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The current state of motorcycle safety in Australia

There is and has been a huge increase in the use of motorcycles within Australia, with the number of new motorcycle registration increasing 112% over the past 10 years.

There is now estimated to be over one million registered road motorcycle on Australian roads and are the fastest growing of all road user types. There is also estimated to be a further 700,000 off road motorcycle in Australia

Although motorcycles make up only approximately 5% of the Australian traffic fleet, they do represent approximately 20% of all road fatalities and many more serious injuries are due to motorcycle crashes.

What can be done to reduce these crashes.

Infrastructure

As motorcycles generally only have two wheels, and unlike cars are much more likely to be adversely effected by road conditions. Some simple and relatively inexpensive changes to how road treatments are managed could include-

- Install centre and edge lining on all road but particularly country motorcycle favoured routes including wide centre lines on major highways.
- Install edge sealing of roads particularly on the outside curves of bends in the road.
- Ensure that all signage if possible is installed on straight sections of roads and not on curves or bends in the road, as riders need to look through corners more that car drivers and do not need the distraction of looking at signs on curves.
- Allow motorcycles to use priority bus lanes, thus removing them from the congested and close quarter traffic conditions that make it far more difficult for other road users to see the rider.
- Install rub rails on w bean barriers to reduce the chance of a rider colliding with the posts of the barrier.

- Reduce sight line obstructions at intersections to increase the opportunity of riders being seen by other traffic entering the roadway, such as posts, signage, vegetation.
- Design intersections on roads in build-up areas to increase sight lines in all directions.
- Carry out motorcycle specific road safety audits on popular motorcycle routes.
- Develop a specific motorcycle Black Spot criteria, to fund upgrades on high risk roads for motorcycle riders.
- Establish Road Safety Audit Teams to systematically audit motorcycle favoured roads in Australia. to identify hazardous roads that are in need of improvement. This proactive approach has the capability of stopping crashes and reducing the trauma on our roads before it becomes a personal disaster to someone's family.

Protective Clothing

- Promote the use of Motocap 5 star motorcycle protective clothing through all forms of advertising mediums and include motorcycle shops and dealers in the conversation.

Safer Motorcycles

- Investigate the feasibility of a motorcycle type of AMCAP star rating for motorcycles, based on crash avoidance, with measures such as ABS, cornering ABS, traction control, tyre pressure monitors, a reduction of any design feature in front of the rider of a motorcycle such as display instruments or objects attached to the handlebars or fuel tank that could cause torso or leg injuries to a rider being thrown over the front of the motorcycle.

Rider Training and Assessment

- Promote the take up of enhanced skills training for all riders with the focus on returning and older riders who may have lost some skills over the years. This could be subsidised and the safety and reduced crashes may be a good return on the investment by government.
- Set a Australia wide curriculum that all motorcycle trainers must follow, as the current system allows the trainers too much freedom in some states as to what they teach or do not teach to learner riders, such as protective clothing, hazard perception, ride to be seen, reading the road, correct cornering and braking etc.
- Ensure that only the best people are authorised to teach learners the skills that they will require to remain safe whilst riding on Australian roads. At the moment it is far too easy to obtain a motorcycle instructors licence in some states. I would suggest that all instructors complete a cert 4 in Rider Training

followed by an intensive assessment by officers from the Department of Transport, with a re-assessment every three years.

Autonomous Vehicles

- Fund research into the safety of motorcycles when mixed with semi and fully autonomous vehicles. Motorcycles will present a difficult challenge to autonomous vehicles as the shape detected by an autonomous vehicle of a motorcycle will change from face on to side on and to a leaning motorcycle from all different angles and at road speeds that may slow down the response time if detected at all. This seems to have been missed in many of the research available at the moment.

Enforcement

- Increase enforcement of distracted drivers as this is one of the more dangerous actions that a driver can do to put motorcycle riders and other vulnerable road users at risk of injury, this includes using emerging technology such as drones and using Main Roads cameras to capture dangerous behaviour.
- Although enforcement and any fine and demerit points that go along with it is a good deterrent for bad road user behaviour, perhaps a slightly different approach could be taken in rewarding good road users. This could be in the form of a reduction in the third party insurance premium included in the vehicle registration. If a road user has had zero demerit point for 5 continuous years, they receive 10% reduction and for 10 years they receive a 15% reduction. If they do receive any demerit points during the discount period, all of their vehicles would revert back to full price. This is a way or rewarding safer road users who we believe would be less inclined to exceed the speed limit or be involved in any other offence, if on top of the fine it also cost them more to register all of their vehicles for the next 5 years.

Crash Investigation

- Establish dedicated Crash Investigation teams that would follow the Safe System approach to road safety and investigate the crash without looking for any blame but rather the causal factors of the crash, in a true Towards Zero approach. Some of the factors could include mental condition, fatigue, emotional state, mechanical failure, road design, road conditions to mention just a few.
- South Australia have a good model that they have been using for some years and their team seems to be getting good results. It is obvious that we are unable to fix the problems on our roads if we don't fully understand what happened and why it happened and not just the how did it happen.

Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee

- Re-establish the Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee, this Committee was disbanded several years ago, and we believe this has left a void in the advisory and consultation process between motorcycle riders and the road safety departments within Government. This Committee had representatives of respected motorcycle groups from all states and territories, who met to raise issues and make recommendations to the relevant Australian Government Departments on road safety for motorcycle riders.

The Australian Motorcycle Council

The Australian Motorcycle Council was formed in 1980 and revitalised in 2004 with a broader membership structure. The objectives of the Council are to:

- Promote and improve all aspects of road safety concerning motorcycling in Australia
- Promote, improve and protect the use of motorcycles in Australia, recognising their environmentally beneficial place in urban and land transport planning and systems
- Promote and improve at all levels the full knowledge, awareness, understanding and acceptance of motorcyclists' welfare and safety needs in Australia
- We are the peak motorcycle body in Australia, representing all motorcycle riders at a federal and state and local Government level.
- **Current member organisations of the Australian Motorcycle Council include**
- Ulysses Club Inc.
- Motorcycle Riders Association of Western Australia Inc.
- Motorcycle Riders Association of South Australia.
- Motorcycle Riders Association of Australian Capital Territory.
- Motorcycle Council of N.S.W.
- Victorian Motorcycle Council.
- Tasmanian Motorcycle Council.
- Riders Association of Northern Territory.

We are more than happy to discuss these and any other issues with you, as I believe we need to investigate every option to make motorcycle riding safer, if we hope to ever achieve the inspirational Target Zero for all road users.

David Wright
Acting Chair