

SURVIVE THE RIDE – BE IN CONTROL MOTORCYCLE SAFETY EDUCATION 2005

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ABSTRACT

Survive the Ride (*STR*) is a community education campaign focusing on assisting motorbike riders to take responsibility for their own safety, regardless of who causes the crash. Since its inception in 2002, *STR* challenges riders to consider the gear they wear, their crash avoidance thinking skills and their riding behaviour.

Our primary target consists of nearly 7,500 registered motorbikes and over 15,000 licensed riders in seven Local Government Areas in Sydney's Western Suburbs.

To attract the attention of riders 26,000 *STR* brochures were distributed, \$5,000 worth of motorbike leathers, rider training and motorbike servicing was given away and riders were able to support The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

The success of *STR* depended largely on community support, partnership with State Government and sponsorship from private enterprise. Seven Local Councils, three Government agencies, a range of local businesses and motorbike clubs were keen to fund, donate and provide in-kind support to promote the key messages and participate in a positive campaign. *STR* in 2005 attracted over \$20,000 in sponsorship and support from 18 companies including FPC Magazines, Stay Upright, Monza Imports and Sony-BMG.

2005 is in the third year of a long term campaign to improve motorbike rider safety.

SURVIVE THE RIDE 2005 - PROJECT BACKGROUND

STR commenced in early 2002 when the Road Safety Officers (RSOs) from Parramatta and Auburn Councils combined their limited funds to create an education program targeting rider behaviour. This was one of the first motorbike safety campaign conducted under the umbrella of the Local Government Road Safety Program (LGRSP) in NSW.

Since its inception, *STR* has targeted rider behaviour in terms of encouraging riders to take more responsibility for themselves by:

- Wearing adequate protective clothing.
- Using risk management thinking to avoid crashes in the first place.

Our strategies have focused on the rider taking more responsibility for their own decisions regardless of the road conditions, insurance cover or the behaviour of other road users.

Since 2002 *STR* has undertaken a range of public events to raise awareness of motorbike safety issues including:

- Information booth at the Sydney Motorbike and Scooter Show (Homebush Bay) in October 2002.
- Development of the first motorbike safety brochure by Local Government in 2002 and revised in 2004.
- Project launch at Blacktown Olympic Park and Canada Bay in April 2004.
- Information booth at the Sydney International Motorbike Show (Darling Harbour) in May 2004.

Councils involved in *STR* has grown to include Auburn, Blacktown, Canada Bay, Holroyd, Parramatta, Burwood and Strathfield. The geographic area stretches over 30 km along the transport corridor that covers the M4, Great Western Highway and Parramatta Rd from Mount Druitt to Ashfield. These Local Government Areas (LGAs) account for over 12% of all motorbike crashes in the Sydney Region.

Motorbike sales in NSW have grown substantially over the past decade and now rivals the heady days of the 1980's (RTA and ATSB). In 2004 there were 47,200 motorbikes registered in the RTA Sydney region compared to 33,100 in 1997. In the *STR* LGAs alone there has been a 7% increase in the number of registered motorbikes from 6,927 in 2003 to 7,398 in 2004.

Following more than a decade of reductions in motorcycle rider fatalities from 160 in 1986 to approximately 50 fatalities per year since the late 1990's, the increasing popularity of motorbikes has resulted in a similar increase in crash rates in recent years. NSW is not alone in this regard. ATSB statistics indicate over the last 12 months motorbike fatalities have increased across Australia by over 10% and since 2000 have increased by over 3%.

RTA statistics show that there are currently just over 2,200 motorbike crashes in NSW each year. This is approximately 4% of all crashes in NSW. However, motorbike riders account for 7% of the total injuries and 10% of the fatalities. It was this disproportionate representation which prompted the *STR* program.

Prior to 2002, motorbike safety was a low priority funding issue for State and Local Government despite riders being recognized as one of the key high risk road user groups. The reason for this is unknown although the success of the RTA's Motorcycle Rider Training Scheme that had been in place for over 10 years is probably a major factor.

Following the increase in awareness of rider safety sparked by *STR* in 2002, other Local Councils have examined their crash statistics and conducted successful motorbike safety projects in the Snowy, Hawkesbury and Hunter Valley regions and Southern and Northern Sydney.

However, when compared to other countries motorbike rider safety in NSW is still underfunded. For example, in the US, motorbike safety enjoys a higher priority by Government and the industry itself than in NSW even though the crash statistics are often quite similar to NSW, on a state by state basis. In countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, motorbike safety has a significantly higher priority as nearly 50% of the registered vehicles are motorbikes.

THE PROJECT SCOPE FOR 2005

An ongoing challenge for *STR* is that the main funding for this project comes not from State Government but from Local Councils. Therefore the project is required to focus on local issues that affect local residents. To complicate matters, many motorbike riders

crashing in our LGAs commute from other LGAs during the week, and, ride through our LGAs to rural areas outside of the Sydney Metropolitan Area on weekends.

As with other road user groups, some riders agree with the “common sense” personal safety messages and remind themselves to do the right thing. Road safety advertisements provide them with the necessary prompting to maintain the desired behaviour.

However, for many riders, owning and riding a motorbike is a statement of one’s perceived or desired personality and personal image. While the exact percentage of riders who see making a statement as more important than being safe is unknown, what is known is that changing the behaviour of these riders cannot be done with a simple education campaign conducted over a few months.

Experience from a range of other road safety programs (eg, drink driving, seat belts, etc) demonstrates that to achieve a sustained change in road user behaviour, the initiative needs to be conducted over several years utilizing a range of strategies in an integrated approach.

LOCAL CRASH STATISTICS

The LGAs between Mt Druitt in Sydney’s West and Canada Bay in the Inner West contain a significant amount of Sydney’s motorbikes and riders. We have nearly 7,400 registered motorbikes (16% of registered motorbikes in Sydney) spread amongst more than 15,000 licensed riders.

The following charts provide a picture of how many riders have crashed in our LGAs. In the five years from 2000 to 2004 there were 975 crashes involving motorbikes that resulted in 22 fatalities and 836 injuries.

Chart 1

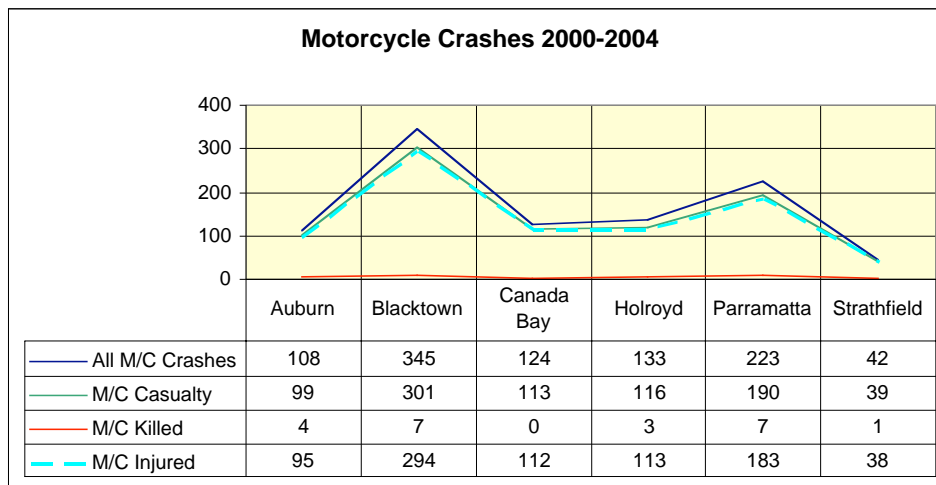


Chart 1 shows the spread of crashes across the LGAs. Blacktown has the highest number of registered motorcycles and licensed riders in any LGA within the Sydney region and therefore the highest crash rates.

Chart 2

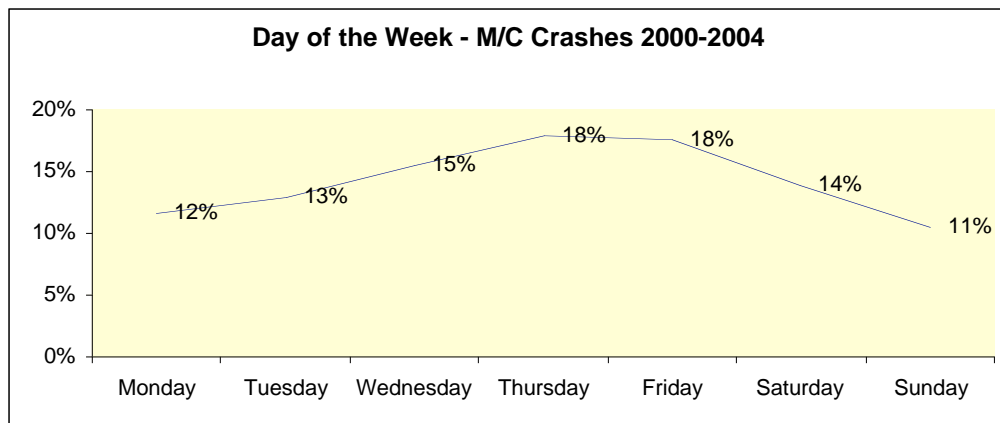
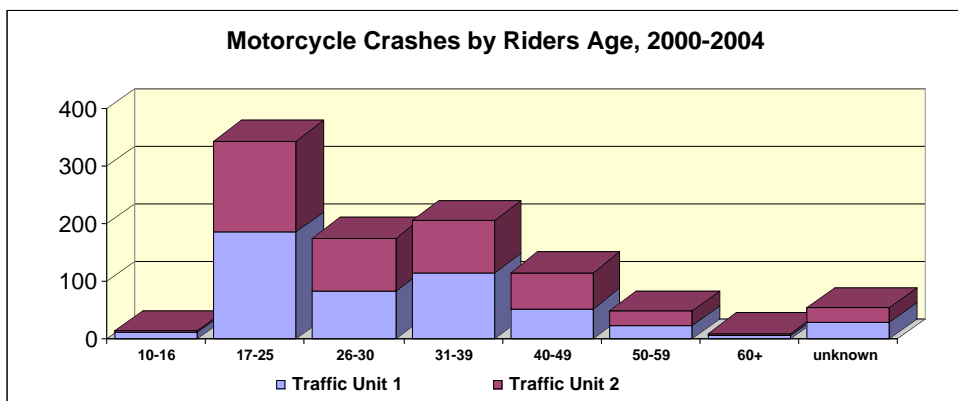


Chart 2 shows the percentage of motorbike crashes occurring on each day within the LGAs. Chart 3 shows the age group for riders involved in crashes within the LGAs.

Chart 3



Although motorbike crashes account for only 3% of all crashes in the LGAs, they account for 7% of all crash casualties and 14% of all fatalities. In total, 88% of all motorbike crashes in our LGAs result in a casualty.

Our LGAs also span a major road transport corridor that provides access to the Sydney CBD and surrounding regions for millions of vehicle movements each week. An analysis of the motorbike crash data for our LGAs revealed that the majority of crashes were occurring along the Great Western Highway and feeder roads. Our data also showed over 70% of crashes involving motorbikes occurred during the week and at a time that indicates the riders were commuters. Many crashes were clustered in specific areas. For example, one short stretch of Parramatta Road in the Auburn LGA accounted for a large number of fatal crashes.

RTA Road User Movement (RUM) codes indicate that over 77% of crashes in our LGAs occur on straight roads. Loss of control on curves accounts for only 7% of motorcycle crashes in our LGAs. The RUM codes indicate the causes of crashes in our LGAs being associated with:

- Intersections
- Insufficient following distances
- Losing control
- Lane changes
- Right turns across traffic.

This is at odds with the state wide RTA statistics that include rural crash rates. State wide trends show an increasing crash rate for single vehicle motorbike crashes on corners. This trend has been reflected in changes to the RTA Pre-Learner and Pre-Provisional rider training.

THE CHALLENGE IN 2005

As the *STR* project is still in the early years of implementation, the challenge is still to create an increased acceptance by riders that they are primarily responsible for their own safety, even if the Police report indicates they were legally “in the right”.

But rider safety is not a stand alone issue. It is part of a complex, often emotional landscape that includes politics, business interests and rights of individuals. There are several groups in NSW attempting to improve road safety for motorbike riders including those targeting legislative changes associated with insurance, tolls, licensing compliance and road design.

Crash statistics and opinion surveys showed the challenge for 2005 was to further separate the politics from the rider behaviour and reinforce the concept that riders need to take more responsibility for their own riding decisions. However, *STR* accepts that the reality we need to operate in include:

- Despite being taught the key safety lessons when completing their RTA rider training, many new riders quickly forget or choose to disregard the need for adequate protective clothing as the Summer months approach.
- Older riders returning to motorbikes after several years abstinence often have maintained their riders license by merely paying their annual fee. Their skills are often rusty at best and are more likely to afford motorbikes that have significant performance improvements compared to when they were riding previously. In addition, the level and type of traffic they encounter is significantly higher than they would have previously experienced on a motorbike. In addition, on weekends they are also less capable of traveling long distances and more easily succumb to fatigue.
- In NSW new riders over 30 years of age and qualifying for a Gold drivers’ license are able to legally ride a motorbike without engine capacity restrictions once they obtain their Provisional riders license. Many of these riders purchase motorbikes that significantly exceed their skill level. Many riders purchase motorbikes that have an acceleration and speed capacity unmatched by any other vehicle they have driven.
- The roads in and around Sydney used by commuters present serious daily risks due to inadequate maintenance and increasing traffic volumes.
- Rural roads preferred by weekend motorbike riders are also the roads that present the biggest crash risk (eg, Putty Rd, Old Pacific Highway, Princes Highway, etc).

The challenge for *STR* is to continue to increase the level of awareness of the individual rider’s obligation to avoid a crash by changing their personal riding behaviour, regardless of who is at fault for road conditions and road user behavior.

STRATEGIES FOR 2005

To influence riders we decided to work with them directly as well as create additional support from the industry and government stakeholders to assist in the years to come.

Our strategies targeted:

- **The riders** who had to change their behaviour. Some riders will take notice of safety messages without an inducement so we provided a comprehensive DL brochure featuring the key *STR* messages. Others need to see “what’s in it for me” before they take notice so we conducted a competition with \$5,000 in prizes. Still others take the lead from their club so we partnered with several clubs to spread the word and participate in the Easter Egg Ride.
- **The industry** players who were committed to improving rider safety and could assist in making the messages look attractive to riders. They provided prizes that would be attractive to motorbike riders.
- **The Government** who could provide funding to allow us to pay for logistical requirements. Local Councils and the RTA provided funds and opportunities to seek community support to cover the cost of delivering a successful project.

In essence, our main strategy for 2005 was to work with each of the three above groups to:

1. Attract riders with the opportunity to be involved in an event to assist children.
2. Provide safety information as part of every advertisement and also during every interaction with clubs and riders during the lead up to the event and on the day.
3. Provide a competition with prizes that reinforce the key messages and provide opportunities for ongoing marketing.

Experience had taught us that to deliver a road safety message to motorbike riders, we first had to get their attention. We also knew that many motorbike riders look for opportunities to go for a ride in a group.

The selection of the 2005 project theme was actually made following a suggestion by one of our major stakeholders (Blacktown Olympic Park) in 2004. Motorbike riders have a long history of supporting children’s charities and the Hospital did not yet have a fund raiser conducted by riders at Easter. By creating the Easter Egg Ride we were able to lift the profile of *STR* to a level where the project became almost “mainstream” in the wider motorbike community.

The project team consisted of only five members, three of whom were experienced riders who had contacts within the motorbike industry and Police networks. Through these contacts *STR* has achieved significant support from a few high profile companies in previous years. The attractiveness of their products were used once again to obtain the attention of riders.

In 2005, Tim Webster from Network 10 and 2GB was keen to remain the campaign Patron. Being a keen motorbike rider and high profile personality, his presence created additional interest from several stakeholders and led directly to Sony-BMG supporting the project.

PROMOTING THE EASTER EGG RIDE

In 2004, we found that promoting a local event in a national magazine was not only cost effective but also ensured we reached our target group. In 2005 we were able to use the profile of the previous advertising campaign to attract sponsorship.

STR Easter Egg Ride was promoted in three of the leading motorbike magazines, Two Wheels, Live to Ride and Cycle Torque, in February and March.

In addition, we installed information stands during March in 10 motorbike and accessories retail shops including some of the biggest names in the NSW industry. Each stand contained brochures on the Easter Egg Ride and motorbike safety.

To attract the attention of riders, the magazine advertisements and Easter Egg Ride brochures on the information stands featured the *STR* logo, The Children's Hospital at Westmead logo and images of motorbikes.

Using national magazines and high profile retail stores ensured we were able to reach our entire rider target group. That is, riders from our LGAs and other areas of Sydney who use our roads. As in 2004, this approach also provided additional benefits in that we found it easier to attract sponsors interested in Australia wide promotion.

ATTRACTING SPONSORS

STR was fortunate to maintain the support of key sponsors from 2004 including:

- Stay Upright Pty Ltd
- Monza Imports
- FPC Magazines
- TJ Automotive and Motorbike Performance
- Metropolitan Motorbike Spares

Having an event associated with a popular children's hospital and having high profile sponsors allowed us to attract interest from a range of other sponsors for example:

- McDonalds' Family Restaurants Blacktown
- Western Sydney International Dragway
- Sony- BMG
- Moto Concepts Australia
- Draggin Jeans
- Sydney Wide Party Hire
- Caffè' Migliore
- Reading Cinemas - Auburn

By the time the event was conducted *STR* had 18 sponsors providing either significant discounts or free event materials, products and services. The value of sponsorship in 2005 was in excess of \$20,000.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE KEY MESSAGES

STR in 2002 and 2004 established a strong interest in the project from riders and retailers alike. Our survey was sent to over 1,800 riders in 2004 and achieved a 32% response rate.

The survey and interviews with retailers demonstrated we had begun to establish *STR* as a road safety brand in the motorbike community and our key messages were recognized by the majority of riders:

- 18% of respondents recalled seeing our advertisements in Two Wheels.
- 68% recalled seeing our stand at the Sydney Motorbike Show.
- 66% of respondents recalled our message that they should look out for themselves
- 59% said our second message was to wear the right protective clothing when riding.

However, the survey also confirmed our observations that despite recalling the messages, many riders were not actually wearing sufficient protective clothing and the key thinking skills required to avoid crashes were not being used effectively.

In 2005 we once again promoted protective clothing and skills development with a competition. Five winners each received new gloves, leather jacket and boots from AGV Sport plus a free Stay Upright Advanced Skills course. The winners included a commuter rider and the president of a weekend riding club.

Our database was increased by nearly 300 new names who will be targeted with information and promotions later in 2005 and 2006.

SUCCESS INDICATORS - OUTCOMES

STR is in its third year of a long term campaign. Considering that it takes 10 to 15 years to achieve any significant outcomes in a public education campaign, measures related to crash rates as a result of *STR* would be misleading. However, we have measured the *STR* campaign at a lower level in terms of the nature and extent of awareness and influence we have in the motorbike community.

Measures we have used to indicate the level of influence we have had on the motorbike community include:

- Acceptance by retailers for the use of our in-store displays. In 2005, dealers in all LGAs welcomed the return of our displays and positioned them in high traffic areas. Dealer representatives have also expressed great interest in future programs.
- Recall of the *STR* brand and safety message by riders has exceeded 60%.
- Community ownership by clubs to attend our events. In 2005, we had over 6 motorbike social clubs attend our Easter Egg Ride. Since then a large club, Kobbiers Cruisers have willingly agreed to conduct the ride for us in 2006. We have also established support from the Goldwing Association and Harley Owners Group.
- Acceptance by Government stakeholders. Motorbike safety projects now enjoy a higher profile than ever before in NSW. *STR* has established itself as a key player with the Police, Ambulance and RTA. Since our crash analysis was made public in 2004 the Motorcycle Council of NSW have used the data to encourage the RTA to declare a stretch of Parramatta Road in Auburn as a “black length”.

SUCCESS INDICATORS - DELIVERABLES

Many road safety projects can only be measured in terms of deliverables due mainly to the yearly funding cycle and the lack of long term specific goals from the State Government. When measuring the deliverables, the data includes:

In 2002:

- Developed and distributed over 20,000 brochures on safe riding.
- Access to the 32,000 visitors to the Sydney Motorbike and Scooter Show at Homebush Bay.
- Advertisements in Two Wheels magazine (circulation of 250,000)

In 2004:

- Revised and distributed over 26,000 new brochures.
- Displays in 10 retail stores.
- Access to the 30,000 visitors to the Sydney International Motorbike Show at Darling Harbour.

- Advertisements in Two Wheels and Live to Ride magazines (circulation of 250,000)
- Creation of a 1,800 name rider database.

In 2005:

- Distributed over 26,000 brochures.
- Displays in 10 retail stores.
- Creation of an annual motorbike charity event.
- Advertisements in Two Wheels and Live to Ride magazines (circulation of 250,000)
- Established sponsorship from 21 companies.

In addition, the project title and themes have been duplicated by other projects and the RTA in their recent advertising campaigns.

Obtaining funding either as cash or as in-kind support is vital to any road safety project. In 2004/2005 financial year the project funding included:

- RTA - \$15,000
- Councils - \$9,000
- Private enterprise sponsorship – approximately \$20,000 (in-kind)

They assisted with spreading the word about the ride and organising riders to make the event enjoyable.

FUTURE OF SURVIVE THE RIDE

Despite the increased interest in safety, clearly there is still a great deal of work to be done to make riders more aware of and interested in using adequate protective clothing and crash avoidance thinking skills.

RTA records show that over 7,000 Provisional rider and 17,500 new rider licenses were issued in NSW in 2004. Many of these new riders will join the existing riders as they travel through our LGAs. Some of them will become acutely aware of personal safety issues through the confronting experience of either witnessing or being involved in a motorbike crash.

In 2006 *STR* will establish key initiatives in conjunction with the motorbike industry to deliver road safety messages to riders. These initiatives include:

- Creation of a web site featuring motorbike safety technical information, open debate on current safety issues and a process for reporting and tracking road maintenance and design issues to Local Councils and the RTA.
- Conducting an industry forum with representatives from all of Sydney's major motorbike industry suppliers. The aim of the forum will be to create a "push" from the motorbike industry to "Sell Safety" with every motorbike purchase, without the need to impose a new Government regulation.

Motorbike crashes will increase as registration of new motorbikes increase. It is our belief that the motorbike industry needs to play more of an active role in looking after the safety of their customers. Some business operators have recognised this responsibility and the benefits to their business. This is exemplified by the owner of Metropolitan Motorbike Spares commenting, "I want my customers to come back".

Survive the Ride will concentrate on this national issue from a local perspective as all riders are local residents somewhere, not just statistics. We will continue to work at the grass roots level to facilitate riders and the industry working together to improve motorbike rider safety.

REFERENCES

- RTA Crash Data December Quarter 2004 Data Release
- RTA NSW Driver and Vehicle Statistics 2004
- Australian Transport Safety Bureau Fatal Road Crash database
- Australian Transport Safety Bureau – Road Deaths Australia 2004 Statistical Summary