



TASMANIAN MOTORCYCLE COUNCIL Inc.

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

6 February 2015

Senate Inquiry into aspects of road safety in Australia

Dear Sir

Please find below the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council's (TMC) submission for the Senate inquiry into aspects of road safety in Australia. The TMC notes the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry and submits the following in response to item e) *other associated matters*.

The TMC was established in 2004 and is the peak representative body for motorcyclists in Tasmania. The TMC deals with political advocacy on behalf of motorcyclists and the goals of the Association are to improve and promote the welfare, safety needs and road safety concerns of motorcyclists, and to promote the safe and convenient recreational use of motorcycles.

Over the past ten years, the number of registered motorcycles in Tasmania has doubled, and the number of licenced riders has increased by over a quarter: there are currently 47,519 licenced motorcyclists in Tasmania, and 16,433 registered motorcycles. This represents approximately 3% of all registered vehicles in Tasmania, however motorcyclists continue to be over-represented in crashes, accounting for around 21% of serious casualties.

Motorcycle road safety initiatives in Tasmania

The TMC continues to work with local council and the State Government to reinforce the importance of appropriate infrastructure for motorcycle safety. While the TMC notes that road defects are a minor contributory factor in crashes, it draws attention to the vulnerability of motorcyclists once a crash has occurred. Appropriate infrastructure, particularly the use of suitable barriers, can reduce serious casualties and fatalities for motorcyclists. In particular, the TMC is pushing for underrun (rub rails) protection to be installed on W-beam barriers, and discouraging the use of wire rope barriers.

The TMC notes the preference of the State Government and interstate governments in using wire rope barriers due to the lower cost and apparent road safety benefits for other road users, however reiterates its opposition to this form of barrier. The TMC believes that future national road safety initiatives should consider the impacts of inappropriate barriers for motorcyclists,

which may increase the chances of serious casualties or fatality. The TMC does not believe it is acceptable to compromise the safety of an increasing road-user group based on cost.

Improved rider training

Analysis of crash statistics in Tasmania has shown that novice riders are grossly over-represented in crashes and serious casualties. Despite Learner and Provisional licence holders accounting for only 8% of licence holders in the period from 2004 – 2013, novice riders consistently account for over a third of crashes. In 2013-14, novice riders accounted for 44.4% of all motorcycle claims and 34.2% of serious claims. The Tasmanian Motorcycle Council is currently working with the State Government to review and improve mandatory and non-compulsory rider training in Tasmania, with a view to incorporate an on-road component.

Crash data indicates that approximately 34% of novice motorcycle crashes occur 'off-path on curve'; compared with 15% 'off-path on straight' and 14% while 'manoeuvring'. The three most common crash factors include 'excessive speed for the conditions' (21%), inattentiveness (12%) and failing to give way (11%).

The TMC believes that a consistent national approach should be sought for rider training, with a focus on real-life practical skills which are directly transferable to on-road riding. In particular, novice riders must be taught the importance of paying attention on the roads, hazard awareness and riding defensively. The high percentage of crashes occurring 'off-path on curve' highlight the need for greater focus on correct cornering techniques, practiced at speeds consistent with on-road riding.

Crash data from Tasmania indicates that over 35% of all motorcycle crashes occur 'off path on curve'. This is double the percentage of other types of crashes, with only 16% of motorcycle crashes being 'head on', 15.8% 'off path on straight' and 12.6% while 'manoeuvring'. In addition, inexperience was found to be the largest factor in serious casualties, present in 34% of crashes. Inattentiveness was a factor in 30% of crashes and 'excessive speed for the conditions/circumstances' was a factor in 28% of crashes. 'Road defects' were present as a factor in 11% of motorcycle serious casualties, almost double that of car crashes resulting in serious casualties, where it is a factor in only 6% of crashes.

In addition to younger riders being highly represented in serious casualties (31.2% of casualties are aged 16-25), riders between the ages of 36 and 45 are represented in 22.8% of crashes, with a further 18% of serious motorcycle casualties involving riders aged 45-54.

These factors demonstrate the importance of rider training and a focus on motorcyclists constantly working to improve their skills and paying attention on the roads. Tasmanian motorcyclists are able to access a heavily subsidised training course, the Road Skills Course, at a cost of \$50, which can be tailored to the individual needs of riders. However the course has a low uptake, indicating that many motorcyclists either do not know about the course or do not believe they can benefit.

The TMC believes that further focus must be placed on the importance of skill improvement, hazard awareness and defensive riding in Government road safety campaigns. Initiatives could include discounts on registration for completion of approved rider training courses, further subsidies for rider training, increased campaigns focussing on hazard awareness and improving skills (rather than the usual 'speed kills' and 'drink driving' road safety campaigns) and ensuring skills learned in off-road training courses are transferable to on-road situations.

While the TMC recognises that these types of initiatives are best raised at State Government level, it believes that a national, consistent approach to road safety campaigns will help engender engagement and positive change resulting in better outcomes for motorcyclists.

Speed enforcement

The TMC would like to note the often misleading use of the term 'speed' in road safety campaigns and in particular, the inappropriate use of 'speed enforcement', which it believes results in monetary benefits to governments without the corresponding road safety benefits. Tasmanian motorcycle crash statistics show that 'excessive speed for the conditions' is one of the most common factors in crashes (28%), whereas 'exceeding the speed limit' is only a factor in 11% of motorcycle crashes resulting in serious casualty (compared with 12% of car crashes).

The TMC acknowledges that the greater the speed at the time of a crash, the higher the chance of serious injury or fatality and recognises that exceeding the speed limit was a factor in 46% of fatalities in Tasmania. However it notes the relatively low numbers of motorcycle fatalities per year in real terms (Motorcycle fatalities ranged from 5 – 8 per year from 2004 – 2009, dropping to a low of 3 per year in 2010 – 2011, before increasing to 5 in 2012, doubling to 10 in 2013, then halving back to 5 in 2014).

However the high focus on 'speeding' ignores the three major factors in crashes and serious casualties and does not address other high risk behavior which impacts on road safety. In the case of motorcycle crashes, where the highest percentage of crashes occur on corners (35%), focusing on 'speeding', in terms of enforcing the speed limit, will not reduce the number of incidents. Likewise, a focus on 'speeding' does not address 'inexperience' or 'inattention'.

While it appears popular for governments across Australia to focus on speed limit enforcement as a key road safety initiative, the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council advocates for high visibility policing as the best approach. Information from the Tasmanian Motor Accidents Insurance Board shows that that motorcycle claims and serious motorcycle casualties remained fairly consistent from 2004 – 2010, with a sharp drop around 2012, before a rise again in 2013. In addition, around 1 in 5 of all serious motorcycle casualties involved unlicensed riders. Unlicensed riders also account for 18% of fatalities and 18.6% of serious injuries.

The TMC has noted a correlation between high visibility policing and reduction in high-level excessive speed offences (+15 of speed limit) and believes it is possible to extrapolate this out to infer high visibility policing deters all manner of high risk taking behaviour. It is likely therefore that high visibility policing will also act to reduce the number of unlicensed riders.

In regards to unlicensed riders, the TMC strongly supports the Trail Bike Initiative from the State Government. As part of its election commitments, the Hodgman Government has pledged \$40,000 funding per year (for 4 years) with the main purpose to encourage riding in legal areas and to reduce illegal trail bike riding. This positive and pro-active approach to reducing illegal riding behavior should be adopted across all jurisdictions.

In summary, the TMC believes the following are key to improving road safety in Tasmania:

- A focus on appropriate infrastructure, considering the needs of all road users,
- High quality training for novice riders, which includes an on-road component and focus on hazard awareness and paying attention on the roads as well as approved and supported training for experienced riders to foster continuous skill improvement.
- High visibility policing which focusses on all risk-taking behaviours, not just speed enforcement.

Sincerely

Paul Bullock
TMC President