

## **MOTORCYCLE SAFETY IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Shooters and Fishers Party NSW Motorcycle Branch  
**Name:** Mr Sam Cannuli  
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# Submission to Staysafe, Motorcycle Safety in NSW.

I have been riding motorcycles since I was 12 years old and have competed in motocross, enduro, desert racing and road racing at a national level. I am now 56 and have had very few accidents over the years because of proper rider training.

I have ridden over 1 million kilometres on roads and tracks in Australia, Vietnam, Italy, France, South America and New Zealand. Some of my more challenging rides have been crossing the Gunbarrell HWY, Canning Stock Route, Simpson Desert, Finke and Cape York that are very challenging tracks for very experienced riders only.

I believe the current motorcycle training course in NSW is deficient in many areas. I see many learner and P plate motorcycle riders struggling with confidence on the road and many times I have wondered how they obtained a license.

My recommendation is to train motorcycle riders in off road skills that would give riders a much better sense of bike control and understanding about weight distribution and controlling an unstable bike in rough conditions. Off road riding equips the rider with far more skills than they will require compared to road only training.

Since 2010 I have had several meetings with [REDACTED] re the safety issues on the Old Pacific HWY from Brooklyn Bridge to Somersby. We both drove the entire length of this road and documented over 50 safety issues on this road in March 2011. It took over 4 years to erect two signs warning motorists of the high volume of cycle traffic and replace 3 dangerous armco barriers..... a very poor effort.

I have been riding the Old Pacific HWY since 1983. Back then the speed limit was 100 KPH and since has been reduced to 80 KPH and now to the ridiculous 60 KPH. I have studied the fatalities on this road over a period and the fatality rate has remained similar. Every weekend police will blitz the road issuing speeding fines etc and still the fatality rate remains unchanged. The speed limit should return to 80 KPH as this is outside a built up area and also there is minimal compliance at 60. If you took a survey of user speeds on this road the 85th percentile speed would be 90 KPH.

It is a well known fact that a motorcycle is more stable at speed and most motorcycle accidents occur at speeds less than 60 KPH as reported in the NSW Motorcycle Safety Strategy 2012-2012. Police blitzing has a tendency to force riders to focus on the speedo and creating a major distraction....similar to texting in a car. The whole police HWP strategy is flawed and actually causes more fatalities as explained above.

My recommendation is to retrain police HWP in the way they police speeding and allow more leniency towards motorcyclists so that they are not speedo gazing to the point of causing accidents. It only takes a small distraction for a rider to miss judge a corner and end up in trouble and into a dangerously positioned and designed armco barrier and that can be fatal or cause permanent injuries. Riders need to focus on the road and not the speedo, or highway patrol police hiding in the bushes etc. Once a motorcycle becomes unstable on this road there is little or no opportunity for a safe outcome as armco barriers are too close to the roadway and also have no lower barrier allowing the rider to pass underneath the barrier and sustain serious injury or death.

I pointed out to the RMS in 2011 a motorcycle friendly crash barrier that Hornsby Council have used on Berowra Waters Road. (Photos attached). Since installation no motorcyclist has been injured. The crash barrier was retrofitted with a vinyl canvas material that has been successfully used in Europe and South Australia. I notified RMS re this material and it took them 4 years to research and test their own brand and in the mean time hundreds of motorcyclists have either been killed or maimed by dangerous armco barriers.

One of my recommendations would be to instruct RMS to recognise that motorcycles are a major and important road user and therefore road construction needs to incorporate safer armco barriers and safer positioning. To date RMS do not consider motorcycles in their road design. An example of this is the newly completed Hunter Newcastle freeway, completed in mid 2014 where RMS have used over 30 Kms of wire rope barrier fencing that is a known killer of motorcyclists. It seems that government departments like Centre for Road Safety NSW and RMS do not communicate with each other.

I read a recent media release by Scot MacDonald MLC, Parliamentary Secretary Central Coast, stating that motorcycle safety improvements on the Old Pacific HWY are complete. I took a drive on this road on the 14/8/15 and did a review of the upgrades costing \$1.3 million. Of the 3 armco barriers replaced, two of them are more dangerous now than they originally were. Once again we have RMS road design engineers without a clue on motorcycle safety. The problems have since been reported to the Motorcycle Council of NSW who are following this up with NSW Centre for Road Safety. From my observations of this road safety improvements have not even started. I have noticed that three sets of traffic lights and two electronic signs have been erected on this road at the cost of several million whereas more important road reconstruction has been ignored.

My recommendation would be to do another full survey of this and other country roads to identify safety concerns and dangerous road construction and armco barriers. Funding of retro fitting dangerous armco barriers must be a priority along with educating RMS engineers on proper road design incorporating motorcycle safety.

On the issue of police targeting motorcycles in ridiculous operations that occur regularly I would like you all to examine some facts. I have taken these statistics directly from NSW Road Toll Statistics 26/8/15 from Transport NSW website. To date 26/8/15 42 motorcycle fatalities occurred in NSW corresponding to 37 in 2014. The three year average is 42.3. Therefore no significant increase has occurred. Police HWP have publicly posted on their facebook pages that motorcycle fatalities are alarmingly on the increase and will be targeting motorcyclists all over NSW using helicopters, unmarked cars and marked cars as well as motorcycles. Totally false and misleading. I would have thought a government department would check statistics before publically broadcasting false and misleading information.

Further to my argument. Obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 31/1/15. In 2010, there were approx 175,000 registered motorcycles in NSW. In 2015 there were over 225,000 registered motorcycles in NSW. A 28.6% increase in motorcycles using the road and no significant increase in fatalities. So in actual fact motorcycle fatalities are on the decrease.

Taken from NSW Motorcycle Safety Strategy 2012-2021.

In 2000 there were approx 90,000 registered motorcycles in NSW and 2,200 casualties (2.4%).  
In 2005 there were approx 118,000 registered motorcycles in NSW and 2,250 casualties (1.9%).  
In 2010 there were approx 173,000 registered motorcycles in NSW and 2,500 casualties (1.4%).  
The above figures prove beyond doubt that motorcyclists are far safer on the roads.

In summary my recommendations are:

1. Retrain all NSW highway patrol officers in detecting dangerous speed V appropriate speed on a motorcycle. Speed is not the killer.....speedo fixation is the killer.
2. Promote lane filtering and motorcycle safety in commercial television advertising.
3. Retrain RMS road engineers in motorcycle safety in regards to road design and crash barrier location and installations.
4. Remove wire rope barriers from existing roads and retrofit motorcycle friendly barriers.
5. Motorcycles to be recognised as a major road user by RMS.
6. Motorcycles should be permitted to park off street rather than take up valuable car parking spaces.
7. Motorcycles to be exempt from tolls and parking fees encouraging their use and reducing road and parking congestion as well as using less fuel.
8. Motorcycle license training to incorporate off road techniques.
9. Retrofitting of dangerous armco barriers on all popular motorcycling roads.
10. Provide conditional off road registration for motorcycle use in NSW forests encouraging all riders to be registered and ensuring all riders are insured. At present many unregistered motorcycles are used in state forests because the registration fees are too high.

Please note that if a Public Meeting is planned that I wish to appear as a Witness.

Regards

Sam Cannuli

President

Shooters and Fishers Party NSW Motorcycle Branch.

New armco barrier on the Old Pacific HWY at Mt White. The new installation is dangerous as it has an exposed rod and a massive gap under the rail right on the apex of the corner where a fallen rider is most likely to hit. It seems that a gap between the armco rail was made to allow access to a fire trail.

My recommendation is to relocate the access road to the fire trail and have one continuous crash barrier.



Another view of the same crash barrier above showing the access to the fire trail. Notice on one side is visible a foam protection barrier. What happened to the other side?  
This installation is a killer and should be made into one continuous barrier.....no gaps and dangerous projectiles.







Traffic lights installed at Mt White.....never used.



Expensive electronic sign at Mt White.





Installation on Berowra Waters Rd. This style of barrier is a vinyl canvas material that is attached to the existing top rail and blocks the lower area and preventing a rider going under the top rail.



Berowra Waters Rd installation showing how it is attached.



## Submission to Staysafe Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety in NSW.

Motorcycling in Australia is increasing in popularity. It relieves congestion on our roads, requires far less space to park and uses a fraction of the fuel of a motor vehicle. In my recent visits to Vietnam and throughout Europe the motorcycle is the main form of transport in the cities. Off street parking is the norm for motorcycles relieving authorities of building extra parking spaces and making more room for cars. Lane filtering was also observed to help in keeping the traffic flowing.

Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that there were approx 175,000 registered motorcycles in NSW in 2010 increasing to approx 225,000 registered motorcycles in 2015. An increase of 29% in 5 years. Authorities need to take note of this increase in planning for future development.

I see a real importance for governments to provide the necessary infrastructure for young kids to learn to ride a motorcycle in a safe environment developing the skills that will make them a far more confident driver and rider in the future. Looking at the trend in the last 5 years and with rising fuel costs I can see the increase in popularity in the use of a motorcycle will further increase.

I think also authorities should encourage the use of this efficient means of transport by abolishing tolls and parking costs for motorcycles in and around all suburbs of Sydney.

Lane filtering has been a great initiative and has improved the safety of riders and the free flow of traffic but I think it needs more promotion towards drivers as not that many know it is legal. More advertising is required on television and bill boards etc.

When I was growing up we would ride our mini bikes in the local industrial area where there was a vacant block of land. Almost every suburb in the 70's had a place where kids could ride their motorbikes instead of riding around the neighborhood streets. Parents would take us to the area and we could enjoy our fun safely.

Today there is no opportunity for kids to ride a motorcycle in the neighborhood. Police would slap fines of over \$1,500 on them as well as the EPA fining them for noise pollution and other authorities would ban it completely. So where do kids ride? It seems that they just take the risk and ride on the roads and in parks if their parents can not spend the day to drive up to 100 kms each way to take them to an outer suburban motorcycle park. Lets face it as busy parents who has the time to spend a whole day driving the kids somewhere to have fun.

My suggestion would be to have 3 motorcycle parks developed in Sydney. One in the west, one in the south and one in the north. Mini bikes do not make a lot of noise and most of the activity would be on weekends. Motorcycle riding teaches kids very important mobility and visual skills that will make them far better car drivers when they grow up. These parks can be supervised by adults and teach kids proper riding skills as well as socialising skills.

The police will have more time to spend on real crime instead of chasing kids around the streets.

A further suggestion as I mentioned in a previous submission is to introduce a recreational registration for currently unregistered motorcycles to be used in state forests. At present the only recreational registration available is at Stockton Beach in Newcastle.

I see many unregistered motorcycles in the state forests that present a risk if they are involved in an accident. Police and authorities are spending enormous money and energy in trying to control unregistered vehicles in the forests.

A recommendation would be to introduce a conditional registration for off road vehicles and possibly designated riding areas in state forests for unregistered vehicles. Victoria has several forest areas for off road motorcycle riding.

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/forestry-and-land-use/visiting-parks-and-forests/visiting-state-forests/activities/trail-bike-riding/ride-safe-ride-legal>

Victoria, a much smaller state, leads NSW in that it has recreational registration for off road motorcycles and designated off road motorcycle forests.

One of the major criticisms of the current registration system for off road motorcycles in NSW at present.

- Only vehicles with compliance plates can be registered.
- Compulsory third party insurance for off road motorcycles is the same as a road motorcycle and far too expensive. The difference is that an off road motorcycle can not carry a pillion passenger and spends most of its life on single tracks. Off road motorcycles on average are used one time per month and otherwise sit in garages. They are not used as daily transport.
- Because of the above two points, riders take the risk to ride in forests unregistered creating unnecessary risks to other legal forest users. If registration costs or conditional registration were available at a reasonable cost then this would encourage more riders to do the right thing. Having all bikes registered would free up resources from several authorities and make the forests a safer place to ride for all.

Sam Cannuli  
President  
Shooters and Fishers Party NSW Motorcycle Branch.



### Submission #3

#### Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety in NSW.

One of the major causes of motorcycle accidents in NSW is the poorly designed country roads that do not have adequate overtaking lanes as well as the over policing of speeds and crossing double centre lines.

On a road posted with a 100 KPH speed limit that is typical of a country road often you will be following a slower vehicle. Typically there are no overtaking lanes and very few opportunities for overtaking. Suppose I wish to overtake a vehicle doing 90 KPH. For me to overtake quickly and safely and to avoid a head on collision I must accelerate as quickly as possible and I will need to do at least 20-30 KPH faster than the vehicle I overtake. But no...if I exceed the speed limit over 30 KPH I will be fined \$750 and lose my licence on the spot for 3 months....what a ridiculous outcome. What I was trying to achieve was to overtake as quickly and as safely as possible.

My recommendation is that police should take into consideration your speed when overtaking. The current strict application is killing people on the roads.

On a motorcycle it is unsafe to travel behind another vehicle because it removes your ability to judge the road and also the surface conditions. Quite often I have been travelling behind a vehicle and have been surprised by debris on the road that I could not avoid.....bricks had fallen from a truck. Quite often road works are carried out for example, many regional councils carry out road repairs. I have written to the Dungog council on several occasions reporting very dangerous practices of repairing pot holes and then piling excessive gravel over the surface. This practice has led to numerous motorcycle crashes and is practiced all over the state for road repairs.

My recommendation is to write to all councils and notify them of this dangerous practice that must be stopped and a new safer method of repairing roads adopted.

In my opinion the motorcycle is a unique vehicle and the current Motor Traffic Act does not recognise it's superior manouverability or it's compact size. A motorcycle is only approx half a metre wide and can accellerate at much faster rates than motor vehicles. I have already mentioned above how dangerous it is to follow another vehicle on a motorcycle. By far the safest way to ride is to be out in front with a clear view. All too often I see a passing opportunity and yet I see double white lines and therefore legally I can not overtake but in reality on a motorcycle I could very easily overtake and very safely. It is better to ride out the front with a clear view.

My recommendation is to incorporate the motorcycle as a unique road vehicle and allow overtaking when it is deemed safe by the rider and not a silly line. The Motor Traffic Act must allow a rider to be responsible for their own safety and the police should take into account that motorcycles can overtake at a much faster rate than other vehicles.

The current police blitzing on our roads is a major fail and the strategy is seriously flawed. With a doubling of police presence on the roads the road toll remains unchanged. The better strategy would be to encourage drivers/riders to be more responsible for themselves.

Sam Cannuli

President

Shooters and Fishers Party NSW Motorcycle Branch.

## NSW Police Highway Patrol

On several occasions I have witnessed police highway patrol cars tail-gaiting motorcycles when they are attempting to pull over a rider. As happened to me on the Old Pacific Highway on one occasion. Police were using an un marked vehicle and the officer was travelling at a distance of 2 metres behind me. As there was no place to safely pull over I continued on until there was sufficient room to pull off the road. When I questioned the officer he stated that I was to blame because I did not pull over immediately. I explained to him that I was looking for a safe place to pull off the road so as to avoid any accidents because the road had several blind corners. I have many times witnessed police parked in a dangerous position or where they are blocking traffic. They need to be instructed to pull over offenders well off the roadway. I have heard that this is a common practice by NSW highway patrol officers. The practice is very dangerous and should be stopped immediately.

My recommendation is that police need to be instructed that when pulling over a motorcycle they must not tail gate but rather move to the side of the motorcycle or stay a safe distance behind. Furthermore they need to make sure that they move the vehicles off the roadway.

A further safety issue I have witnessed was the police using an unmarked vehicle to pull out in front of motorcyclists and then drive deliberately slower than the posted speed limit to frustrate motorcyclists to overtake their vehicle in dangerous situations. I believe that one the case went to court and the magistrate found the police to be acting recklessly and dangerously and awarded costs against the police of some \$60,000. These dangerous campaigns must be stopped immediately.

I have further witnessed police blitzes that target motorcyclists ONLY on outer Sydney country roads. The tactics of using unmarked vehicles and intimidating motorcyclists is dangerous and unnecessary. As well as intimidation motorcyclists are subjected to road blocks and they are unfairly given fines for minor defects and non standard exhaust pipes. This practice puts motorcyclists on edge and also distracts riders from concentrating on the road, rather they are looking out for un marked police vehicles. Police have a job to do in enforcing the road rules but harassing everyone instead of catching offenders is a big fail and it is also an expensive exercise.

My recommendations is that the police highway patrol be instructed to use fully marked patrol cars and target offenders rather than harass ALL motorcyclists. At present police credibility amongst motorcyclists is very very low and respect is close to zero. Fair and fully visible policing is what is required.

Sam Cannuli  
President  
Shooters and Fishers Party NSW Motorcycle Branch.