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Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

The Australian Motorcycle Council (AMC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030* (NRSS). We have been engaged in this process through written submissions and online meetings since early 2020; however we feel that many elements of our previous representations have been overlooked.

The draft strategy talks about a “new approach” and a “cultural change”, but where are the changes acknowledging the increasing use of motorcycles and the benefits of powered two wheelers (PTWs) in reducing congestion?

During the consultation process it was indicated that “motorcycles” were worthy of consideration and policy development separate to other vulnerable road users (VRUs). This is reflected in the August 2020 stakeholder consultation document, which deals with separate categories.

Yet this is now not the case with the draft NRSS. Motorcyclists have clearly been the (very) poor cousins in the vulnerable road user category in the past, with exponentially more money being spent on projects that improve road safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

In some cases, this results in infrastructure *less safe* for powered two wheelers. An example of this is the arterial route Exhibition Street, in Melbourne’s CBD. What had been a roadway with two lanes in each direction, allowing for PTWs to safely filter through congested traffic, has recently been altered considerably to create bike lanes adjacent to the footpath. The traffic lanes in each direction now vary from 2 – 1 – 2 – 1 and finally back to 2. This also varies in Clearway times. Overall, this has created a *more dangerous* road environment for motorcyclists and scooter riders.

The same could be said of the 1 metre and 1.5 metre overtaking rule for cyclists. With a mandated distance, rather than leaving it for motorists to pass at a “safe distance”, we hear many anecdotes of cars moving excessively (well over 1.5 metres) to the incorrect side of roadways – particularly over solid single or double white lines – to pass cyclists, often exposing motorcycle riders travelling in the opposite direction to significantly greater danger. This is particularly so on winding, rural roads.

Improved road safety for one road user group should never be achieved at the expense or to the detriment of any other road user group.

There is also some potential for confusion with the reference to drug and alcohol laws under the single section on VRUs. It is understood that the inclusion is with reference to harm caused *to* VRUs by drug and alcohol-affected drivers. However, without more detail, this may be interpreted by some as saying there is an issue (worthy of specific mention and resultant action) of drug and alcohol use *by* motorcyclists in general. This isn't the intent and shouldn't be portrayed in this way.

These and other issues – added to the significant increase in motorcycle use since the development of the previous ten-year strategy – make powered two wheelers worthy of separate consideration within the new strategy.

Motorcyclists and motorcycle safety should be addressed as a discrete item in the National Road Safety Strategy.

The Australian Motorcycle Council has consistently said that training and licensing is a key area for improving motorcycle safety, and this was highlighted as far back as the [2008 Motorcycle and Scooter Safety Summit](#) and earlier.

The draft strategy has the dot point “Strengthen graduated licensing arrangements for motorbike riders”, without an indicator of what this might mean.

Better training around risks and hazard perception, for example, is a positive measure.

We have, though, seen the regressive step taken in more and more Australian jurisdictions of increasing the learner age and/or adding a requirement that a car licence is already held prior to being able to obtain a motorcycle learner permit. These are not motorcycle safety measures – they are simply measures aimed at discouraging (in particular) young people from taking up PTWs as a transport choice. Where is the “new approach” and “cultural change” to motorcycling as a transport mode in this?

The Australian Motorcycle Council cannot support anti-motorcycling measures dressed up as road safety.

In many European countries, the exact opposite approach is taken, with riders as young as 14 and 15 able to ride a moped in some jurisdictions. There are also European countries where fully-licensed car drivers of a certain age are able to ride mopeds and small motorcycles on a car licence, after some basic PTW training.

Australia seems more intent on measures to discourage motorcycle use, in the face of more and more people opting for PTWs.

In terms of infrastructure, the strategy should be more specific in referring to the 2016 Austroads Guide [Infrastructure Improvements to Reduce Motorcycle Casualties](#).

This was even showcased internationally by the ARRB Group at the 2018 International Transport Forum in Germany, yet there remains an inexplicable reluctance for Australian jurisdictions to adopt this as a business as usual guide.

For federally-funded projects (not only major works but also the Black Spot Program), use of and reference to the Austroads Guide *Infrastructure Improvements to Reduce Motorcycle Casualties* should be mandatory.

The Australian Motorcycle Council remains concerned about the focus and interest in reducing rural speed limits – the “open road default” in particular. Whilst understanding why speed limits may be reduced from 100kmh on some roads due to increasing semi-rural development, there remains thousands and thousands of kilometres of Australian roads that are literally the “open road”, and very popular touring routes.

The Australian Motorcycle Council strongly opposes any plans to reduce the open road default speed below 100kmh.

The absence of detailed data around motorcycle serious casualty crashes remains a significant area of concern. This was recognised by all parties present at the 2008 Motorcycle and Scooter Safety Summit, yet more than a decade later little has changed.

One thing has changed, though, with more than twice the number of people riding powered two wheelers in Australia in 2021 than in 2008. This continues to increase with more and more riders participating in the ‘gig’ economy, plus more people looking to personal mobility transport choices post COVID-19.

The [Leuven Report](#) of 2011 – a transport study undertaken in Belgium – showed that replacing cars in traffic with PTWs significantly reduces congestion, resulting in savings on many hours of time for individuals, and also results in lower emissions. In a “whole of government approach”, motorcycles as an increasing percentage of the vehicle fleet in congested urban settings is a positive and should be encouraged.

Certainly some of the motorcycle safety initiatives in Australia have been working. The fatality rate when looking at registrations has continued to decrease year on year for more

than a decade, to currently be at the lowest level since records have been kept – since the early 1970s. Some may say that we have already made significant progress, but fail to acknowledge it.

We note also that the International Transport Forum (ITF) is hosting an invitation-only [Motorcyclists Safety Workshop](#) in June 2021. This event had originally been planned as a face-to-face workshop to be held in Stockholm June 2020. The AMC will be participating in this event, and we anticipate that the learnings from this will be vital. Hopefully this will not be overlooked, as was largely the case with the findings from the ITF's [Motorcycling Safety Workshop](#), held in Lillehammer, Norway, in 2008.

The Australian Motorcycle Council remains committed to working with the Australian Government, the Office of Road Safety and the motorcycling community to see a National Road Safety Strategy for 2021-2030 that will acknowledge powered two wheelers as an increasingly popular transport choice; a strategy that will lead to better safety outcomes as more and more Australians choose motorcycles and scooters.

Clearly there is considerably more work to be done, as acknowledged in one of the recent stakeholder forums. A key way of strengthening consultation with the motorcycle community would be the re-establishment of the Australian Government's Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee, as recommended by the 2020 report of the Australian Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Road Safety.

The Australian Motorcycle Council calls for the re-establishment a National Consultative Committee on Motorcycle Safety, as recommended by the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety's 2020 report, [Improving Road Safety in Australia](#).

Finally, we ask that a correction be made to the word "motorbike" used throughout the draft strategy and the Office of Road Safety's website. Notwithstanding that the term "motor bike" is used commonly throughout the Australian road rules, "motorbike" has long been regarded as a slang term; one that perhaps belongs in the 1960s.

Throughout this submission and elsewhere, the Australian Motorcycle Council – an organisation established with that name in 1980 – interchanges the terms "motorcycle" and "powered two wheeler" (or "PTW"). These terms each refer to all powered two and three wheeled vehicles requiring registration in order to be used on a public road. "Powered two wheeler" or "PTW" are terms frequently used in international policy discussions pertaining to motorcycles and scooters, and have also been used by the AMC in previous communications.

The Australian Motorcycle Council requests that the Office of Road Safety cease using the term "motorbike" when referring to motorcycles and powered two wheelers.



Shaun Lennard
Chairman

End of submission