

VMC Policy Position: Road Safety Key Principles

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Road Safety – VMC Key Principles Policy position and FAQ April 2022

Position Statement:

Key Principles:

The Victorian Motorcycle Council holds, and the various antecedent ministerial and Vicroads motorcycle advisory panels, with participants from Victoria Police, Transport Accident Commission, VicRoads, Department of Justice, Road Minister's Office and members of the riding community, agreed that:

"On the topic of road safety, there are two key principles.

The primary one is that road safety is a shared responsibility amongst all road users, road builders and road maintainers.

The second principle is that the road safety of one road user group should not come at the expense of the road safety of another road user group."

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: Is this principle really seen in action?

A: It is excellent that these principles are/were recognised by various people within the authorities and agencies, but in terms of departmental output, the answer is no. There is no inherent policy to make such considerations, unlike for walking and cycling.

Q: In what ways isn't motorcycling considered when authorities make road safety decisions?

A: The impact on motorcycling is rarely considered when vehicular, pedestrian or cycling safety programs are announced. All transport policy and road infrastructure decisions consider the impact on pedestrian and cyclist safety as a matter of course. Some decisions are even driven by such considerations in that walking and cycling have ongoing and multiple road safety programs in place funded from the general community by way of general revenue. Given that everyone is a pedestrian and almost everyone has cycled or is a cyclist, this makes some sense, but it is not right.

This happens because walking and cycling are well integrated in Transport policy. There is active provisioning in planning, policy and budgets for adding and/or improving pedestrian and cycling safety and infrastructure. The same obligations and focus does not exist for motorcycling and the VMC has counted many decisions over the years that completely ignored their impact on motorcycling; Victoria's 30yr Infrastructure plan, City of Melbourne bicycle and tram lane separation works, lane width reduction works, carcentric road repair standards, are but a few examples.

Q: But the TAC and other agencies are on about motorcycle safety all the time aren't they?

A: Yes they are primarily because motorcycling is considered as a road safety problem, particularly when there is a spike in statistics. Motorcycling is rarely considered outside of this framework. The mobility, efficiency, environmental, congestion and mental health benefits of motorcycling are never positively promoted unlike for walking and cycling. Even fledgling personal e-modes of transport such as e-scooters and e-bikes have a more positive public discussion.

Q: Isn't that a gaping contradiction in the bureaucratic framework then?

A: Yes it is. Rather than safer motorcycling objectives dropping out as part of an integrated transport policy, such as we see with walking and cycling, riding is almost always considered through the lens of road safety generating a "something has to be done" public discussion.

Q: Why do the authorities have such a blind spot?

A: That is a long and convoluted discussion. It is partly a rod riders have made for their own back by wanting to be left alone or exhibiting anti-authoritarian tendencies. It is partly to do with not having a critical mass of riders in the general community. It is partly to do with there not being enough riders in the bureaucracy. It is partly to do with riding largely being seen as a discretionary activity. It is partly to do with riders being an extremely broad demographic who have not been able to coordinate a single voice...And the reasons go on.

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Q: Is this why we have a motorcycle safety levy?

A: Short answer is yes. Firstly, the VMC does not support the motorcycle safety levy as it is discriminatory and institutionalises this singular focus on motorcycling as a road safety problem. Secondly, with the current policy positions and road funding systems in place, motorcycle safety programs and road treatments rarely rise in priority over other “bigger” issues to attract timely funding from general revenue. Until that changes, the motorcycle safety levy is fund of money that can only be spent on approved activities that benefit motorcycle road safety in some way. Like it or hate the levy, fewer riders have ended up in hospital as a result of levy spending. Achieving these kinds of outcomes without a levy is the ultimate goal and would come when riding is genuinely considered as an integrated part of transport policy.

Q: What's the VMC doing about trying to get motorcycling viewed as part of transport policy?

A: The VMC is a volunteer organisation and does its best with limited means and personal time. It is working towards this long game objective by being seen as a reasonable voice. By building working relationships based on cooperative partnerships rather than taking a belligerent line. By calling the bureaucracy out when we see another example of the policy blind spot. By making submissions to government that sometimes take an educative and wider scope than called for.

Q: We can't just stop thinking about motorcycle safety – it is a genuine issue?

A: That's correct. There's always more that can be done to help work towards safer motorcycling. This is not an argument for the bureaucracy to stop thinking about how to improve motorcycle safety, but to treat it as one of the outputs of a more integrated approach. Some examples: Filtering was introduced without updating the learner driver curriculum about this change. Freeways have had lanes added to increase capacity, partly by reducing lane widths which failed to recognise how this might make filtering less safe. Road space is carved away to increase walkways and add bicycle lanes, reducing the shared road space available with vehicular traffic. Future infrastructure plans often focus on public transport, walking and cycling, but never consider promoting the benefits of motorcycling.

