

# A Strategic Approach to Motorcycle Road Safety – Two Years On

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## Biography

Liz de Rome is a consultant in road safety research and development. Her work on strategic planning for road safety has broken new ground in facilitating community ownership and involvement. She is the principal author of *Positioned for Safety*, a road safety strategic plan for motorcyclists and the associated web site. She is currently developing a users' guide to motorcycle protective clothing. She is also the author of *A Guide to Developing Council Road Safety Strategic Plans* and *A Framework for Driver Education*. Liz was the convenor of the MAA Young Driver Seminar and co-facilitated the National Summit on the development of a Pedestrian Charter for Australia.

## Abstract

In 2001 the MAA of NSW funded the development of a Road Safety Strategic Plan for the Motorcycle Council of NSW (MCC). This was a unique experiment in supporting a road user group to apply strategic planning methods to address their own road safety issues. The project was timely as motorcycle casualty rates in Australia were rising, but there was little agreement as to causes or solutions. This paper describes the benefits of the development process and an account of the subsequent implementation of the plan.

It is apparent that the process was at least as important as the final product – the strategic plan. While the MCC had an established track record as an effective lobby group at the political level, they were not previously recognised as a key stakeholder by the various road safety agencies. The process enabled members of the MCC to develop a better understanding of how road safety is delivered in NSW including the relationships between the key agencies and their roles. As a result they are a more informed and effective lobby group and are recognised as the peak body representing motorcyclists in the State.

The outcome has been to establish more productive relationships between other road safety stakeholders and the motorcycling community. Two years since the process began there is an impressive list of achievements, which may be linked either directly or indirectly to the strategic plan. These include research projects into motorcycle fatigue and protective clothing, a motorcycle road safety web site, the first state funded motorcycle safety advertising campaign, community based motorcycle safety projects with some 15 local councils, and the incorporation of motorcycle safety issues into the road safety strategy plans of many local councils. Demand for copies of the strategic plan nationally and internationally have far exceeded expectations, over 5,000 have been downloaded from the internet.

## 1. PAPER

Since 1982, the Motorcycle Council of NSW (MCC) has represented the interests of motorcyclists in NSW on the NSW Motorcycle Consultative Committee. The Committee was the established forum for input into public policy affecting motorcyclists, however progress was slow and frustrating.

The MCC felt that their needs as road users were not well addressed. At the time public policy was based on a general assumption that motorcyclists were adequately covered by road safety programs directed at motorists in general. There was a lack of provision for their

special needs as vulnerable road users in road design, transport planning and facilities and the development of road safety behavioural campaigns.

The MCC were well organized in terms of identifying issues and responding to their members, but they were not recognised as a key stakeholder by the various road safety agencies. They were an effective lobby group at the political level, but this was not an effective or efficient way of influencing the agenda, nor decisions at the policy development level. When frustrations built up they would side step the NSW Motorcycle Consultative Committee and lobby the Minister directly. The outcome was frustrating both to the public servants who were attempting to address the motorcyclists' issues, and to the motorcyclists who felt such drastic action should not be necessary. It was a failure of communications and understanding on both sides.

### **1.1 What was going wrong?**

- ❖ The MCC were reactive to government policy, responding to decisions rather than setting the agenda or driving issues pro-actively.
- ❖ The MCC did not have access to basic motorcycle crash data. Their attempts to raise issues were hampered by reliance on anecdotal experience, rumour and occasionally misinformation.
- ❖ As a volunteer based community organization, they did not have the resources to employ professionals to research issues or prepare submissions and policy documents.
- ❖ While MCC members monitored journals and conferences on motorcycle issues they did not have access to unpublished information that was available within the local road safety community.

Essentially the MCC were attempting to represent their members and contribute to the discussion on motorcycle safety, but they were not equal partners in the debate. They were disadvantaged by their lack of access to information and understanding of the structure within which the debate took place. They believed that by engaging in the consultation process established by the government, they actually were talking to "the government", when their efforts failed to result in policy change, their response was disillusionment and anger.

Early in 2000 members of the MCC discussed their concerns with research consultant Liz de Rome. It was apparent at that stage that, despite the years of involvement in the NSW Motorcycle Consultative Committee, the MCC lacked understanding of how road safety is delivered in NSW, the relationships between the key agencies and their roles. Liz proposed that the MCC needed to take a strategic approach to the whole area of motorcycle safety. She suggested they approach the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW, who agreed to provide a grant to fund the development of a motorcycle road safety strategic plan.

The process involved an analysis of motorcycle crash data, interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, a survey of motorcyclists and a workshop at which all the stakeholders came together to develop a plan.

The data analysis and the interviews with stakeholders identified a number of key issues which became the focus of the survey of motorcyclists and further research and discussion. The workshop was attended by MCC members and all the key stakeholders including the RTA, Police, MAA, Ambulance, Local Government, Streets Opening Conference, rider training organisations, road safety consultants and the Injury Risk Management Research Centre at UNSW.

The entire process had revealed a number of important gaps of understanding between the road authorities and the motorcyclists. The workshop went some way to resolving some of

these points and it established and opened the way for constructive dialogue. The product of the workshop was a first draft of the strategic plan for the MCC. The plan set priorities, defined 10 objectives and described strategies for achieving them. Five hundred copies of the plan were printed and distributed to key stakeholder agencies. Demand for copies of the strategic plan nationally and internationally far exceeded expectations. Over 5,000 copies have been downloaded through the MCC motorcycle safety and other web sites.

## **2. AFTER POSITIONED FOR SAFETY**

Positioned For Safety represented a watershed at its release in June 2002. Road safety agencies and motorcyclists are now talking the same language with better understanding and appreciation of each others' perspective. It is apparent that the process was as important as the product for the motorcyclists and agencies involved.

### **A. The members of the MCC:**

- ❖ Learned how road safety is delivered in NSW.
- ❖ Learned about the range of different agencies involved in road safety and road maintenance (RTA, local government and utilities).
- ❖ Discovered and established communications with a wide range of stakeholders including (MAA, NRMA, Local Council Road Safety Officers, road safety consultants, forensic engineers and university researchers).
- ❖ Discovered opportunities for funding project (MAA, RTA, NRMA, IPWEA, Local Councils).
- ❖ Gained access to motorcycle crash data and information on factors contributing to crashes.
- ❖ Gained access to data on participation rates and changes in age profiles.

### **B. Stakeholders gained increased understanding of:**

- ❖ How to communicate with motorcyclists.
- ❖ The MCC as a key stakeholder and conduit for consultation.
- ❖ Motorcyclist as road users with special needs.
- ❖ Motorcycle physics and environmental factors in crashes.
- ❖ Different perspectives on crash data and risk rates.

## **3. BROAD OUTCOMES**

The process has enabled members of the MCC to develop a better understanding of the motorcycle safety issues and the policy development system. As a result they are a more informed and effective lobby group and are recognised as the peak body representing motorcyclists in the State.

**Improved communications** and relations with the RTA have resulted in a more effective two way flow of information and consultation on motorcycle issues.

**Attitude change** on both sides due to improved communications and an increasing understanding of motorcycle issues by government agencies, and of government process and division of responsibilities by the MCC.

**Reliable data** on motorcycle crashes is now available and provides a basis for motorcyclists to develop positions and prepare submissions for effective input to policy.

**Reconciliation** and recognition of shared objectives for motorcycle safety.

**Direction and a framework for activity** by the MCC of NSW has been established. Issues are no longer raised on an ad hoc basis. The MCC is now setting their agenda for change with priorities determined with clear objectives for the next few years.

**Direction and a framework for activity** has also been provided for other stakeholders, particularly for Local Government. Road safety agencies are able to link their initiatives to the objectives of Positioned for Safety.

**Raised awareness of motorcycle issues by agencies** that had not previously identified a role in motorcycle safety (eg NRMA, IPWEA, Streets Opening Conference, etc).

#### **4. STRATEGIC PLAN TWO YEARS ON - ACHIEVEMENTS**

While the MCC do not claim direct responsibility for all of the initiatives described below, it is significant that there is a raised level of awareness and activity associated with motorcycle safety in NSW.

##### **RTA**

- ❖ Developed a Motorcyclists and Pedal Cyclist Safety Action Plan
- ❖ Commissioned motorcycle road safety audits of popular motorcycle routes such as the Old Pacific Highway, Royal National Park, Putty Road, Bell's Line of Road and various roads in the Snowy Mountain including the Alpine Way.
- ❖ Developed a system of motorcycle warning advisory signs.
- ❖ Produced with the MAA a major motorcycle safety awareness advertising campaign and consulted the MCC on the content of the messages.
- ❖ Promoted Motorcycle Awareness messages on the Variable Message Signs during Motorcycle Awareness Week.
- ❖ Include 'Making Motorcycling Safer' brochures with registration renewals.
- ❖ RTA Sydney Region have initiated a safety campaign with the use of banners.
- ❖ RTA Northern Region are using billboards promoting motorcycle awareness along routes identified as crash sites.
- ❖ Workshop on occupant and rider protection to develop an action plan.

##### **MAA**

- ❖ Funded the development of Positioned for Safety – the MCC Motorcycle Road Safety Strategic Plan.
- ❖ Funded an investigation of motorcycle crash patterns for riders aged 17-25 in NSW and development of countermeasure strategies
- ❖ Produced with the RTA, a major motorcycle awareness advertising campaign.
- ❖ Held a motorcycle safety seminar to release the results of the research they have funded into motorcycle safety issues.
- ❖ Funded a project to develop a user's guide to motorcycle protective clothing.
- ❖ Funded a project to address motorcycle group riding in the Snowy Mountains region.
- ❖ Funded a project to identify motorcycle usage and risk exposure in NSW.

##### **NRMA**

- ❖ The NRMA provided a grant to develop the MCC road safety web site to communicate the road safety strategic plan to motorcyclists and road safety stakeholders. This site has been visited over 26,000 times since it was launched in October 2002.
- ❖ The NRMA coordinated and funded a Motorcycle Safety Research Seminar and brought Dr Umar Radin from the University of Malaysia to be the key speaker.
- ❖ Published several motorcycle safety articles in their magazine 'The Open Road', Hub & Spoke and on the NRMA site.
- ❖ Developing an ITS motorcycle safety and security device which involves accident crash or theft notification using a combination of GPS/ telematics and sensor technologies with the support of funding from Austroads.

## **INJURY RISK MANAGEMENT RESEARCH CENTRE**

Undertaken pilot study into the effect of fatigue on riders on day rides.

## **STREETS OPENING CONFERENCE**

The Streets Opening Bulletin is, for the first time, incorporating motorcycle safety into the requirements for utilities and contractors who dig up the surface of the road.

## **MEDICAL PROFESSION**

The NSW Institute of Injury and Trauma Management and the Royal College of Surgeons are considering a 'motorcycle safety' project. The MCC bonafides were established by providing them with copies of *Positioned for Safety* and the *MCC Survey of NSW Motorcyclists, 2001*.

## **MEDIA**

- ❖ MCC given the ALLMOTO internet motorcycle magazine award for their contribution to motorcycling safety by the development of the strategic plan *Positioned for Safety*.
- ❖ Raised the level of discussion of safety issue in the motorcycle media, by being able to provide factual information based on current crash data.
- ❖ Encouraged the involvement of motorcycle journalists in motorcycle safety projects eg Peter Thoeming with the Snowy Mountains Group Riding project and the Old Pacific Highway brochure.
- ❖ There has also been an increase in the number of safety related articles in motorcycle magazines.
- ❖ There have been a number of positive stories about motorcyclists in the general media.

## **MOTORCYCLE COMMUNITY**

The credibility of the MCC has been enhanced by the professionalism of the strategy. This has:

- ❖ Provided a role model for motorcycle groups in other states to address safety issues at their local State and Federal level.
- ❖ Resulted in a representative from the MCC being appointed to the National Road Safety Strategy Panel representing the Australian Motorcycle Council.
- ❖ Encouraged high profile celebrities who are also motorcyclists to be involved in motorcycle safety. eg Kieren Perkins, Wayne Gardner, John Laws, Phil Koperberg, Darryl Eastlake all of whom donated their time to make radio commercials for Motorcycle Awareness Week.
- ❖ Encouraged motorcycle groups to establish their own local safety groups. Eg Central West Motorcycle Safety and Tourism Group initiated by the Orange branch of the Ulysses Motorcycle Club and now including the Ulysses branches from Mudgee, Dubbo, Cowra, Bathurst and Lithgow.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Prior to the development of *Positioned for Safety* there were no Local Government programs which had motorcycle safety as their primary objective. Motorcycle safety is now included in the road safety strategic plans of a number of Councils.

## **IPWEA/RTA LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROAD SAFETY PROJECTS GRANTS PROGRAM**

The following projects have been initiated in the past two years:

**CESSNOCK CITY** - Produced a brochure call 'Motorcycling in Hunter Wine Country" which was Highly Commended in the 2003 Local Government Excellence in Road Safety Award.

**NORTH SYDNEY, WILLOUGHBY AND KU-RING-GAI** - Motorcycle Safety Project which won the 2002 Local Government Excellence in Road Safety Award.

**CITY OF SYDNEY** - Motorcycle safety campaign that included the display of banners.

**FAIRFIELD CITY** - Traffic Awareness Program that included a presentation on sharing the road with motorcycles.

**GOSFORD CITY** - Survey of riders using the Old Road (Old Pacific Highway).

**HAWKESBURY SHIRE** - Survey of riders as a part of a Motorcycle Safety Project.

**PARRAMATTA, AUBURN AND HOLROYD** - 'Survive the Ride' motorcycle safety campaign.

**SHELLHARBOUR** - Included sharing the road with motorcyclists in their 'U-Turn the Wheel' day for year 11 students.

**TUMUT, TUMBARUMBA AND GUNDAGAI COUNCILS** - Formed the Snowy Region Motorcycle Safety Group to address safety issues and produce a brochure 'Motorcycling in the Snowy Region'.

**WOLLONDILLY, WINGECARRIBEE, GOULBURN CITY** - Published a brochure 'Motorcycling the Southern Way'.

**WOLLONDILLY** - Included sharing the road with motorcyclists in their 'U-Turn the Wheel' day for year 11 students.

**WOLLONGONG, SHELLHARBOUR AND KIAMA** - Conducted a fatigue study in conjunction with the Injury Risk Management Research Centre into the effect of fatigue on riders on day rides in the region, A survey of riders on day rides in the region, and a brochure to on 'Motorcycle Touring the Illawarra'.

## **References**

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## **Keywords**

Motorcycle, safety, strategic plan, MCC.