



What is the MRAVic about?

The Motorcycle Riders Association of Australia was founded in Melbourne in May, 1978. It is a non-profit organization serving and representing the interests primarily of Victorian motorcyclists while also supporting all Australian motorcyclists.

The aims of the MRAVic are the promotion of:

- * ROAD SAFETY
- * FAIR & SENSIBLE LAWS
- * A BETTER IMAGE FOR MOTORCYCLISTS

In attempting to further the aims of the association, MRAVic representatives participate on various state and federal committees including the following:

- VicRoads Road Safety Reference Group, Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council (VMAC), Australian Motorcycle Council (AMC), Standards Australia (Helmet Standards), Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee (ATSB),
- Various Road Safe groups

this issue

AGM notice **P.3**

Ride for the Hills **P.4**

President's Report **P.5**

VMAC and Advocacy Report **P.8**

March 13th MRAVic Annual General Meeting Bell's Hotel 7pm

Membership Secretary

Hi, some of you know me, some don't. My name's Mick Doedee, I've become the interim membership secretary since the Toy Run on December 14th so if you're chasing an invoice for your membership or paid it and chasing your membership card, blame me for the delay.

One of the joys of this gig is that through the course of a year I contact every member, directly or indirectly. Those that I do hear directly from is usually a rewarding experience, it's always nice to get feedback from members, bad or good, at least with feedback we can know more about where to focus our endeavours or indeed if our efforts are focused in the right areas.

One of the pitfalls of this gig is that it's a fair bit of work, envelope stuffing, folding, stamping envelopes etc and sometimes it's all in vain. As membership secretary I'm reliant on a database full of members personal details, address, phone number, email address etc etc, unfortunately during the course of a year, some people invariably change address, change telephony or internet provider and the details in our database can quickly become out of date as whilst most people will contact their bank and work place to provide the new details, it's not many that contact the MRAV to provide their new details so a lot of my work may come right back to me.

If you've moved recently, changed email address, got a new mobile telephone number, please advise me in anyway you can. I can be contacted by phone on 0411 183 258, email membershipsecretary@mraa.org.au or by post to PO Box 12905 A'Beckett St, Melbourne, 3000.

Keep it rubber side down people.

Mick Doedee

Membership Secretary MRAV

Vale Marcel Smits

Z Transport Group's Managing Director, and long time MRA member and supporter Marcel Smits, was tragically killed by the bushfires at St Andrews in Victoria. Marcel was for many years the MRA's representative on the Council's "Motorcycles in Melbourne" committee and a stalwart of the BMW Motorcycle Club.

The family sincerely thanks all those people and organisations who have been in touch to offer their condolences and support and request that donations can be made to Red Cross at www.redcross.org.au to contribute to their bushfire relief fund.

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The 2009 Annual General Meeting is upon us and this year looks to be an important year for the MRA.

We have seen an increase in membership this year and the organisation is well and truly in the black. We are progressing very well with our building fund account as well.

While there is a hard core of committed members – both on and off the board, we still need more volunteers. If you want to make a contribution to the organisation, come along and be heard at the meeting. Nominate for a position or volunteer to assist.

Nomination forms and details will be available on the forum at <http://www.mravic.org.au> by the time you receive this, or email secretary@mraa.org.au for a copy.

We also have plenty of work for anyone who wants to volunteer but doesn't necessarily want a board position.



National News

On a national level the MRA(Vic) operates as a member of the Australian Motorcycle Council. This is the peak body of Australian Motorcycle Rider Associations and includes representatives from all states and territories.

We are currently represented at Executive level on the AMC by our Secretary Tony Ellis. Tony is also one of the AMC delegates to the Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee of the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure.

Ride Report

Toy Run

The 2008 Toy Run was marred considerably by torrential rain early in the day. Only about 6000 riders showed making it one of the smallest in recent years. However those that did attend were rewarded by fine weather for the ride itself and at Williamstown.

It was gratifying to know that children still received their Christmas gifts as riders who did not attend dropped them off to the Salvos and other charitable organisations prior to Christmas.

Eureka Ride

Once again the MRA led the Eureka Ride to Ballarat. First organized by Brunswick HOG to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Eureka Stockade, this ride has now become a fixture on the Calendar the week prior to the Toy Run and regularly has many hundreds of riders attending.

The City of Ballarat welcomes riders and has been very supportive.

Are you Injured?

For free legal advice, phone Grace Placencio, MRA Official "Legal Eagle", Public Officer and Life Member

Grace has represented injured riders for over 10 years and specializes exclusively in Personal Injury law, including:

- Transport Accident Claims
- WorkCover Claims
- Superannuation Claims
- Medical Negligence Claims
- All Other Injury Claims

Suite 5, Level 5, 517 St Kilda Rd (opp. The Alfred Hospital) Melbourne, 3004.

Ph. (03) 9867-7769.
Fax. (03) 9857-7750

GRACE PLACENCIO DAVIES & COMPANY LAWYERS

2008-2009 Summer Blood Challenge

As this goes to print the motorcyclists are just behind the police in the Summer Blood Challenge – however the overwhelming support from the public following the disastrous bushfires means that it's impossible to predict the outcome.

The 30th Annual Summer Blood Challenge finishes on February 28th! To register a donation for the MRA, simply fill out a Summer Blood Challenge entry form located in the refreshment area of your nearest Donor Centre and the donations will be added to the tally.

At this time of incredible need, the blood challenge has taken on even more importance for those victims of the fires and the aftermath. Please put aside all your procrastinations and make a donation now, it will make a difference.

Remember it may be your life this saves!



Over the past week, beginning at 8.30am last Sunday Morning (the day after Black Saturday) the MRA has fielded many calls from riders saying - "What is the MRA doing?" - "Are the MRA organizing something?" - "Is a ride being organized? If its not we are going to organize one."

By Monday night at 6pm (9th Feb - 48 hrs after Black Saturday) a coalition of riders and rider groups (MRA was represented by me) met and forged a concept for an event titled "Ride for the Hills (Bushfire Victims Relief 2009)". Incidentally, this group was initiated by an independent rider and the MRA (along with other organisations) decided to pool resources.

Over the last week, Team Leader Phil Cassap (the individual who got the ball rolling, decided to take 14 days off work to focus all his enthusiastic supporters, has already achieved the following:

A. Start location at St Kilda - on Sunday 5th April.

Application has been submitted to St Kilda Council.

B. We don't quite have a formal destination. It is tentative at this stage and we expect that it will be formalised soon.

Where the fires struck is in "The Heart of the Riders Playground"

Dan Rotman - MA

C. There has been a major offer of support from one Motorcycle manufacturer.

. In addition other offers of support have been coming in from across the motorcycle industry.

This week has been filled with grief, in six weeks time a lot of that will have changed and the victims will need a somewhat different type of support.

However there will still be a need for support for the people and organisations that have suffered.

Tollfree Victorian Bushfire Accommodation Donation Line, 1800 006 468. There are 40 lines with operators on standby from 8am – 8pm

RIDE FOR THE HILLS

People enjoy watching a "parade of motorcycles", it is something that the Motorcycle Community does well, and it's something that I know people watching and participating will enjoy. It is something that we can do to show the victims that there is a large group who cares about them.

As Dan Rotman stated last week in an MA Media Release - the area where the fires struck is in "The heart of the riders Playground" and as such this is one way in which riders can show that they care and want to help. It may also act as a catalyst for further rider contributions.

Watch the MRA web site

<http://www.mravic.org.au>

for further news.



President's Report

Having been a motorcycle rider for longer than I would like to admit, there comes a time in one's life when one feels the need to give something back to the family to which they feel a sense of belonging. Riders with whom one often shares a "friendly nod" as they pass in the opposite direction, while stopped at traffic lights or wherever we find ourselves together sharing our "common bond" is what motivates me.

Our sense of family can be seen in the form of those somewhat senior riders, be they just experienced, or senior in age, volunteering their time to make a difference for their descendents – the younger or "newbies" joining our family.

At a time when the motorcycle community is experiencing a growth spurt these people come out of the woodwork. The work done by certain riders on VMAC is testament to the sense of family which one feels after having experienced what it means to be identified as a "motorcycle rider".

The upcoming Powered Two Wheeler Transport and Safety Strategy 2009 will see our family take its biggest step in terms of finally being recognized as a legitimate form of transport in Victoria. This achievement has come about through the dedicated efforts made by your MRA over many years, and in concert with other riders who share our "sense of responsibility".

As we move forward we need to recognize that times have changed and we are all now members of The New MRA and that the role our organization plays must change with the times if it is to continue as a viable component of our wider family.

I encourage all riders to think about what they can do, not for themselves, but for their family, its reputation, health and safety. It is never easy, and the challenges are great. But, knowing that one has made a contribution and seeing the results of that achievement is worth aspiring to.

On a final note, we all need to reflect on bushfires that have taken the lives of so many of our family of riders recently. In particular, mention must be made of Marcel Smits, a long time member of the MRA who has served our family with distinction over many years. I knew Marcel but briefly, yet I shall miss him because he was one of "our family".

John Karmouche

MRA(Vic) President

New Web site

With the change in name to MRA(Vic) we now have our new Domain Name registered as well.

The forms, news etc. are now available at

<http://www.mravic.org.au>

To keep in touch with what's happening, come and check it out or sign up to let your opinions be known.

The email addresses will remain in the form@mraa.org.au for the time being until updates are completed. Once that happens the literature and website will be updated with the new addresses.

Contact the MRAVic

PO Box 12905 A'Beckett Street Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone 03 9877 3004

ABN 28 703 101 330

Patron: Professor Marcus Wigan, FACS, FlInstP, FICE,
FIEAust, FAITPM, FCILT, MBCS, CEng, CPhys,
CPEng, Eur-Ing.

MRAVic Board members 2008 - 2009

President: John Karmouche
0419 359 628 president@mraa.org.au

Vice President: Austin Webb

Secretary: Tony Ellis

Treasurer: Rik van Zuylenkom

Membership Secretary (elect): Mick Doedee
membershipsecretary@mraa.org.au

Ordinary Board Members: Grant Delahoy, Wendy
Taylor

Other Positions (whilst not riding)

4Bs Co-ordinator: Mick Dabbs (www.4bs.org.au)

Road Safety Reference Group Rep: Wendy Taylor

Blood Challenge Co-ordinator: DJ McCarthy

Newsletter Editor: (TBA)

VMAC Rep and AMC Delegate: Tony Ellis

Events Co-ordinator: Dale Maggs

Art Director: Paul Murphy

Email: mraa@mraa.org.au

19 April 2008

MY OFF DAY

What a day! What a life! Not only was the sun smiling on us riders but the gods seemed to be smiling on my very existence, a job I loved, a new home being built, all was well with family and friends, then I rode out of the car park.

Such a simple thing a couple of the guys had the traffic stopped so we could leave as a group. Two lanes of about five cars each, some were even waving, I banked into my left turn, not fast, not going hard, committed to the turn when I heard the shout "You Bastard!!!" As this penetrated my consciousness something clipped my rear end followed by a wall of shiny black duco. It seemed endless as my inadvertent counter steer took me into it. MY mirror left the bike in a whirling arc and metallic crunch and I started to fly.

The first thoughts fly through my brain "Tuck in your hands! No telescopic fractures! Roll! How am I going to get to work Monday?" "Then I hit the bitumen, seems like forever but really only milliseconds. Running feet, helping hands and roaring engines all merged into my consciousness with a new constant PAIN!!! I got to my feet with the help of others and was guided off the road amid a barrage of questions. My mind was spinning, out of control, answers came automatically, head, neck, back and legs OK. Right shoulder not. Yes I did need an ambulance. No I didn't want a drink. Could someone ring my daughter? Mobile phone in back pocket. Is the bike off the road? Yes I would love someone to take it home in their van for me (realised it was Ducman). Get the address off my license. Hear the sound of sirens.. It's the ambo what a welcome sound.. Feeling woozy... shock, relief, pain, I don't know maybe all three.

A voice penetrates, it's a plain clothes copper, I give my name, D.O.B, address, someone gets my license out of my wallet, I can't do it .. Right shoulder and arm not working too well... Paramedic bends over me... helps me remove gloves, jacket, helmet, checks for breaks, notes deformity of shoulder.. Gives me pain relief.. Helps me to stand and walk to gurney.. Puts me in back of ambo.. More questions... Name, D.O.B where is pain?? A strange thing somewhere amongst all this a thank you, what for? "Wearing the right gear makes my job easier and nicer, no minced flesh to deal with Thanks". Close the doors, next stop Western General.

More questions, same questions, observations, x rays, morphine, results no dislocation fractures, three of them in and below the head of the humerus, bad news can't be immobilised, sling fitted, more observation, family arrive. Tears and recriminations, yes I got off lightly, no I don't know where he came from, everyone was stopped. The doctors sent me home. Come back Wednesday. Here are some pain killers. Thus starts the end of my life as it was.

The fractures actually broke the head of my humerus into four pieces and it didn't heal smooth and round leaving a considerable ridge of bone to jam against my collarbone and shoulder blade, thus rendering my right shoulder somewhat useless.... no rotation... about 30% range of movement and lots of muscle wastage. The only cure a joint replacement, but at 55 I am considered too young. So all I can do is follow my doctor's instructions and persist with physio hoping to minimise the damage and live on painkillers.

Why? Because one guy was too impatient and drove down the verge, passing on the left because he was in a hurry. Thanks Mate!!!!

Dianne Carlile



MRA 4B

MOTORCYCLE RIDERS ASSOCIATION VICTORIA
Bent & Buckled Bikies Bureau

This year we have had success in re-establishing the 4B's. Thanks to the tireless work of Mick Dabbs who has single-handedly revived it in the form of "Rider Down".



MRA at the Mver Christmas Pageant



Eureka Ride - 2008



Mick Dabbs and AJ at the MRA Stand – 2008 Toy Run

HONDA RIDER ASSIST OFFERS RIDERS PEACE OF MIND

Motorcyclists face a unique set of challenges if and when they experience a breakdown or other misfortune. Luckily there is a service that exists to help riders 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Honda Australia has extended their partnership agreement with International SOS to continue to provide emergency relief on the road through the Honda Riders Assist program – an exceptional service made possible through the largest club of its kind in the country, the Honda Riders Club of Australia (HRCA). Riders Assist not only offers a bevy of vital services, but also advice and help from specialists who are familiar with the technical aspects of Honda's range of motorcycles as well as the unusual circumstances that riders occasionally find themselves in.

Membership holders on roads anywhere across Australia can ride secure in the knowledge that issues such as flat tyres, running out of fuel, lost keys, a flat battery or any other inconvenience can be tended to quickly and efficiently. Services are offered through Gold or Platinum programs and, depending on the level of cover, include breakdown assistance, roadside repairs, transport, accommodation/ car rental, accident coordination, emergency fuel, key replacement, emergency contact, medical/legal advice and much more.

Costing just \$69 for Gold cover and \$119 for Platinum, Honda Rider Assist is exclusive to Honda owners and is one of the most comprehensive covers available on the market today. "The advisors at Rider Assist work closely with our in-house technicians at Honda to ensure they are up-to-date on any potential issues and are also well-versed in our particular models," said HRCA Manager Rhys Griffiths.

"This means we can offer a very personalised and effective service which is why, we believe, it continues to be so popular with owners from across our product range."

For information, please visit: www.hrca.com.au and click on "Rider Assist".



BITS & PIECES

Prime Stupidity

At the very time that WA are holding a Road Safety inquiry to address rising casualty rates among motorcyclists – The West Australian government have decided to slash the police motorcycle fleet by one third.

HAPPY 40TH BIRTHDAY HONDA AUSTRALIA!

4 February 2009 - In the year that Neil Armstrong touched down on the surface of the moon, Honda touched down in Australia.

Meet WSBK racers Troy Corser and Ruben Xaus

BMW Motorrad offers World Superbike fans the unique opportunity to chat with Australia's own Troy Corser and his Spanish team-mate Ruben Xaus in Melbourne just days ahead of the opening round of the 2009 WSKB Championship at Phillip Island. Corser and Xaus will be appearing at Southbank Motorcycles in the heart of Melbourne (130 City Road, Southbank) from 6.30pm - 8.00pm on 24 February

Chairman's communiqué from 11 December 2008 meeting

The December meeting of VMAC rounded off an extensive year of work by VMAC. I wish to thank everybody involved for their efforts during 2008.

The work of VMAC is changing significantly. The December agenda reflected a number of changing priorities which will emerge as the motorcycling and scooter riding landscape expands significantly in the years to come.

1. VICTORIAN POWERED TWO WHEEL (PTW) SAFETY AND TRANSPORT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

The draft 4 year strategy for safer riding in Victoria, which will operate from 2009 – 2013 has now been approved by VMAC for submission to Minister Pallas after final work within VicRoads.

The draft strategy fits within the framework of Victoria's Road Safety Strategy: arrive alive II 2008-2017 while also linking with the Victorian Transport Plan (VTP). The plan recognizes PTWs as part of an integrated transport solution and recognizes the potential benefits they can offer.

2. DSE TRAIL BIKE PROJECT

VMAC and VicRoads have been actively involved in assisting the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) in developing a new approach to "off road" riding in Victoria under the theme of "Ride for Tomorrow".

Roger Pitt (DSE) presented VMAC with an excellent overview of the progress on the Trail Bike project. His team has received input from many motorcycling clubs and associations, actively listened to rider feedback and attended trail bike events/rallies.

VMAC is particularly pleased with the construction of new trail bike visitor information areas providing riders with parking and unloading areas, shelters/facilities and maps and information to help riders understand where riding is approved and under what conditions.

The Trail Bike Project shared the VMAC stand at the recent Motorcycle Expo. It was very clear that many riders are interested in these issues and responded positively to the material on display.

3. COMMUNITY POLICING, EDUCATION & ENFORCEMENT

This project is progressing well and has the prospects of becoming a national showpiece for positive reinforcement of good riding practice coupled with a "community" and "coaching" approach to policing of poor rider habits.

Assistant Police Commissioner Ken Lay has joined VMAC under approval of both the Police and Transport Ministers. I regard this as a very strong signal that motorcycling and scooter riding is taking a more significant place in top level thinking around future priorities for road sharing and safety.

Inspector Jeff Millar, who is the regular Victoria Police nominee to VMAC, provided a verbal update on the project with a launch date targeted early in the New Year. Victoria Police have taken delivery of 10 new Police Motorcycles (not funded from the levy) that will be used as part of this program.

Inspector Millar reported that the program model was outlined to approximately 350 traffic police during the recent Vision 237 conference with the assistance of John Karmouche, MRA (Vic) President and received very positive feedback from all.

4. COLLABORATION WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

David Shelton (Director Road User Safety, VicRoads) and I visited Canberra on 27 November 2008 to press for urgent implementation of a national motorcycling/scooter safety and transport strategy (with our offer to assist in any way).

We were positively received by senior Department of Infrastructure officers. There is clear acknowledgment of the improved safety outcomes emerging from the Victorian programs.

Minister in May last year pointing to the need for national action on motorcycle casualties. To be effective these calls need to be backed up by a fully funded agenda.

I will be writing, on behalf of VMAC to the Prime Minister and Federal Transport Minister Albanese suggesting a rethink and offering strong support from VMAC for a national action strategy consistent with the findings of the recent national Workshop held in April 2008.

I have suggested that rider groups and industry representatives on VMAC may wish to consider a similar approach to take to Canberra.



5. RIDER TRAINING/DRIVER EDUCATION
the new levy funded motorcycle awareness campaign for drivers has gone to air on state-wide television – with the dollars buying many prime time TV slots to maximise reach. Feedback from riders has been good. Now we need to see the results of research into effectiveness in changing driver awareness and response to sharing the road with riders.

VMAC has also significantly progressed two new rider training initiatives – community policing (above) and the “assisted rides” trials which will begin operating in the next few months. The latter is to be a fully documented and researched trial under which 2000 riders will participate in rides with trained instructors to work on “on road” experience and hazard perception skills.

These new programs signal a strong shift to training and skills as the next significant leg of a long term strategy to make it safer for everybody to share the roads.

6. VMAC STRUCTURE AND PERSONNEL:
At the December meeting I signaled my personal view that the VMAC agenda and action program has become too broad and too significant to be handled properly under the current arrangements.

Even though VMAC is only an advisory body to Government it is clear that recommendations are taken seriously and the work is highly valued. It is also clear that VMAC is now being seen as a successful vehicle through which to bring forward policy ideas and initiatives – increasing the workload and representations to members.

Therefore I will propose to Minster Pallas that we consider some changes to the structure and operations to better account for these changes and to improve our capacity to handle the emerging pressures. If this idea is progressed VMAC will develop some alternatives over the next few months in consultation with the constituent organizations

7. THANK YOU AND BEST WISHES:
Professor Marcus Wigan resigned from VMAC in April 2008 after many years of dedicated and important voluntary service.

Roger Northam (Ulysses and Barwon Road Safety) has indicated that he will resign after the February 2009 meeting as time and family interests do not allow him to continue at his current level of active involvement (and he doesn't have a second gear).

We thank both members for their significant contributions and wish them well in the future.

May I convey our best wishes for a strong recovery to Ray Newland, a foundation member of VMAC who represents the national automotive industry. Ray has been sidelined by a stroke in recent weeks but is now making great progress and we hope to see him back on deck as soon as possible.

I would also like to congratulate Minister Martin Pakula on his recent appointment to the Victorian Ministry and Cabinet. Martin served for the past 18 months as Parliamentary Secretary for Transport with special reference to motorcycling and VMAC matters. He has been a strong source of support in our changing agenda and priority and we wish him well in his new field of responsibility.

Ride Report

Australia Day ride

This year the MRA did not marshal for the Police “Ride to Remember” As a result those members who turned up were able to relax and enjoy the ride in the company of over 400 other riders

It's not often one can ride with a police escort from Albert Park to Frankston and not put ones feet to the ground for the whole trip. And then come back up Eastlink and the Monash – again without stopping at any point!

Myer Christmas Parade

The MRA(Vic) participated in the Myer Christmas pageant last year. With a variety of bikes (and members) it proved to be a major hit with the crowds. Particularly with the small children lining the parade who seemed to have a definite affinity with Austin and his Harley – which barely survived the parade before managing to overcook itself...



Motorcyclists were well represented at the annual Safe Roads Conference in Melbourne.
From Left:
Perry Stephens (Inner North Road Safe), Tony Ellis (MRA), John Karmouche (MRA), Wendy Taylor (Inner Melbourne Road Safe), Mark Collins (HART), Roger Northam (Barwon Road Safe)



Editors Note

You will, by now have noticed the new colour layout of the newsletter. With the advent of modern technology we can produce a colour newsletter for only marginally more than the old black and white ones.

This is the first issue for some years not produced by Martin Taylor – who has finally decided to get a life after many newsletter issues with many thanks from us all.

Your esteemed secretary is producing this one – on a template designed by Board Member Grant. It's a one off (the editing) and we need someone to step up and take it on – as a quarterly newsletter, the work isn't all that difficult so if you're a budding journalist, have a think about it.

I'm sure there are plenty of people out there who find it easy to string a few words together and who would enjoy seeing themselves in print.

The Honda DN-01 – a different bike

Having been offered the loan of a DN-01 for the Christmas Pageant by Stuart Strickland, I picked it up from Honda's offices at Campbellfield with a bit of trepidation. It's a while since I've ridden a cruiser and at around 270kg it's no lightweight.

I needn't have worried, by the time I got to Bell Street I was very much at home on it. I don't think I've ever found an easier bike to ride. Apart from occasionally grabbing for the clutch lever and not finding anything, it was a bike I felt instantly comfortable on. It's certainly not a bike to ride if you don't want attention – and not just from other riders. Even in the first minute or two it became obvious that this was going to draw some attention when a couple of V8 Commodores pulled alongside, slowed down to take a look and then shot off. For the rest of the week almost every motorcyclist (and scooter rider) who I passed turned their heads to look. Especially amusing were the two Harley riders who steadfastly tried to ignore the Honda when they came alongside at the lights, but then kept sneaking a look when they thought I wasn't looking. Stopped in traffic in the city I even had a couple of cops leave off booking an unfortunate Pulsar to come over and have a chat about it.

Opinion on the looks was definitely divided right down the middle. The comments ranged from "amazingly cool looking bike" to "WTF is that ugly POS?" I must admit, the more I rode it, the more the science-fiction looks grew on me. I'm still not a fan of the exhaust but I can live with it – it does at least suit the bikes style.

It's a moderately good performer for what it is but could certainly use some more power. (Couldn't everything?) The 680cc V-twin engine is good in the Transalp; but with an extra 88kg to haul around its edge is rather blunted in the DN-01. Off the mark the auto transmission compensates a little, moving it away very quickly with no driveline snatch and then in both Drive and Sport modes making very smooth imperceptible changes.

In truth, the transmission is very nice indeed. I was somewhat cynical about the concept of an automatic transmission but very quickly warmed to it. After trying it in manual mode with the handle-bar mounted tiptonic type gear change a few times I always found myself reverting to the automatic modes. Commuting through the CBD and down crowded roads like Sydney Road and Lygon Street, the ability to not worry about changing down and always being in the correct gear for any circumstance is a huge advantage. I could concentrate on the traffic and not on the gearing. The long wheelbase gives the bike the ability to travel very slowly feet up and makes it an easy bike to filter on. It's surprisingly narrow for what seems like a large bike and the mirrors sit below and within the handlebars. In fact the mirrors are among the best I've seen on a bike - vibration free and placed low where your shoulders don't get in the way they give an excellent coverage.

Riding it in the MRA Toyrun contingent in the Myer Christmas Pageant was simplicity itself. I was able to cruise slowly and a lot more comfortably than any other bikes in the contingent. Comments from the crowd were overwhelmingly favourable. In fact if 10 year old boys or Star Wars fans are the intended market Honda has it exactly right. It attracted a lot of attention from the Star Wars contingent in the pageant – especially from the Imperial Storm Troopers.



Now if only it came in white...

Membership

Mick Doedee has picked up the membership secretary (elect) position since Anton stepped down recently. A large thank you must go to Anton for the effort he has put in over the years and very best wishes for his health.

We will be changing our memberships to a single date method – all memberships will be due on the same date each year. This will make it easier for managing renewals and for following up those members who forget to renew.

It will mean a slight loss of income for the first year as we intend to make sure no member is disadvantaged so some members could find themselves with several months free membership when they renew.

The notices will be accompanied by a significant membership drive where we will be contacting previous members and asking them to renew. More on this to follow.



The cowl at the front is just about perfect for my height and strangely the wind flow felt very similar to my old R65LS BMW with its angled front. The seat was comfortable and the stepped pillion gave a little lower back support which improved the comfort immensely. The wide seat and the tank shape were a minor issue and I found that the shape of the tank precluded getting a good grip with my knees when cornering a little harder. It just never felt quite right, even though I was able to touch the floorboards occasionally. The floorboards too had an unexpected advantage – when riding in Melbourne's unusually heavy rain that week, they blocked a lot of the water that comes off the road and my feet stayed significantly drier.

Thinking about a comparison with other bikes I've ridden there's nothing recent that compares – the main one that springs to mind is the R850C BMW cruiser. It has a similar "feel" in many respects. The performance envelope didn't seem much different (although it's a few years since I rode an R850) and the 850 was also a bike you could hop on and instantly feel at home. The R850 and R1200 Beemer cruisers are probably also the only other bikes that attract the same sort of divided opinions on the looks. Both bikes have a similar feel of quality and solidity about them.

Cornering required some reasonable counter steering effort. With the 1610mm wheelbase, it's not a VTR250 to be flicked from side to side. However for the style of bike it is it handled well and very predictably. I took road surfaces in its stride (especially speed humps) and soaked up uneven surfaces quite well. Riding quickly is aided by the brakes. The linked ABS brakes are more than capable of stopping the bike very quickly and they work at least as good as any of the ABS equipped BMWs I've ridden.

I have to admit if I was in the market for a brand new bike it would certainly be on my list to consider. More luggage capacity would be good – while Honda has none, there's a range of options available from Givi (UK). It might be a background of riding BMWs or it might just be the fact that I'm getting older and softer but I rather fancy the idea of a few more options such as Electronic Cruise Control, heated grips and so forth.

Tony Ellis



The 2008 31st MRA Toy Run arriving in Williamstown



Upcoming Events

MRA (Vic) AGM.

Bells Hotel 13th March

Ride for the Hills

5th April – St Kilda to TBA

(See article)

E.J Whitten Prostate Cancer Ride

22nd February - Ride leaves from James Squire Brewery (Mel 2E C5) at 11:00am. with breakfast available from 8:30am & proceeds via

MRAVic Website

www.mravic.org.au

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Membership Application

I would like to become a member of the MRA and gain a voice government and decision makers will hear

Name

Address

Phone Postcode

Mobile

Email

DOB Occupation

Renewal Member no.

Payment method Cheque Money Order

Please make payable to "MRA Australia"

Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Card Number

Cardholder name

Expiry Date

Signature