issues they will encounter as they journey through the inner city suburbs.

Informal consultation has been conducted. This involved talking to riders – motorcyclist to motorcyclist – in Melbourne city. Every rider spoken to mentioned social media as their preferred communication resource, rather than a DVD or brochure. All were comfortable with the concept of a resource that would identify types of hazards, with discussion or information about their management.

As a result of this consultation, a Face book page is in development. It links to the RSAGIM website – shareandbeaware.org.au – with links to information and reports of interest to riders.

Project Team (2004 – 2013):

Colin Bates - City of Yarra, Sam Donato, Alex Gorelik - City of Melbourne, Paul Smith, Stefan Mitrik – City of Port Phillip, Gordon Walker – City of Stonnington, Sharon Wishart, Kerry McConnell, Maria Falzone, Elizabeth Hovenden – Vicroads, RSAGIM members: Janet Bolitho, Jane Waldock, Kerry Hylton

References

GTA Consultants, (April 2006) 'Motorcycle Route Safety Review', RoadSafe Inner Melbourne Community Road Safety Council (unpub)

TrafficWorks (July 2009) Inner Melbourne Motorcycle Route Safety Audits – follow up (Updated) (unpub)