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Wire Rope and other Roadside Barriers Policy position and FAQ May 2022

Position Statement:

Wire Rope and other Roadside Barriers:

Preamble:

Barriers are placed at roadsides by authorities with the intent of decreasing the likelihood of vehicles unintentionally leaving the road and colliding with trees or other vegetation or crossing into the path of oncoming vehicles. The Victorian Government has spent more than \$1,000,000,000 on such barriers over 2016 to 2020 as a part of their “Towards Zero” program. (TAC Victoria, 2022) ¹.

Since the introduction of Wire Rope Barriers (WRBs), motorcyclists around the world have been vocal in condemning them as creating dangers to motorcyclists that are not suffered by other vehicles and occupants. ²

In some countries, cessation and even reversal of programs of installation of WRBs has been achieved as a result, but not in Victoria, where the installation has only gained pace, such that Victoria is one of the most likely places on the planet where WRBs will be encountered. ³

As Victorian motorcyclists, we have lost this battle comprehensively with little to no chance of reversing the program through any kind of advocacy.

Given this, and while we in no way resile from our complete opposition to WRBs, we must be realistic and observe that more than 300 km of Victorian roads have WRBs now and installation is continuing apace.

Policy:

Our position therefore is to advocate for moderation of all roadside barriers but particularly WRB installations to improve safety for motorcyclists. As a minimum we request that all exposed posts in WRBs be fitted with post protections such as “stack cushions” as shown in:

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<https://www.ingalcivil.com.au/products/road-safety-barriers/motorcyclist-barriers/stack-cushions>



Figure 1 Ingal Stack cushion

Steel Barriers:

With Steel W beam types of roadside barrier we also request protection be provided for motorcyclists from contact with the support posts by means of additional components such as:

<https://www.ingalcivil.com.au/products/road-safety-barriers/motorcyclist-barriers/ingal-mpr>



Figure 2 Motorcyclist protection rail

Reduction in injuries to motorcyclists afforded by protection rails are reported in the December 2014 UNSW Report “MOTORCYCLE CRASHES INTO ROADSIDE BARRIERS STAGE 4: Protecting motorcyclists in collisions with roadside barriers”

Concrete Barriers:

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Our position on concrete barriers is that such barriers provide protection to a sliding motorcyclist by having a smooth surface with no potential snagging points. Statistically, concrete barriers have the best outcome for motorcyclists in sliding contact. This is the preferred roadside barrier for motorcyclists ⁵.

References:

1. <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/victorian-road-safety-strategy/towards-zero-2016-2020-road-safety-strategy>
2. <https://motorbikewriter.com/victoria-rolls-out-190km-of-wire-rope-barriers/>
3. <https://motorbikewriter.com/wa-first-to-replace-wire-rope-barriers/>
 - a. <https://motorbikewriter.com/norway-removes-wire-rope-barriers/>
 - b. <https://motorbikewriter.com/irish-riders-win-on-wire-rope-barriers/>
4. "MOTORCYCLE CRASHES INTO ROADSIDE BARRIERS STAGE 4: Protecting motorcyclists in collisions with roadside barriers" Bambach, M and Grzebieta, R. UNSW, 2014
5. "MOTORCYCLE CRASHES INTO ROADSIDE BARRIERS STAGE 1: CRASH CHARACTERISTICS AND CAUSAL FACTORS" Grzebieta, R et al, UNSW, 2010

Further Information:

Motorcycle registrations and roadside barrier exposure(From Reference 5 above)

State	Total Vehicle Population	Motorcycle Population	Proportion of motorcycles (%) ^a
Australian Capital Territory	224 076	8 022	3.58%
New South Wales	4 268 631	122 211	2.86%
Northern Territory	114 015	3 950	3.46%
Queensland	2 897 867	110 501	3.81%
South Australia	1 137 957	33 772	2.97%
Tasmania	374 846	10 488	2.80%
Victoria	3 740 726	114 438	3.06%
Western Australia	1 600 566	59 675	3.73%
New Zealand	3,308,142	49,283	1.49%
Total	14 358 684	512, 340	2.90%

Motorcycles as a proportion of the population of registered motor vehicles

Table 2: Population of vehicles and motorcycles in Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand

Note the proportion of motorcycles to total vehicles. While not a justification for ignoring the needs of motorcyclists, it probably does indicate where the focus is.

Installed lengths of roadside barriers along roads in Australia and New Zealand (From Reference 5 above)

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State	Total road length (kms) ^a	Total length of roadside barriers (kms)	Steel Barrier length (kms)	Concrete barrier length (kms)	Wire rope barrier length (kms)	Other (kms)
New South Wales	17,818	2,272.0	1,825.0	152.0	295.0	0.0
Queensland	35,000	1,511.0	1,118.0	264.0	121.0	8.0
Tasmania	3,900	521.5	245.2	8.5	88.4	213.9
Victoria	23,300	1 726.0	1 263.0	*	463.0	*
Western Australia	18,024	370.0	212.2	60.4	97.2	0.0
Total Australian	98,042	6,400.5	4663.4	484.9	1,064.6	221.9
Total New Zealand	10,800	1383	902	188	170	123

^a These figures refer to the roadways managed by the state authorities and excludes roads managed by the local government authorities such as councils and shires.

* not available

Note that Victorian installations of WRBs are much greater than in other states.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: XXX

A: xxx

Q: Do roadside barriers reduce the risk of motorcycle crashes?

A The UNSW study concluded that while motorcycle crashes into roadside barriers are rare, the placement of a roadside barrier of any type in front of a hazard such as a tree and pole has been found to significantly reduce the risk of serious injury and fatalities for motorcyclists compared to striking the fixed object.