Review of Post-Licence Motorcycle Rider Training in New South Wales

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Abstract

Fully licensed motorcyclists represented over two thirds of riders killed on New South Wales (NSW) roads from 2010 – 2014. An ongoing need to address crash risks among this cohort is recognised and there is strong support for post-licence rider training (PLRT) among rider advocates and stakeholder groups. This research examined the PLRT environment in NSW to assess the extent to which NSW PLRT courses targeted identified rider skills and competencies. A desktop review of available courses was supplemented by interviews with training providers. A wide range of courses was identified, most of which appeared to potentially support rider risk management.

Background

Motorcyclists remain overrepresented in fatal and serious injury crashes (~17%) on New South Wales (NSW) roads. Rider training and related research has historically focused on novice rider safety (e.g., Ivers et al., 2016), yet fully licensed riders comprised over two thirds of motorcyclist fatalities in NSW from 2010 to 2014. Post-licence motorcycle rider training (PLRT) has strong support from motorcycle stakeholders, but course diversity and limited specific program evaluations leave many questions unanswered. Having identified the need to address crash risks in the *NSW Motorcycle Safety Strategy 2012-2021* (Transport for NSW, 2012), the Centre for Road Safety engaged CARRS-Q to investigate the extent to which NSW PLRT courses targeted identified rider skills and competencies.

Method

The research included a desktop review of available PLRT courses to provide an overview of course content, locations and costs. The review was complemented by interviews with eight training providers for information on course structure, components, delivery, promotion, and trainee characteristics. The information was used to identify courses likely to support riders to manage risks and promote safety improvements. The study framework was informed by identification of six key rider competencies (scanning, buffering, braking, cornering, lane positioning and basic motorcycle handling) drawn from a review of crash types and feedback from motorcycle stakeholders.

Results and Conclusions

The research identified 36 PLRT courses across 10 providers that may variously assist riders to manage potential crash risks. Trainees were reported to have vastly different characteristics, needs and objectives for undertaking training (Table 1); some reportedly required skills development from a low level while some were highly competent. This reflects a need for a diverse range of course offerings, which appears to be largely met across NSW overall, although courses are geographically limited, and some course costs are a potential barrier.

Unlike many pre-licence training courses, many of the PLRT programs contained, and were often structured around, the key competencies identified above, but in most cases there was no standardised curriculum. Providers indicated that prospective PLRT participants sometimes lacked basic skills that could be expected to be acquired through pre-licence training. As such, providers usually set some prerequisites for participation in higher level courses. Importantly, training was often tailored to participants' individual requirements and ability.

Assessment was made of the extent to which each training course would likely support riders to manage on-road risks, based on the inclusion of key competencies in program components, as well as the broadly defined concepts of 'roadcraft' (a combination of practical skills, situational awareness, hazard perception and response, and attitudes and behaviours). Around half (55%) of available courses appeared likely to support riders' risk management, clearly addressing both skills and roadcraft, while 20% appeared only somewhat supportive due to limited skills and roadcraft content. The remaining 25% were higher level track-based courses, with a high degree of uncertainty regarding potential road safety benefits. The absence of direct evidence of safety effects is acknowledged, while any positive effects of PLRT on motorcycle safety overall may be minimal due to low participation rates.

Table 1. Post-licence training participation among interviewed NSW providers*

Provider	Trainee Age range	Male %	Motorcycle types	Returning %	Average skill level	Trainees per year
A	Up to 87	95	Sport	NA	Variable	Up to 900
B	18-60	NA	Touring, Cruiser	20	NA	Up to 40
C	Up to 80	80	NA	20	NA	NA
D	NA	85	Mixed	10-15	Poor	NA
F	20-75	80	NA	NA	Poor	NA
G	NA	84	Sport, Touring, Adventure, Cruiser	25-30	Avge-poor	~320
J	17-60	50	Cruiser, Adventure, Touring	40	Avge-poor	>200

*Insufficient information was obtained from one of the interviewed providers. NA = Not available.

References

Ivers, R. Q., Sakashita, C., Senserrick, T., Elkington, J., Lo, S., Boufous, S., and de Rome, L., 2016. Does an on-road motorcycle coaching program reduce crashes in novice riders? A randomised control trial. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 86, 40-46.

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