

INQUIRY INTO VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

Organisation: Private Citizen

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Date Received: 4/08/2010

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Staysafe (Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make a short submission to the Staysafe committee on the following points in the terms of reference.

I am a fifty year old motorcyclist with many years of riding experience, and believe I have some insight to give to the non motorcycle riding public and yourselves.

Addressing C) underlying factors in motorcycle and bicycle injuries and fatalities;
I believe that one of the factors in Car vs Motorcycle accidents is the lack of empathy by the car driver to the motorcyclist. Examples: Not understanding the safe braking distances needed by a motorcycle, especially in the wet.
Not seeing **a person** riding, just an object, which is not much of a risk to them in their car. Drivers rarely pull out in front of a B double truck, but will put out in front of a motorcycle as they think we can get out of their way, i.e. risk perception.

Some of my answers to these problems are:

Driver education, Questions about Motorcycle rights of way as part of Driver licence testing. A media campaign along the lines of "I didn't see you" is an admission of guilt to driving with undue care and attention. Also pointing out how much "rubber to the road" a motorcycle has compared to a car.

Allowing some riders to choose not to wear a helmet, this will make drivers see a "real person", and allow eye to eye contact. I suggest you allow those riders over 25 with least five years riding experience (Plus no loss of points?) and full Private health insurance this choice.

A program similar to the Learner Approved Motorcycle scheme to apply to L and P plate drivers cars. Restrictions on power to weight ratios and brake horse power, i.e. no turbo's and superchargers.

E) Integration of motorcyclists and bicyclists in the planning and management of the road system in NSW;

This I believe would be fairly easy to arrange, allow the Motorcycle Council of NSW and Bicycle NSW to send reps along to planning meetings, allow submissions to come from the public at anytime to the RTA and private road builders/owners that have to be followed up and answers given. Simple things like the banning of large plain steel plates in road repairs and allowing the use of motorcycles & bicycles in Bus lanes and breakdown lanes will make things safer for all. Also allow more time in asking for submissions! I only read about this opportunity in Wednesday's paper to find submissions close on Friday!

F) *Motorcycle and bicycle safety issues and strategies in other jurisdictions.*

The Medical Association in the UK disagreed with the mandatory use of bicycle helmets because they felt that people, especially young people and women were discouraged to ride bicycles because of the helmets looking uncool and messing their hair, and that this discouragement was outweighed by the health benefits, examples weight loss and cardio health, etc of riding bicycles. I believe that the effects of the mandatory use of bicycle helmets in Australia should be looked into, to measure if this law has had a negative affect on bicycle use. I also believe that it would very interesting to measure the effect of the Motorcycle Helmet Laws in the USA as in some states motorcycle helmet use is voluntary. Looking at the number of traffic accidents, not the fatalities, of non helmet wearing motorcyclists compared to helmet wearers would show if these measures are in fact useful in preventing accidents. Whilst I agree that in some accidents a helmet can help with the severity of some head injuries, I believe that they can also cause some accidents due to lack of vision, lack of hearing, overheating, and what I term as the “Superman syndrome” were some riders believe that if they wear a thousand dollar helmet they are invincible. An example of this is some bad drivers drive Volvo’s or 4WD’s as it makes them feel safe.

I’m more than happy to come and expand on these ideas and provide some evidence if needed.

Thank you for your time in reading this and I hope it has been helpful.

Kind Regards

Andy Hart