

Submission

No 17

DRIVER AND ROAD USER DISTRACTION

Organisation: Motorcycle Council of NSW

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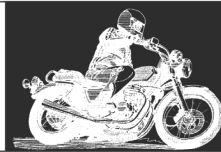
Position: Vice Chair

Date Received: 27/04/2012

Submission
Staysafe Inquiry into Driver and Road User Distraction

27th April, 2012

MOTORCYCLE COUNCIL
OF NEW SOUTH WALES
INCORPORATED



To

Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety

Parliament of New South Wales

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About the MCC of NSW

The Motorcycle Council of NSW Inc. (MCC of NSW) is an internationally recognised umbrella group for motorcycle clubs, associations and ride groups, in the state of New South Wales, Commonwealth of Australia.

Established in 1982, the MCC of NSW is the peak body for motorcycling in this state. It represents over 41 clubs, with more than 36,000 riders.

The MCC of NSW is recognised as the peak motorcycle representative body in NSW and subject matter experts on many complex issues dealing with motorcycling including crash data and statistics, traffic data and congestion.

The MCC of NSW has published documentation that has been referenced worldwide by overseas motorcycling and government bodies. It has recently produced video training films that have adopted both in Australia and internationally.

The MCCofNSW has appeared before several standing commission of inquiries in NSW including the Standing Committee on Law and Justice and the Standing Committee on Road Safety. It is regularly consulted on a range of motorcycle issues by the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), Motor Accidents Authority and the Life Time Care and Support Scheme.

Inquiry into Driver and Road User Distraction

Introduction

The Motorcycle Council of NSW (MCCofNSW) is happy to present this submission into the "Inquiry into Road User distraction.

In relation to the Terms of Reference

a) Nature and extent of distraction

Inattention and distraction are not currently recorded in NSW's statistics as causal factors in crashes, so the extent of distraction as a causal factor can only be estimated from naturalistic studies done elsewhere and reference to other jurisdictions such as Queensland where 'inattention' is recorded as a causal factor.

There is however anecdotal evidence from NSW motorcyclists that it is common in multi-vehicle crashes for the other party to comment "sorry mate I didn't see you", this is referred to as a SMIDSY and is an admission that the other party was distracted or inattentive.

Motorcycles are not invisible, so there is no excuse for not being able to detect their presence.

b) Current rates and future trends

While we don't have any data to present, it is our view that the take up of electronic devices and the range of devices available that have the potential to cause distraction, will only continue to increase at a rapid rate.

To gauge the extent of the problem, one only needs to observe pedestrian activity in the Sydney CBD where pedestrians are often observed crossing the road with their eyes glued to their mobile phones.

These increased rates will, no doubt, result in similar increase in reported SMIDSY crashes.

c) Regulatory enforcement

The rate of technological change is far quicker than the rate at which prescriptive regulation can be introduced to control their use.

Test procedures need to be developed to determine the level of distraction the device causes and its cognitive loading, so descriptive regulation can be introduced.

Using these test procedures, the introduction of unsuitable devices could be restricted before they become commercially available, rather than trying to restrict their use once they are available in the marketplace.

These test procedures could be based on driving simulators that measure the time the road users eyes are diverted from the road ahead and the cognitive loading required to operate them.

So a driver has the clearest possible view, current NSW vehicle standards for windscreens prohibit vehicles that have hairline cracks greater than 30mm and 'bullseye' cracks greater than 16mm in diameter within the driver's section of the windscreen (RTA Vehicle Standards Information 3, dated July 2003). Yet it is permitted to mount devices well in excess of these dimensions within the driver's half of the windscreen.

The NRMA have a Blind Spot Rating system to determine the ability of a driver to observe the road environment, primarily this is designed to determine how much A pillars restrict the ability of the driver to see motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians. This procedure could be modified to measure how much a device restricts the driver's view.

<http://www.nrma.com.au/car-blind-spot-ratings>

d) Technological solutions

If the test procedure described above were developed there would be no need for technological solutions as unsuitable devices would not be made commercially available.

e) Other solutions

We are unable provide any relevant comment.

f) Other matters

Even though the use of a hand held mobile phone while driving is illegal, it is still a very common practice, indicating that motorists do not appreciate the distractive effect they have on the driving task. Drivers and riders need to be informed that they only have a matter of a few seconds from when they detect a hazard to impact. In the interests of motorcycle safety, these few seconds are vital in avoiding SMIDSY crashes and drivers need to be made aware of this.

Anecdotal comments indicate that detection of mobile phone users is not overly difficult as they are either wandering in their lane or they stop in traffic about 2 metres short of the vehicle in front or the stop lines.