

May 1 2010

Letter to the elected representatives of the NSW Parliament

Subject: A guide to covering up for 480,500 NSW voters

Local Government Areas with more than 10,000 licenced motorcycle riders each include Penrith, Blacktown, Sutherland, Gosford, Wyong, Wollongong, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

New Austroads Guides adopted by all states and territories in Australia (NSW in July 2009) require road authorities to provide a road system that will lower the casualty rate (injuries + fatalities). The Guides specifically state the road system needs to tolerate the “inevitable mistakes” by road users. This means that when a driver, rider or pedestrian makes a mistake they should not be seriously injured or killed as a result. As motorcycle riders are one of the key “at-risk” groups we call on the NSW Government to provide riders with the information needed to reduce their injuries when they make their “inevitable mistake”.

The NSW Govt has an obligation to provide this information as riders are 10% of the licence holders in this state. The recent CARRS-Q study* shows that simply reproducing existing resources and handing it out to Learners does not fulfil the Government’s obligation. For example, the new *Good Gear Guide* published by the Federal Dept of Infrastructure is an excellent resource however:

- Distribution of safety information often misses the target group. Distribution needs to include clubs and riding groups, commuters, new riders and “lone” riders.
- Resources need to be written for riders who have little experience with personal safety gear as well as experienced riders who have become complacent about wearing protective clothing.
- Being visually attractive means the resource has the potential to be effective but without evaluation the success as educational resource remains an unknown?
- There are many realities of choosing protective gear that are overlooked when consultation is restricted to riding groups because of lack of funds. Many new riders do not share the same motivations or beliefs of the experienced riders and/or riding club members.

Riders are drawn from all walks of life including barristers, surgeons, politicians, tradesmen, clerical workers and a growing number of retirees. While most riders know leather and armour provides the best crash protection after a fall they also know it is not always practical. In addition, most riders also know:

- The probability of a fall is actually very low unless they do something stupid.
- In the warmer months overheating when riding, particularly in the metropolitan areas, is a major concern and far more likely than having a fall.
- They select gear they can wear when they reach their destination.
- They would rather wear gear that looks good. Just as a great number of car drivers wear good looking and fashionable clothes, riders also need gear to look good.

Many riders are searching for practical alternatives to the traditional black leather. This task is made very difficult by the lack of clear guidelines on the level of protection offered by different materials.

Discussions need to be held with individual riders in NSW from different target groups. Riders who commute have different needs to those who ride for relaxation on weekends. Riders who ride alone or just with friends have different requirements compared to members of the large riding clubs.

Riders need an accepted reference to assess the resistance to abrasion, impact, temperature, etc, so they can weigh that against fashion, price, etc. Very few riders understand the detailed technical issues of stitching, number or layers, thickness of fabric, friction coefficients, etc. For example, abrasion resistance can be tested by several methods. Some methods test wear and tear while the EU methods provide an accurate assessment of road abrasion.

Without an accepted reference, riders' decisions are based mainly on the preferences of their friends. The result is a great deal of both uninformed and misinformed decisions. And these riders are approximately 10% your constituents.

Over the past 20 years the motorcycle industry and riding groups have become very proactive in promoting protective clothing with the result that most riders now wear some form of suitable clothing. Magazine editors devote many pages to the benefits of personal protection and the range of clothing suppliers has increased significantly.

Volunteers with The Survive The Ride Association of NSW have spent the last few years working with riders, the industry and Local Government to encourage riders to take more responsibility for their decisions. We have exhibited at trade shows at our own cost to discuss these issues face-to-face with hundreds of riders and distributed TAC Vic DVDs and a range of other resources.

The NSW Govt has adopted the new Austroads Guides. We call on the NSW Govt to begin detailed discussions with riders in NSW and the protective clothing industry with the intention to develop a practical and useful guide based on proven testing regimes such as the EU standards. The Victorian Govt has already started this process. NSW is a much larger state and faces greater challenges in consultation, development and distribution of effective resources.

We look forward to your response and assisting you in this process of consultation.

Yours sincerely

Stephan Henderson
President
Survive The Ride Association of NSW

**A Survey of Motorcycle Safety Programs Across Australasia - By N Haworth, K Greig and D Wishart; Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland, Queensland University of Technology; ACRS Journal November 2009 Vol 20 No 4. "Many current initiatives lack collaboration between state road safety agencies, local community groups and rider groups." "Two limitations of statewide programs delivered by Government agencies were identified. Some programs have inadequate consultation with rider groups that can result in a lack of acceptance of materials and programs that are developed. Delivery of material, or the message, is sometimes undertaken by a method that appears to be cheapest but may not reach the target audience".*