

A Safe Systems Response: Protecting Motorcyclists along the Oxley Highway

Monica Sirol, John Alexander, Joshua Buckham, Penny Sutton^a, Melvin Eveleigh, Joseph Le^b

^aNSW Roads and Maritime Services, ^bNSW Centre for Road Safety

Abstract (100 word limit)

The Oxley Highway is popular among motorcyclists from all over Australia as it has many tight and demanding corners which require a lot of concentration. However, over a 44 kilometre section between Wauchope and Walcha, there have been 60 crashes since 2012. Of those, 58 have been on curves and 43 have been motorcyclists. There have been 25 serious injury crashes and 6 fatal crashes. All 6 fatal crashes have been a motorcyclist.

In response to the high crash rate involving motorcyclists, the Centre for Road Safety (CRS) and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) worked collaboratively to engage local motorcycle groups and key stakeholders to introduce a Safe Systems package to improve safety along this popular riding route.

Background

In 2015 RMS in collaboration with the CRS completed a Route Safety Review of the Oxley Highway. The review found that a 44 km section of the Oxley Highway between Walcha and Wauchope recorded a significantly high crash rate, with 43 motorcyclist crashes over 5 years resulting in 6 motorcyclist fatalities.

Approach

The review identified the need for a number of improvements, including upgrading the infrastructure in conjunction with an evaluation of the existing speed zones.

A Safe System approach was adopted, taking a holistic view of the road transport system and the interactions among the key components of that system – the road users, roads and roadsides, vehicles and travel speeds. This is in recognition that all component of the system have a role to play in helping to keep road users safe.

Developing a Package of Treatments

In consultation with local motorcycle groups and key stakeholders, a Safe Systems package was developed to reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes along this route. This included:

(1) Safer Roads

An infrastructure package of consistent delineation, shoulder sealing, safety barrier with motorcycle underrun and crash warning signage will be installed along the whole length of the 44km section. The proposed infrastructure measures will be installed to coincide with planned Asset works along the route.

(2) Safer Speeds

The speed limit along this length of road was reduced from 100 km/h to 80km/h.

(3) Safer People

Behavioural campaign material was prepared along the length of the road a 'Roads We Ride' video was launched for the Oxley Highway (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiz_r5rE3dg).