

MEDIA RELEASE

29 March 2009

RAC wants motorcycle forums to confront all issues

The RAC has challenged the community to confront the road safety issues which are seeing a growing number of motorcycle riders killed or seriously injured on our roads.

Motorcycles make up about six per cent of Western Australia's vehicle fleet – but in 2008, 17 per cent of road deaths were motorcycle riders.

Based on figures between 1998 and 2007, motorcycle riders were 23 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured than other drivers.

In response to this growing crisis, the Road Safety Council has organised a series of three forums to identify the key road safety issues facing motorcyclists, propose solutions and then commit to implementing these solutions.

The first forum – to be held on April 3 and 4 – will be chaired by the RAC.

RAC Head of Member Advocacy Matt Brown says the forum should not shy away from some of the issues and potential solutions which cause controversy within the community.

“We all share the responsibility for reducing the level of road trauma suffered by motorcycle riders,” Mr Brown said.

“The forum will hear from the experts, the academics and from motorcyclists themselves as to what they see as the big road safety issues.

“At the end of the day this forum belongs to its participants and it's up to them to decide which issues they discuss.

“But there are issues and solutions which may prove unpopular with some members of the community.

“These should still be put up for discussion to show we are serious about tackling the rising toll of road trauma from motorcycle accidents.

“So let's throw some of the tough questions out there and engage in a rigorous debate on the merits of these issues.

“For example, should we revisit the issue of front number plates for motorcycles? If not, we should be pushing strongly for the immediate introduction of speed cameras that can photograph both front and rear number plates.

“Should the practice of weaving through slow moving traffic, particularly on freeways, be banned? Given that one in ten accidents causing death or serious injury involve a motorcycle being sideswiped by a car travelling in the same direction, can the risks involved in weaving through traffic continue to be ignored?

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“We know that protective clothing can reduce the risk of injury to riders by up to 50 per cent. Given the inherent increased risk of injury to motorcycle riders, should legislation be passed to set a minimum standard of safety clothing to be worn at all times by all riders?”

“Why do motorcycle riders require a separate licence and specific training while anyone with a drivers licence can jump on a moped? Given that moped riders face the same dangers as motorcycle riders, why shouldn't they be required to have a motorcycle licence?”

Mr Brown said there were other less controversial issues which could be raised in the forum including;

- A review of the design of roadside safety barriers to reduce the risk and severity of injury to motorcycle riders;
- Establishing a design standard for protective clothing to ensure riders are getting the protection they are paying for;
- A review of design features that sit on the road surface such as manhole covers, road lining and speed humps to reduce the hazard to motorcyclists;
- Appointing a motorcycle 'champion' or 'advocate' in relevant government departments/agencies such as Main Roads WA;
- Establishing a separate category for mopeds and scooters in road crash statistics; and
- Fast-tracking the graduated rider licensing and training project.

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****For radio interviews please call Matt Brown direct on 0419 813 171**