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Motorcycle Safety in Australia – Consulting with Riders and Jurisdictions Working Together

By Shaun Lennard, Chairman, Australian Motorcycle Council

I congratulate the College for inviting contributions for this edition on the subject of motorcycle safety – I look forward to reading the thoughts of others on this topical issue.

When referring to “motorcycles” in Australia, we adopt the definition used by the International Transport Forum, that is, we’re talking about motorcycles, scooters, trikes, motorcycles with sidecars, and even quad bikes. For most common usage, “motorcycle” means “motorcycles and scooters”.

The College kindly published my article *Motorcycles and Road Safety in Australia for the Next Decade* in the August 2009 issue, so I won't repeat myself here, other than refocusing on a couple of points in particular.

In this article I'll cover two key themes – consulting with riders and jurisdictions working together.

Consulting with Riders

The international *Workshop on Motorcycling Safety*, hosted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s International Transport Forum and held in Lillehammer, Norway, in June 2008 (“the Lillehammer workshop”), identified three general principles and 13 practical measures as priority measures for addressing motorcycle safety across the OECD. These were also ranked in order of importance amassing the individual views of each participant.

The first – that is, the highest of all priorities identified at the workshop – was listed with the heading “Cooperation between the various stakeholders” and stated:

“Improving safety for motorcyclists implies to set up a continuing dialogue and cooperation between the various stakeholders, including the motorcyclists themselves, policy makers, researchers and motorcycle manufacturers.”

It's important to note here that only around two thirds of the almost 90 participants were not motorcycle rider or industry representatives, that is, it was a group mostly made up of government representatives, policy makers, researchers, insurance

industry representatives and the like who agreed on this recommended way forward.

A common theme between virtually all participants at the Lillehammer workshop was that it was time to end the “blame-game and finger-pointing” and instead work cooperatively to improve motorcycle safety. Rather than a focus on motorcycle crash statistics, once the issues had been quantified, the focus of the workshop then turned to developing practical solutions. This needs to be the approach we take across Australia too, if we're to see any significant improvements to the current crash rates.

All reports from the Lillehammer workshop can be found at: <http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/jtrc/safety/Lillehammer2008/lillehammer08.html>

In Australia, fortunately we already have the right approach at the Federal level with the Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee (MSCC). The largest rider groups in the country are represented on the MSCC, along with the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries. The MSCC convened Australia's first Motorcycle and Scooter Safety Summit in Canberra in April 2008, attended by over 100 invited participants including many members of the College.

Members of the MSCC are currently working on progressing the seven key recommendations from the Canberra workshop. I recommend anyone with a serious interest in motorcycle safety in Australia to read this report at: http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2009/msss_report.aspx

The Australian Motorcycle Council (AMC) has amongst its members the peak rider group in each of the States and Territories. How each of these organisations interacts with government and other key stakeholders varies across the jurisdictions. There are a number of different consultative and advisory groups in place across the country.

Not to be confused with the Austroads-backed structure of the Australian Bicycle Council, the Motorcycle Council is a representative body made up of rider groups. Their details are all on the AMC's website, but for those unfamiliar with the organisations I'll mention them all by name here.

The members of the AMC are:

- Bikes Unlimited
- Motorcycle Council of New South Wales (MCC of NSW)
- Motorcycle Riders Association of Queensland (MRAQ)
- Motorcycle Riders Association of South Australia (MRA SA)
- Motorcycle Riders Association of the Australian Capital Territory (MRA ACT)
- Motorcycle Riders Association of Victoria (MRA Vic)
- Motorcycle Riders Association of Western Australia (MRA WA)
- Rider Awareness Northern Territory (RANT)
- Tasmanian Motorcycle Council (TMC)
- Ulysses Club
- Victorian Motorcycle Council (VMC)

For further information about how to contact any of these organisations, please contact the AMC by email committee@amc.asn.au.

Jurisdictions Working Together

We're all familiar with the public debate over hospitals, education and a number of other areas where Australia's federal system presents challenges for best-practice and efficient use of resources.

Although not as widely recognised or discussed, in my view road safety is clearly another area hampered by the State and Territory structures. How can eight different motorcycle rider training and licence regimes all be the "best"? Or how can there be eight different "best" ways of marking highway patrol cars in Australia?

I'm certain each of the jurisdictions shares the AMC's serious concerns – and the concerns of our member organisations – about motorcycle casualty numbers in Australia. Each of the jurisdictions was represented at the Canberra summit in 2008 and was therefore involved in developing the recommendations.

I mentioned the Australian Bicycle Council earlier intentionally. Austroads works collectively on issues concerning cycle safety and infrastructure planning. But each of the States largely works independently on motorcycle safety initiatives. A challenge in Australia is to work as collectively as we can; to break down the State borders and develop some nationally-consistent strategies.

Members of the Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee will be working to progress outcomes from both the Canberra summit and the Lillehammer workshop as consistently as possible across Australia. We encourage cooperation between the jurisdictions, in consultation with rider groups as discussed above, to collectively bring about improvements in motorcycle safety in Australia.

A New Strategic Approach to Advance Motorcycle Safety and Mobility in Victoria

By Nicola Fotheringham, VicRoads

Abstract

Victoria recently released a new strategic action plan for Victoria's motorcycle and scooter riders. As part of its ongoing commitment to improving rider safety, Victoria already had a significant number and range of motorcycle safety projects currently being developed or delivered. The plan provides a new strategic focus as well as identifying a comprehensive set of actions aimed at improving both road safety and mobility for riders. Key focus areas within the plan include research and evaluation, the road network and environment, rider and pillion passenger safety, and vehicle safety and protective clothing. This paper provides an overview of the key safety actions identified in the plan and some of the projects in motion to address them.

Introduction

In August 2009, Minister for Roads and Ports Tim Pallas MP launched a new strategic action plan for Victorian motorcycle and scooter riders, *Victoria's Road Safety and Transport Strategic*

Action Plan for Powered Two Wheelers 2009-2013. The plan integrates both the road safety and mobility needs of riders and is the first of its kind for an Australian State Government. The plan recognises the role of motorcycles and scooters in Victoria's transport future. Its objectives are twofold: aiming to significantly reduce serious casualties to riders and pillion passengers and ensure that powered two wheelers (PTWs) are given appropriate recognition in transport and road use policy and planning.

Background

Since 2002, the Victorian Motorcycle Road Safety Strategy 2002 – 2007 guided the direction of motorcycle safety in Victoria. Over the life of the previous strategy, considerable gains in motorcycle safety were achieved. These contributed to a 20 per cent reduction in motorcyclist fatalities in Victoria at the same time as motorcycle registrations increased by 41 per cent.