

Tasmanian Motorcycle Council Inc (TMC)

response to

Road Safety Advisory Council (RSAC) Discussion Paper

Development of an Improved Graduated Licensing System for Motorcyclists

Introduction

The Towards Zero Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2017-2026 and The Towards Zero Action Plan 2020-2024 (Action Plan) and the long-term goal of zero serious casualties on Tasmanian roads are matters supported by the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council Inc (TMC). Whilst this response will ultimately see some objections to the recommendations there is certainly no objection to a review, perhaps even robust discussion around any steps that may improve the safety of motorcycle riders in Tasmania.

To this end, the TMC response is the result of numerous meetings with its members and the canvassing of views of many motorcycle riders and stakeholders. We acknowledge the grant of funds from the Crown in Tasmania that has enabled a rigorous process and ultimately some outside assistance in compiling the response.

Background

We acknowledge that Tasmania has much work to do to achieve the outlined 2026 target of fewer than 200 serious casualties annually.

As can be seen by the data in the Introduction to the paper, the strategy and plan has not delivered the desired outcome in its bid to continually reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads. As can be seen in the graph and as stated in the Introduction 'Tasmanian's downward trend in fatalities and serious injuries have plateaued over the last decade'.

Submission

In many respects it is the view of the TMC that a review and recommendations of substantive change is premature given that the review does not include a statistical analysis of the years following the change to the content and structure of the motorcycle training and assessment curriculum in Tasmania in 2017.

Analysis of Tasmanian crash data does not tell the full story. As noted on page 7 of the Discussion Paper, the total number of motorcycle crashes in Tasmania is relatively small. Of those crashes, the numbers themselves tell a story of rider involvement in crashes but do not tell the story of what percentage of crashes were rider caused or the result of genuine unavoidable accident. It is not as simple as relying on the percentage of rider involved crashes to mandate for change. The most experienced and careful motorcycle rider might still be involved in crashes due to weather, the fault of other drivers, road conditions or genuine accident etc. Because motorcycles do not enjoy the same protection of motor vehicles in crashes, they will be more likely to suffer serious injury or fatality regardless of how the accident was caused.

In other words, rider involvement in crashes may well be unavoidable no matter what legislative change is recommended if it is not coupled with more financial commitment and greater priority on both rider and driver education and training. Continued efforts need to

be made to educate and train not only motorcycle riders but also motor vehicle drivers as to the presence and vulnerability of motorcycle riders.

Whilst the TMC agrees that a robust GLS is an effective way to ensure that motorcyclists are as safe as possible during the novice licensing stage it should be noted that novice motorcycle riders and young motorcycle riders are not necessarily the same thing.

Inexperience is not limited to young riders.

The firm view of the TMC is that rather than restricting the age at which one can ride and the circumstances in which one can ride, that a greater priority ought to be placed on education and training.

A new approach needs to be developed. Rather than making it harder and more expensive to obtain a motorcycle licence there should be rebates for return to ride courses and an acceptance that motorcycle riding remains a popular pastime. In 2001 there were approximately 9,000 registered motorcycles on Tasmanian roads compared to approximately 20,00 in the year 2021 and yet the statistics show fewer fatalities and serious accidents in 2021 compared to 2001.

The benefits of motorcycling are numerous and many studies have shown significant physical and mental health benefits for those that ride. With many mental health issues continually rising in modern society motorcycle riding has been shown to provide riders with a far better outlook and has diminished many mental health issues.

As well as the improvement in a riders mental health there is also a significant improvement in physical health as has been shown in study from the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behaviour on the mental and physical effects of riding a motorcycle [1] and Five Physical and Mental benefits of riding a Motor cycle [2] presented by RideNow Powersports which references a Research Study on the Effect of riding a motorcycle on Cognitive Functions presented by Dr Ryuta Kawashima, Tohoku University and Yamaha Motor Co. [3]

Motorcycling itself has been shown to be less harmful for the planet, carbon output from the manufacture of a motorcycle is significantly lower than for an automobile. The Federation of European Motorcyclist Association comparison determined that Motorcycles also use less fuel (petrol and diesel) per 100km than most cars and have lower CO2 and NOX emissions. [4]

One of the major drivers of traffic congestion and delays is the concentration of economic activity in and around major cities. Economic growth and social development increase mobility in cities and promote the use of private cars. Growth in the size of the city exponentially generates a greater amount of traffic.

Research indicates motorcycle commuting reduces traffic congestion and emissions - New Atlas - New technology and Science News [5] has accessed the Impact analysis of an increased share of motorcycles in commuting traffic completed by Belgian consultancy Transport & Mobility Leuven which confirms this. [6]

Unfortunately, our road system has not continually improved with increased traffic and the current system of upgrading our road network reactively instead of proactively certainly needs addressing.

Full ranking 2021

FILTERS (3)

10 results found

RANK BY FILTER	WORLD RANK ▼	CITY	TIME LOST PER YEAR	CONGESTION LEVEL 2021 ▼	CHANGE FROM 2019 ▼	CHANGE FROM 2020 ▼
1	97	Sydney Australia	64 hours	28%	↓ 5%p	0%p
2	131	Brisbane Australia	57 hours	25%	0%p	↑ 3%p
3	136	Melbourne Australia	57 hours	25%	↓ 5%p	↑ 2%p
4	140	Gold Coast Australia	55 hours	24%	0%p	↑ 3%p
5	144	Hobart Australia	55 hours	24%	↑ 1%p	↑ 4%p
6	151	Adelaide Australia	55 hours	24%	0%p	↑ 3%p
7	190	Perth Australia	50 hours	22%	↑ 2%p	↑ 3%p
8	224	Newcastle Australia	46 hours	20%	0%p	↑ 1%p
9	298	Canberra Australia	39 hours	17%	0%p	↑ 2%p
10	349	Wollongong Australia	32 hours	14%	↑ 1%p	0%p

Hobart in particular ranks as the 5th most congested city in Australia. The Traffic Index data provided by TOM TOM covers 404 cities across 58 countries on 6 continents and ranks urban congestion worldwide [7]

As road usage continues to grow, it leads to congestion, pollution, noise and accidents. Both Launceston and Hobart feature in the Rush hour statistics - The Worst Rush Hour and Hardest Cities to Escape during Rush Hour which is provided by Chasing Cars - Automotive Magazine.[8]

Rather than encouraging more people to motorcycling it is feared that the proposed changes to the existing GLS will discourage this from happening. This is definitely not the desired outcome that a GLS system is designed to provide. We need to produce safer, smarter riders not less riders and also avoid a potential increase of unlicensed, unregistered motorcyclists.

The discussion paper appears to concentrate on implementing restrictions incorporated within the Licensing framework and little attention is focused on increased education to proactively address the problem. The success of the Full Gear Project, a local community-based initiative introduced firstly by Glenorchy Council [9] in 2017, trialed in New Norfolk in 2021 and also adopted by the Launceston Council [10] in 2022 has demonstrated that education works.

With the assistance of State Growth Grants [11] this has provided prospective novice motorcyclists not only financial assistance in gaining access to their licence but an introduction to safe motorcycling and increased opportunity for employment.

The Glenorchy and Launceston Councils are to be commended for recognising the need and providing this opportunity, however this resource should be made available State wide to address the Toward Zero targets.

The current GLS implementation occurred in 2017 and early data shows that this key area of motorcycle rider licensing is having the desired effect of a reduction in new motorcyclists crashing. It would not be beneficial to look at changing this until enough time has passed to ensure correct analysis of the data. The review states on page six that the current GLS "is relatively new and has not yet been evaluated and changes to the to the content are beyond the scope of the current review". Changes have been made yet they have not been evaluated so more changes are suggested?

If changes have been made at least evaluate whether or not they have been successful before making further significant change.

Motorcycle riding in Tasmania, states that the annual number of learner motorcycle licenses has decreased since 2012 with an accelerated decrease since the implementation of the current GLS. This trend is set to continue. Many of the changes to the current GLS suggested in the review will continue to deter young people from gaining a motorcycle license and the advantages that ensue as a result of obtaining that license.

The current system is working as can be seen from the MAIB claims shown at the bottom of page eight with claims reducing from 13.6 per 1000 registered motorcycles in 2019-2020 to 12.2 per 1000 registered motorcycles in 2020-2021. More importantly it is essential for the purpose of this review to look at the figures from the year the GLS was implemented 2017 for Novice L Novice P1 and Novice P2 riders

In 2017 Novice L Claims there were 64 claims and only 25 last year

In 2017 Novice P1 Claims there were 35 claims and only 8 last year

In 2017 Novice P2 Claims there were 26 claims and only 15 last year

This is a significant reduction in the number of claims in the target demographic under review.

Vulnerability of motorcyclists is a significant factor in contributing to road trauma as a result of crashes. A motorcyclist can fall off at high speed and has been shown that with full protective gear can survive with no or minimal injury. One only has to watch the Moto GP to see riders who get up and walk away from crashes at a wide variety of speeds. It is the collisions with road furniture ie Trees Buildings Protective Armco Rails, Wire Rope Barriers [12] etc. which has significant contribution to injury and fatalities.

As to motorcyclist visibility, whilst motorcycles riders have a smaller size it doesn't necessarily mean that they become less visible. Movement more than bright colour has been shown to be more effective at seeing motorcycle riders. Correct training as per the current GLS has shown that lane position can make a motorcycle rider more visible to cars.

In Tasmania headlights are required to be hardwired ie to remain on at all times that the ignition is on.

The problem with Hi Viz apparel is that it is everywhere and as such we are all so used to seeing it on a daily basis that it has reduced its impact to stand out significantly. On recent trips to mainland states of South Australia, Victoria, NSW and Queensland we have seen first-hand road signage (both illuminated and Static) reminding drivers to look for motorcyclists.



Tasmania have now implemented the Victorian system since 2017 and early indications show that it has reduced the number of crashes amongst new/ novice riders. Several times during the discussion paper it is stated that it is too early to tell the impact of the changes made in 2017 as data needs to spread over a longer timeframe to show the actual impact. Therefore, we repeat it would be premature to make wholesale major changes to the GLS until enough time has passed to enable more accurate analysis of the data.

So far, the GLS has also seen a reduction in the number of young people obtaining a motorcycle license and we would hope that this downward trend does not continue. We should take into account that the Tasmanian population base is very low and with only one training organisation operating within this state. A further reduction in the number of riders going through the rider training system as part of their GLS may make the financial impact on the sole provider of this training business untenable.

The Recommendations

Age of entry

The view of the TMC is that it is attitude rather than age which is the significant factor in crashes resulting in road trauma.

Psychologists suggest that correct training can and does go a long way to changing the behaviours of riders and also drivers. This is an area to be improved on within the current training system. An increase to 18 before a rider can begin to obtain a motorcycle license is excessive. This increase in age could well lead to an increase in unlicensed riding which has the opposite effect to what the GLS aims to achieve in producing safer, more capable riders with the necessary skill sets to ride on our road system.

Many young riders utilize motorcycles for transport to apprenticeships and training and as a means of independence.

Amending the age to 18 just shifts the problem it does not address the problem. The statistics will inevitably continue to show an over-representation in rider involved crashes among novice riders, however, they will be an older age. It is not about the age it is about the training and education. There is already a GLS implemented in 2017. **Inexperience is not the sole domain of the young.**

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority have the most stringent transport authority safety regulations and allow licensed pilots to fly solo from the age of 16. See "Why age doesn't matter when getting your pilot's licence" Southern Utah University 2021. The only caveat to obtaining the pilot's licence is passing the medical exam. Having done so, pilots can fly private flights from the age of 17 and fly commercial flights from the age of 18!

The TMC opposes this recommendation

Minimum tenure during learner licensing phase.

The TMC supports this recommendation.

Hazard Perception Test

A Hazard perception test is crucial to drivers and riders as it allows them to understand what a developing hazard is and how to not only identify it but also set up for it. The Hazard Perception test is now integral in driver / rider training throughout Australia.

The TMC supports this recommendation

Carriage of Pillion Passengers

The TMC recommends that learners should not carry pillion passengers nor sidecar passengers.

Night-time curfew

Night time curfews should not be introduced because it will prevent many from gainful employment in industries that work outside of the Monday - Friday 9 to 5.

The 43% statistic on page 24 of the discussion paper for riders aged 16 and 25 years involved in crashes between 12:00am and 5:00am is riders of all categories not simply novice riders.

In Tasmania headlights are required to be hardwired ie to remain on at all times that the ignition is on.

The TMC opposes this recommendation.

Towing

The TMC supports this recommendation

Use of mobile phones or other communication devices

The TMC recommends a ban on mobile phone use for entertainment purposes for learner and provisional riders. The TMC supports hands free mobile phone communication only when riding within a 100 metre proximity to a fully licensed rider for instruction purposes.

Maximum speed restrictions

The speed increase is welcomed by the TMC.

The TMC supports this recommendation.

Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme

The current LAMS system has been working well since its implementation on the 1st July 2007.

The TMC opposes this recommendation

In summary we repeat that in many respects it is the view of the TMC that a review and recommendations of substantive change is premature given that the review does not include a statistical analysis of the years following the change to the content and structure of the motorcycle training and assessment curriculum in Tasmania in 2017.

We agree with many of the recommendations from the discussion paper but say that there is insufficient analysis to warrant further change to the GLS with regard to the recommendations we oppose.

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