

24 December 1990.

Dear MRAA Committee Members,

1990 has been a very difficult year in two ways. Firstly, we were behind moneywise and had a real membership of less than 20% of five years ago. Secondly, we had inexperienced people, many of whom did not even know the 3 aims of the Motorcycle Riders' Association.

We wasted a lot of time on failed ideas. We had a raffle that was going to raise \$30,000. Pay all our debts in a couple of months. I did not like it but agreed. It raised about 4 grand for which the organisers did 10 grand's worth of work. The Howqua. A disgrace. I asked it be put off a year until we had the resources to do it properly. No. I gave in and tried to help. Big mistake. Then there were the Calder Ride Days. These cost 3 grand plus manpower per time. I wanted them put off till the New Year so they could be properly organised and promoted. I said that under no circumstances was the MRAA to be liable for those costs after struggling for 18 months to get almost out of debt. Previously Calder had covered costs and kept profits. But the November Ride Day was a disaster. The weather was blamed but there was no promotion. Calder said enough after about 15 people turned up. You need 100 plus to make it break even. I told the organiser "Do not do anything till I get back from Canberra". Just a day trip. When I got back the thing was a mess with Calder not knowing who was running the MRAA. The organiser had not supplied the information requested (in writing) and we had to spend large amounts of time, at the busiest time of year, chasing insurance and manning gates. We served 107 riders, only a dozen or so were members. We took \$3040. With the Committee overloaded with work and underfunded I cancelled the January 20 Ride Day. The next one is Sunday 17 February. If the result is not satisfactory there WILL BE NO MORE. I will be more than happy to let the organiser put up 3 grand of his own each time and run them as private events but I dont think that will happen.

Also during 1990 there was moaning about no national newsletter. I gave the chief moaner a rough and asked the next step to a N/L be taken. Weeks later I got back less than I gave. The year was massively busy so the national N/L hasn't yet begun. But I am working through Christmas on it. If you want something in it, put it in writing. DO NOT RING UP BECAUSE YOU ARE TOO LATE AND BEG FOR SPACE. If you want an event to be an official 1991 MRAA function then be at the next general meeting so it can be put on the agenda of the February Committee Meeting.

FEBRUARY QUARTER MRAA GENERAL MEETING. 10am SUNDAY 3 FEB. 1991.
THE SYDENHAM HOTEL. ELIZABETH STREET, RICHMOND.

Whiskey & Slide will play at the pub from 3pm. These Sunday Sessions are called Starting Grids and it was hoped to get the support to develop them into GP parties with the live telecasts. These are fund raising events. There were to be 4 in December but I cancelled the last one as it was clear the Melbourne Registers were not encouraging their members to attend. We will try one more on 3 FEB. No crowd and the Starting Grids go the way of the Howquas and possibly the Calder Ride Days.

I may seem harsh but I came back to the Presidency 18 months ago to rebuild this operation. It has taken time to get a team that works into the administration. Now we have it we cannot be sidetracked by fun-failures or low return fund raisers. Our main task is to fight for rights and safety of motorcyclists. Any club can organise a piss-up or chook raffle. The MRAA is NOT A CLUB.

The MRA Australia Rally will be held on the Queen's Birthday Long weekend. This was traditionally the Howqua Rally weekend since we started it back in the 70s. It will be held on the Murray. It will start small like the Howquas. It will be a back to basics family event. As rallies go, it won't be cheap (unless you are an MRAA member). We hope to capture the friendly atmosphere of the early Howquas where MRA members from

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all over the country met and enjoyed the bush. That is why I hope someone runs an unofficial Howqua to sort of keep the flies off the watermelon so to speak. The new rally will have good security and first aid. You can bring your kids without too much worry about them getting showered with glass and petrol or having an eye poked out and there being no first aid or driver sober enough for a hospital run.

There will be other events. For those who don't want to go to Sydney for the GP there will be a Starting Grid to watch it live in Melbourne and I hope Brisbane will be able to arrange some sort of fund raiser too.

The Superbikes and the 6 Hour will be run at Phillip Island on the same weekend, OCT 19 & 20 (?). The NMC will run the Frozen Penguin Rally on the same site as the OZ GP Rally. There will be discounts for MRAA members and the MRAA will get stall space free. Please list it in your newsletters.

The National Motorcycle Month starts with the Driver Awareness Ride on the 2nd weekend in November. This year's DAR was an excellent demonstration of how far the association had sunk in the last half of the 80s. The pathetic gathering was not even half the size of the 1980 DAR which drew 800-1000 bikes. Well we are coming back. Melbourne and Brisbane and hopefully other MRAs will hold DARs that weekend. Melbourne's will leave from A'Becket St and loop the city passing major hospitals to the east, north and west. It will not travel on freeways where the public cannot see us. There will be awards for the best presented club and Register, the largest club and Register attendance, the best costume with a road safety message, the best comic costume and so on. I am trying to get major sponsors now. We lost 23 grand sponsorship for Toy Run '90 because the committee was too busy doing damage control on raffles Howquas, newsletters (that weren't), Ride Days and DARs. If you want major successes you MUST plan a long way ahead. The '91 DAR will have a new start time too. 10am Sunday. That's November 10. To get a badge riders will buy a map of the route at the start. At the end of the ride there will be a BBQ (probably hosted by WSR) where maps will be stamped and a badge supplied. The route will surprise some in Melbourne and I am sure Brisbane's organisers will come up with a cracker too.

For many years the MRA ran the Great Ocean Road Poker Run. It too was a casualty of the decline. It is now run by the Geelong Motorcycle Club and we support that. But we are going to have an MRAA Poker Run at the other end of the year. Sunday 17 November. This ride will have top prizes and a do at the other end. Badges will be given to riders who complete all 5 check points. The route will take in the Reefton Spur, Black Spur and the Healsville-Toolangi Road. I hope Brisbane and other capital city MRAs will hold events on this weekend too.

Sunday 24 November, Western Suburbs Register (WSR) Wine Run. A family day and a traditional event. I hope it gets the support it deserves. I will certainly be along for the ride.

Sunday 1 December. A Blood Run to start the annual summer Blood Challenge in Melbourne and hopefully Brisbane though different blood banks have different hours and donor days. Apparently MRA Tas now has a summer blood challenge along the lines of the competition held in Victoria for many years.

Sunday 8 December. Toy Run '91. Melbourne and Brisbane organise rides to a central point in those cities to maximise publicity. It shows the motorcycle community in a good light which helps us stay alive on the roads and fight bad laws. The National Motorcycle Month ends with the Toy Runs.

Coming back to administration was saddening. Not just the damage but the lack of knowledge of what an MRA was about by younger members.

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One guy astonished me by pointing to a bunch of drunks in a paddock and proudly proclaiming that the first aim of the MRAA was to give motorcyclists a good time. He was of the type that would be the first to moan when a law made it harder to continue motorcycling. He would be most unhappy to see a massive increase in 3rd party premiums or a lights-on law that made it impossible to insure your bike or win a court case. But guys like that don't want to learn and they just get in the way of people like my team who don't want to get into partying until after the work is done. Motorcycle politics and the administration of the MRA is a lot of work.

Another thing I find worrying are the number of less experienced riders who actually believe a lights-on law is a good thing. Any benefit to be gained from running a bike's headlamp in daylight can be gained by using your brain and your finger. I got my first road registered bike in 1967. I ride 95% of the time with my lamp off in daylight. I have come off a few times but I have never hit a car or been hospitalised from a bike crash. I ride as if the bastards were out to get me. I use my flasher switch all the time.

Now consider this. Put it in your newsletters. Tell your members at the next meeting. These are government figures. a) 60% of riders use their lamps in daylight now. b) Most riders involved in casualty crashes are under 25, inexperienced or novice. c) The vast majority of bike crashes occur when a car crosses the path of the bike, fails to give way. Think about it!

It means most of our victims are caused by driver error and/or aggression. They are generally young, inexperienced and have their lights on in daytime. So what is going wrong with the magic lights-on theory? I think 2 things.

Firstly, drivers don't want to be hit by a large, flying lump of plastic, metal and flesh. Most don't anyway. They do not go out there and say "watch me turn in front of this bikie then say I didn't see him". Crashes are inconvenient and do the car no good at all. So why do so many of them turn? Why do so many young riders with their lights on in daytime, plough into them? A lot of older riders reckon it might be to do with speed & distance judgement and possibly back-lighting in some situations. But the government refuses to research anything that might show their 20 year fight to get compulsory conspicuity laws is a wheelbarrow full of chook manure. Better dead bikies than embarrassed politicians and bureaucrats.

Secondly, novice riders are the victims of a confidence trick. They are repeatedly told you will be safer if you have your light on all the time. Tell a lie often enough .. you know. Because humans are naturally afraid of the unknown, and there is a lot the novice does not know about motorcycling, they like things that make them feel safer. Lights-on is one of those things that gives novices a confident feeling that they are doing it right so naturally they can be seen better. They have this warm glow of overconfidence that is only extinguished just prior to having the pieces thrown in the back of a meat wagon.

Whether or not your members prefer the light on or off in daylight, tell them to put a cross (X) of tape on the lens to show they don't want COMPULSORY conspicuity.

Like the MRA the 4Bs are not a patch on what they were. I was hoping to work with them to rebuild the service. But certain of them do not want to change the 4Bs from the cosy little club it has become. Some want it to split from the MRA. That was tried before. Legal action saw it fail and become another group. The 4Bs are a sub-committee of MRA Australia Inc. and will continue that way. Just to make sure the record is straight. The benevolent fund was illegally converted to an ordinary investment account. Brian Baker was asked to work with me to get the mess sorted out.

Brian decided not to meet with me and, while I was waiting for him, he went to the bank to sort things out his way. He has managed to freeze the \$3000 plus dollars in the account so only the original trustees can sort the mess out. This kind of gross disloyalty and stupidity only results in damaging the MRAA and the 4Bs. I guess it's just that some people don't understand the way the MRAA has to operate to be both legal and successful.

The point is that I have the track record and the team to rebuild the MRAA better than when we started it. Better than the last time we rebuilt it. I have almost done what I said I would do. That is pay off the debts of the previous administration and get some respect back for our political lobbying and organisational ability.

If Brian, or anyone else, wants to call a special general meeting and move a vote of no-confidence in this administration, I will support the meeting, if not the vote. Such a motion can also be moved at quarterly general meetings. These are on FEB 3, MAY 5, AUGUST 4 & NOVEMBER 3 (AGM).

What I am getting at is that if you don't like the way things are going then don't just moan about it. Do something. Otherwise give my team the credit for experience and dedication that can return this organisation to Australia's premier road-rider group. We need your support for official projects.

Please get as many people as you can to the next Melbourne General Meeting.

Take it easy out there.



Damien Codognotto
President

Motorcycle Riders Association of Australia Inc.

Letters

Bike light law benefits not proved

FEDERAL Transport Minister Brown (Dec. 19) is forcing through a bad law in an attempt to protect the credibility of the PM's 10-point safety package and Federal Office of Road Safety (FORS).

The law is Australian Design Rule (ADR) 19.01 — compulsory lights-on for motorcyclists.

The Motorcycle Riders' Association of Australia is opposed to this law, not the proper use of headlamps in daylight, for several reasons.

Consultation with FORS was a sham. Research was selective, aimed at proving FORS theories.

The recent NSW RTA paper which denies the benefits of 19.01 was not even shown to Brown.

The Government's figures show 60 per cent use lights during the day. MRAA thinks that conservative.

But their figures also show the majority of crashes occur when cars cross riders' paths and

most victims are under 25.

So novices with lights blazing make up most of motorcycling's casualties. What's going wrong at intersections Mr Brown? FORS have refused to research that question.

Lights-on gives us legal and insurance problems. Brown is right. You can't be booked for breaking 19.01, eg: riding with a blown globe.

But you will be booked for breaking state road-worthy laws. Getting

home with no light will be as easy as with no helmet.

ADR 19.01 may well cost lives, but Brown will never know because there are no plans to monitor the effects. There is no evidence lights-on works.

Organisations opposed to ADR 19.01 include Honda, VACC, FCAI, NSW RTA and Government, the Federal and Victorian Oppositions and all bike groups.

— Damien Codognotto,
President, MRAA.