



## 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

Various Road Safe groups



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## VICTORIAN MOTORCYCLE ADVISORY COUNCIL

### Chairman's communiqué from 11 June 2009 meeting

I can continue to report good progress on a number of fronts on the VMAC work program.

#### ROAD SAFETY AND TRANSPORT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

VMAC is keenly anticipating Minister Pallas launching the new 5 year safety and transport strategic action plan underpinning forward investment in various measures to improve safety and access for powered two wheelers in Victoria.

#### WHERE YOU LOOK IS WHERE YOU GO – WYLIWYG

In 2002 the "Where You Look Is Where You Go" (WYLIWYG) concept was successfully trialled in the UK at a motorcycle blackspot. The proposal aims to reduce run off road crashes by providing riders with improved visual cues regarding the radius of curves. WYLIWYG visual cues guide riders through the curve by directing the gaze to the vanishing point of the curve. Maintaining a focus on the vanishing point is generally accepted as an important technique for maintaining positional awareness in a curve. The concept was also very well received at the National Forum in Canberra late in 2007.

VMAC has endorsed a trial and supporting research.

#### MOTORCYCLE GRADUATED LICENSING SCHEME (GLS)

VMAC was represented on a VicRoads workshop on the Motorcycle Graduated

## HOW THE MRA FOUND ITS "BEARING"

Many people might not be aware that the MRA owes its existence to a suggestion from "Ball Bearing", Secretary to the Melbourne chapter of the Hells Angels MC.

At Broadford in late 1977, Bearing made a suggestion that motorcyclists needed a lobby group, an organisation that would speak out on behalf of riders and represent them when dealing with the law-makers that seems so out-of-touch with the motorcycle community. He also recognised that members of a 'patch' club would not be able to do this due to the 'image' they had; it would have to be taken on by a group of independent riders.

Three riders were introduced to each other that day and took up the challenge. The first official meeting of the Motorcycle Riders' Association (MRA) was called in the Corner Hotel, St Kilda, in May 1978 with 16 members. The concept was to build an organisation that was accepted by all motorcyclists and strong enough to fight for their rights and safety.

The aims of the MRA were established then and have not changed; the promotion of:

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

In those early days, the running of the association was conducted without an office and communication was largely by word-of-mouth, particularly in Elizabeth Street on Saturday mornings, the only mailing address being a post office box and meetings were very public in hotels.

During 1979 the MRA was often in the media in Melbourne and more and more motorcyclists began contacting the MRA in Melbourne hoping to establish MRA's in their own area, both in rural Victoria and interstate. Over the next few years, branches started being established in other States and local 'Registers' were formed catering for the needs of riders outside of the capital cities. When I joined in 1983 there were more than 6000 members in Victoria, 10,000 nationally, with 40+ branches and registers including one in the UK.

Action taken by the MRA at this time was largely via articles in the media or by mass protests and rides. The government was forced to take notice. Riders were not happy and the MRA had united them.

Melbourne Branch had set up in a fantastic 3-story building at 184 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy with workshop facilities and recovery vehicle on-site. I miss those days and that building. In 1983 a \$10 annual fee entitled a member to the following services:

### **M.R.A. FIGHTING FUND**

Political representations regarding safety and motorcycle legislation is the main function of the M.R.A. i.e. to oversee motorcyclist's rights and work for a better and safer deal for motorcyclists.

### **M.R.A. DISCOUNTS**

A large number of motorcycle shops still offer genuine discounts to members on items sold or services provided. Shops displaying the M.R.A. DISCOUNT STICKER will give discounts on presentation of a current MRAVic MEMBERSHIP CARD. Check the links section for supporting resellers.

### **INFORMATION AND LEGAL SERVICE**

Information is available on all aspects of motorcycling by phoning, email, forums or writing (check the "contact us" section for details). Free legal advice used to be given to members. The MRAVic can also refer riders to solicitors experienced in motorcycling cases. Consumer protection information is also given.

### **SWAP MEET**

Swap meets used to be held annually to enable members to buy, sell or swap odd bits and pieces lying around, there is now a free wanted or for sale forum on the site.

### **BENT and BUCKLED BIKERS BUREAU (4 B's - now Riderdown)**

The 4B's visit injured riders in hospital and will help by arranging legal representation and organising insurance claims. They also provide some reading material, moral support, and keep bed ridden riders informed.

### **M.R.A. HOUSE**

M.R.A. members used to have their own meeting place which was available as a drop in centre to all members. Clubs wanting to use meeting halls were invited to do so.

### **SOCIAL FUNCTIONS**

Regular social functions are held for members and the motorcycle community in general. These used to include: THE HOWQUA RALLY (held annually), THE MOTORCYCLE EXHIBITION, FILM NIGHTS, PUB NIGHTS, BLOOD RUNS, and POKER RUNS. etc. Nowadays it includes the OZ GP Run, ToyRun, and support for the Pink Ribbon ride and Ride for the Hills. All members are sent details in the M.R.A. newsletter.

### **M.R.A. MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE**

M.R.A. Promotions even used to sell M.R.A. motorcycle insurance! Discounted to members of course.

### **THE NEWSLETTER (Riders Advocate)**

The newsletter is posted to every financial member with information of coming social events, reports from all sub-committees, financial statements, Register reports, the Presidents report, social and rally calendars, member discount resellers, an open forum letters section, stories and other input from members

Sounds too good to be true now doesn't it? The first to go was the bike recovery service; it went broke within a few years due to clients not paying accounts. Other services were also affected by availability of staff or funds but the MRA battled on with many wins for its members and riders in general.

The mid-eighties saw a national body formed with Hal Caston in the ACT as the first National President. Annual national gatherings were held for a few years but unfortunately differing agendas from state representatives saw the end of the national MRA by the early nineties and communication between the state branches became spasmodic following the collapse. Each state branch seemed to go its own way without much thought for what was happening nationally.

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A number of VMAC representatives expressed an underlying concern that the current system of licence graduation may be quite adequate – but that, if there is a weakness, it is that the oversight of providers of training and licensing needs to be strengthened to ensure that standards are maintained at high levels across the board.

A number of examples were given – with VicRoads senior officers agreeing to take on notice the extent to which oversight may need to be improved.

## **COMMUNITY POLICING AND EDUCATION PROJECT**

Superintendent Kevin Casey presented an update on the Community Policing and Education project. While still in its infancy, this project continues to bring exciting new information and practical advice to us all as policy advisors.

Feedback from both motorcyclists and the police officers carrying out the project continues to be very positive.

While it is difficult to translate enforcement data into crash risk trends for the general rider population, the results add considerably to our understanding of drink and drug riding and riding while unlicensed or unregistered. Further analysis of this and other data will be done as part of the evaluation of the Community Policing and Education project.

The most recent operation was conducted on the Great Ocean Road over the Queen's Birthday long weekend. Two hundred and six motorcycle riders were spoken to about motorcycle safety (fourteen offences issued). Six hundred and ninety four drivers were spoken to about driving practices which put motorcyclists at risk (sixty six offence notices issued - speed being the predominant offence).

The project, which is supported by the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council, is jointly funded by the Motorcycle Safety Levy and the Victoria Police, to help reinforce safety messages with riders and drivers and create a safer environment for all Victorian motorcycle and scooter riders.

## **MINISTERIAL REVIEW OF THE TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE STRUCTURE**

Minister Pallas has informed me that the Government is considering the establishment of an integrated transport advisory council to reflect the new integrated transport policy announced recently by the Victorian Government.

Before committing to the creation of a new council, a review is being undertaken of existing transport advisory bodies including VMAC. This will include consideration of how the concept might affect the work and nature of our work on VMAC. The review will ensure that the overall set of transport advisory bodies gives key stakeholders the opportunity to provide meaningful input and that Ministers, the Department of Transport and VicRoads receive quality advice on a range of transport matters. The review is being managed by VicRoads in collaboration with the Department of Transport.

The views and ideas of VMAC members and the organizations they represent will be sought on the concept as part of the process.

## **RETIREMENT OF RAY NEWLAND**

It is with some sadness, but also complete support and understanding, that I advise that Ray Newland has informed us that he will be retiring from his role with the FCAI in September 2009 and as such will be retiring from his position on VMAC. Ray is recovering well from a significant health incident late last year and I know it is time for him to "put the feet up a bit" and pull back from these roles.

Ray was one of the founding members of VMAC and his contribution to VMAC and motorcycle safety policy over a long career has been nothing short of incredible.

We will be farewell Ray in the appropriate manner at our August meeting – and in the meantime continue to wish him and Lyn well with his recovery.

*Neil O'Keefe VMAC Chairman*

The next meeting of VMAC is scheduled for Thursday 13 August 2009 at VicRoads.

## **NSW Bokie politics**

Sydney's other bokie war - not the bloody battle between rival gangs, but the one between motorcycle clubs and the State Government over anti-association gang laws - moves up a gear when the United Motorcycle Council releases a YouTube video arguing the bikies' case. It is titled "Defend your right to associate" and opens with a quote attributed to the former US attorney-general Ramsey Clark, who, it probably should be noted, helped defend Saddam Hussein.

The video features a parade of big men in leather comparing their treatment with German Jews under the Nuremberg association laws passed in 1935, and similar restrictions imposed under apartheid in South Africa. It ends with the clever tag line: "I thought I lived in a country where I wasn't discriminated against for the colour of my skin", spoken by a bokie from the Phoenix Motorcycle Club who slowly crossed his arms, revealing his tattooed "sleeves".

"Historically it has been shown that there are major flaws in these kinds of laws and governments haven't learned from that," said Margaret Lawson, a director of Cole Lawson Communications, which does public relations for the council. Just how the reference to Jews and the Nuremberg laws squares with the liberal use of Nazi symbols by bokie gang members - including the Nomads, whose patch features a swastika - is unclear.

You can also see the video at the United Motorcycle Council of NSW's website, [www.umcnsw.org](http://www.umcnsw.org).

Sean Nicholls and Emily Dunn

# SITUATION VACANT

## MRAVic Treasurer

Every so often in motorcycling one of those plum jobs comes up, great salary package, mobile phone, company car, nice office location etc., etc., well this one ain't it. The MRAVic is in desperate need of a treasurer as our incumbent treasurer is overseas with work quite a bit and is having to hang up the boots.

We can offer none of the above but your assistance with filling the position will be greatly appreciated by all members. What we can offer is all the assistance of our incumbent treasurer with the view to a changeover of the position at our upcoming AGM. Good with financials and comfortable with accounting procedures, is preferred. Contact the board if you'd be interested to join in the fun and take this on, we'd love to hear from you!

Whilst on the topic of MRAVic executive positions it should be noted that all the board positions will be up for grabs come the 2010 AGM. Rather than wait till then, we'd like to begin now with asking for members to put their hands up and show an interest in taking on a position and putting in some effort to help raise the issues that affect us as motorcyclists.

We would really like to see people interested in the position of Secretary so Tony can concentrate on his VMAC role and his health. John would love to have his weekends back and enjoy a less up front role so for anyone looking for the limelight in leadership, we'd like to hear from you now to being the nomination process for MRAVic President.



## President's Report July 2009

More than six months has elapsed since the final draft of the Powered Two Wheeler Transport and Safety Strategy was completed and passed to the Minister for Ports and Roads, Tim Pallas, for sign off and release. In that time the MRA has sought a release date, only to be met with hollow assurances and broken promises. This is something to which MRA members have contributed significantly and we are very disappointed in the lengthy delay.

It seems that riders remain "second class citizens" when we consider how we have been treated by the Brumby Government over the past year. It was made abundantly clear to me in January by senior Vic Roads management that motorcycles are considered a very small and almost insignificant part of the bigger picture. Yet, they constantly complain that we are over represented in the Road Toll. One is left to ask, "What more do we have to do to be given a fair go?" We only have to look at the considerable investment made on behalf of other Vulnerable Road Users to see that motorcycles and scooters are clearly considered second class. Millions of dollars are invested in facilitating the safety of other road users – yet motorcycle and scooter rider safety gets no funding (apart from TAC advertising) and relies solely on our own contributions through the "safety" levy.

Recently, the MRA sought to highlight this matter by seeking to implement "Vulnerable Road User" lanes. This was done to highlight an issue overlooked by government policy that fails to recognize that motorcycles are being placed at risk by not being properly considered in the allocation of road space. The MRA has in fact identified several bicycle paths whose positioning actually increases the danger for motorcycles.

Road space sharing and allocation between Human Powered Transport (HPT) and Powered Two Wheeled (PTW) modes may on the surface appear well defined. However, beneath the surface lies a safety problem that is yet to be properly addressed by Vic Roads. Presently road space allocation is neither rational or defensible. Based on the balance between risk, space and sharing there has been no criteria established to determine what space the two Vulnerable User Groups, comprising HPT and PTW, should be allocated and whether there is any feasibility in allowing these two groups to share certain road space.

Hopefully, things will change in the future. One can only hope that by applying continual pressure that the MRA will force a change in attitude by government towards a more balanced policy that places motorcycles on an even playing field with all other Vulnerable Road Users.

*John Karmouche*  
MRAVic President



## Snug in a Bus

It's winter. It's July. And the MRA Membership Secretary, who, as I start to write this, is also currently the acting newsletter editor, has looked me fair in the eye and stated his need for an article. Such is life sometimes.

The problem is what to write about, given that it is July, it is winter, that Mick has an expectant and stern eye on me, and the pressure is on. This is something to idle on while idling in peak hour. Not one to lane split, or traffic filter, come peak hour at the north east end of town, I often find myself opposite the exhaust pipes of the common domestic variety bus. Lots of them head down Victoria Parade and trundle onto the Eastern Freeway. Diesel driven I guess, given the lumps from the exhaust fumes that stick in the throat.

On the bike, miserable, I ponder, peering around in the cold and damp night, and spy next to me the warm looking and oddly lit crowded interior of a bus. Condensation trickles down the inside of the windows, with people strap-hanging with one hand, while reading a book in the other and people in seats, looking ahead. No-one inside is gazing out. It is as though the interior of the bus is a world in its own right.

My fortunes change a few days later. My public transport of choice is a bus. So, now the shoe is on the other foot.

Inside the bus I acknowledge there is a lot going on: passengers coming and going, settling in and hanging on; too-loud one-sided phone conversations; the radio station the bus driver is tuned in to and the surreal nature of the blue lighting and what it does to our complexions, and colours, and the idle thought about who all these people are and where have they come from (apart from the bus stop) and where are we all going. Most are enveloped in thought.

It is a bad night weather and traffic wise. For me, tonight, there is the novelty of warm and dry hands, and not ending the day peeling off wet gloves and dealing with dye-streaked skin. There's no need for waterproofs tonight, so no moaning about rain dribbling through worn-out overpants and running down the legs and pooling into bike boots, soaking socks and freezing feet. There's no condensation fogging glasses, nor the inside of the visor. There's no grime or sludge kicking up from the road and smearing the visor, my glasses, face and no stinging in the eyes. Snug in a bus.

Unlike most of the bus passengers, I find the night outside more interesting, and peer out into "out there". The traffic slides over the slick roads, the light from street lights and headlights fracture on the wet roads, and there is a hiss from vehicle wheels kicking up spray into the night. Traffic light colours also reflect intermittently as fractured red, orange and green lightning strikes into the black of the wet bitumen. The rain streaks down the bus windows, and inside the windows fog up, and demist briefly when the bus stops and doors open. It is difficult to assess the mood and thoughts of motorcycle riders out there; the occasional glimpse of a face not hidden by their visor reveals absolute concentration.

The manoeuvrability of the bus in the hands of the driver is awesome, and their traffic filtering skills are remarkable. I am also impressed with their alertness to and awareness of other road users, particularly the most vulnerable; pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

So, it's a few hundred words later. It is still July. It is still winter. Is there a point to this article apart from improving the Membership Secretary's mood? I did learn that a day ticket costs the same as a week's worth of petrol for the Hornet! And that life is as much about change as it is about routine, whether on a motorbike closeted in clothing leaking like a sieve in the rain, or snug in a bus. And, while I have been writing this article, Mick has found a new newsletter editor (well done, Mick).

Footnote: The membership secretary actually asked for an article with an update of my RoadSafe activities: Three projects are underway, including auditing recent road safety audits, and reviewing and analysing statistics. It is heavy going, and theory laden with recommendations and outcomes some way off.

*Wendy Taylor*

## Motorcycles in Bus Lanes

Following the Minister for Transport's announcement that Springvale Road is to have a vehicle lane replaced by a bus lane in either direction, the Motorcycle Riders Association (Victoria) has called on the Minister for Transport to ensure that motorcycles will be permitted to use these lanes.



MRA(Vic) President John Karmouche pointed out that in the UK and Europe, NSW and the ACT motorcycles are permitted to use bus lanes similar to the proposed Springvale Road lanes. There has been a drop in crash rates for motorcycles and no conflicts have arisen.

Mr Karmouche went on to say today that riders have been waiting for nearly nine months for the new Powered Two Wheeler Transport and Safety Strategy, which hopefully will address issues such as use of road space. He called on the Minister for Ports and Road Tim Pallas to release this strategy as soon as possible.



## Contact the MRAVic

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Patron: Professor Marcus Wigan, FACS, FInstP, FICE,  
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### MRAVic Board members

President: John Karmouche  
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Vice President: Grant Delahoy  
Secretary: Tony Ellis  
Treasurer: Rik van Zuylenkom  
Membership Secretary: Mick Doedee  
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Ordinary Board Members: Wendy Taylor

### Resource Committee

Merchandise Officer: Kim Davies  
Riderdown Chief Facilitator: Mick Dabbs  
(www.4bs.org.au)  
Road Safety Reference Group Rep: Wendy Taylor  
Blood Challenge Co-ordinator: John Karmouche  
Newsletter Editor: Barry Marks  
VMAC Rep and AMC Delegate: Tony Ellis

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**WORK**  
This is why we do it

## Taking a Scooter on the Icicle Ride

For those of you who have never heard of it, the BMW Motorcycle Club of Victoria has, for the past 29 years, run a carefully managed piece of masochism called the Icicle Ride.

Gathering about 150 idiot riders, it involves a midnight to dawn 300 kilometres plus ride through some of the chillier parts of this Garden State. A stop for hot soup and another stop for coffee do ease the pain a little. Having done a half-dozen Icicle Rides in the past and after a two year break (due more to ill-health than common sense) I had a major piece of brain-fade and decided I'd do it again this year.

Given that all my previous rides have been on BMWs I decided I wanted to do something a little different this time. Living in Brunswick, the natural home of the scooter, I thought it might be interesting to take outside its comfort zone to see how it went. I approached fellow VMAC member and General Manager of Select Scootas (formerly Bolwell), Hollie Black. Hollie offered up a SYM Firenze 250 scooter. Picking it up from their Carrum Downs HQ and riding it the 50 odd kilometres back to Brunswick I had a good introduction. Starting off with a little bit of trepidation since I haven't put any really long distances on a scooter for a while I settled into it pretty quickly. Only once did I manage to scare myself – coming up to a set of lights I forgot and pulled in the clutch. Unfortunately I'd forgotten that it's not a clutch – it's the lever for the highly effective rear brake – and so I locked up the rear wheel; something that almost every motorcycle rider does at least once when they hop on an automatic scooter.

Fortunately it's pretty easy to ride and despite the fact that it rained almost all the way I arrived home very dry thanks to the excellent weather protection. The optional large screen was very effective at keeping off the rain. However the fact that the screen is large and you look through it, rather than over it, meant that visibility became somewhat limited when it got wet. One of only two minor issues I had with the scooter.



*The Scooter in its natural habitat.*



Riding it around for the next day or so to get used to it I was struck again by the manoeuvrability that you have with an automatic scooter. As I found with the last automatic I rode, the Honda DN-01, not having to worry about changing gear means you can concentrate on the traffic and take full advantage of any gaps that open up.

Come the Saturday night I set off with a friend of mine who'd ridden his R1200 BMW down from Queensland to take part for a third time. All went well until I stopped for fuel and the second minor issue arose. Ten minutes later we were still trying to open the fuel cap. Picture the scene – two motorcyclists with around eighty years riding experience between them trying to open the fuel cap on a scooter. As it turns out it's more a feature of rider stupidity than design. Just as I was about to suggest to Peter that he go on without me the cap popped open. It's all in how you turn the key.

Riding on down the freeway to the start point at Little River I was impressed by the quality of the headlights. The brightness and spread (especially with the fog lights on) were as good as many of the bikes I've ridden over the years. The scooter sat very happily on the 100 km/hr speed limit with plenty to spare.

From that point on the scooter behaved flawlessly. Although I had to keep up with bikes of four and five times its capacity it was never disgraced. It never fell far behind and occasionally on corners I even needed to back off to avoid following too closely.

Cornering was very good – bearing in mind the nature of the beast. While it did move about a little on seriously bumpy corners (of which there were many) I never felt insecure. The brakes were extraordinarily good; much to the discomfiture of David who was behind me for the second leg. At the second stop he asked if I had a problem as I seemed to braking before every corner. Of course being an automatic there's a serious lack of engine braking and where he was merely changing down, I needed to brake. The only real discomfort was not being able to take my weight on the pegs on the corrugations, so my backside took an occasional impact.

The first leg ran up through the Brisbane ranges, though Meredith to Inverleigh where the soup stop was. Not being sure about the range of the scooter I stopped for the optional fuel stop on the way out (I needn't have worried) and then went on to Winchelsea, by devious routes to Deans Marsh and the back of Anglesea through Torquay to Grovedale (near Waurin Ponds) or the coffee and main fuel stop.

The final stage was supposed to take us back through the Brisbane Ranges again near Meredith, Steiglitz and Staughton Vale to finish in Melton. Unfortunately the ride leader who we were following managed to get lost and we overshot the turn into Robbs Road and ended up as a separate little pack of five riders.



*Yours truly at 3am*

*Continued on page 8.*

The following are extracts from an email by the Chair of VMA to members talking about accountability etc.

*...Someone has decided to institute a campaign around a nonsense proposition and the Ombudsman - in response to the request being made of him - will come to exactly this conclusion.*

I have given 3 interviews to media on the subject – **the one to the Herald Sun was completely misreported – despite my providing a full account as outlined below the reporter chose to run the line that VMA does not report and is secretive about spending priorities – needless to say I won't be speaking to the Sun again!**

The facts are that VMA does not have access to or control over any funds as stated in the letter to the Ombudsman to which you referred. Nor is the administration or activities of VMA (regional forums/Expo stand etc) funded in any way from the levy.

*VMA is an advisory body* which makes recommendations on how levy (and other) funds should be applied in the fields we cover. Therefore there is no financial accountability applicable to VMA within the public audit protocols and it is wrong of anybody to claim that there is.

VMA does however have a duty to consider and report to the Minister on matters covered under its' brief. This is done on a regular basis by provision of the meeting agenda documents (the full kit) and the minutes of meetings issued later.

This information is supplemented by meetings between the Minister and myself, meetings the Minister has with other parties attending VMA ( e.g. rider groups), attendance by the Minister or Adviser ( or both) generally at least once per year and ongoing briefings from his department.

*Neil O'Keefe  
Chairman*

The full article can be found at;  
[http://www.mravic.org.au/forum/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?forum=3&post\\_id=12870#forumpost12870](http://www.mravic.org.au/forum/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?forum=3&post_id=12870#forumpost12870)

Quote.  
 Sexe, (French poet)  
 Circa 1960.  
 She/He, who gives up  
 Motorcycles, gives up Youth  
 and accepts the inevitable  
 decline that comes with age.



Watch out – John upgraded  
 the Harley...



Does this bike make my butt  
 look fat?  
 Um...

Fortunately we managed to self-navigate and some spirited riding saw us arrive in Melton before all the breakfast had gone and well before the last few stragglers arrived. It also meant that we arrived in time for the awards. Netrider (again) took out the award for the most members participating and my mate Peter took out the Achievement Award for longest distance and, much to his disgust, the Oldest Participant Award (at 63). Despite the fact that there were a lot of ancient Ulyssians there, none of them would admit to their age. While they say women are reluctant to admit their age, these guys were even worse.

The night was remarkably mild for an Icicle Ride. Although the remarkable amount of protection offered by the scooter undoubtedly shielded me from any wind-chill, I never felt uncomfortably cold and ended the night feeling relatively fresh. I felt at least as fresh as I did on my old ex-police K series and I never really missed the heated grips.

As for the scooter, it performed a treat. There were times I would have liked more performance (although that's true no matter what you ride) but it never felt inadequate and always did what was asked of it. Back in town in its natural environment it was excellent and, like all scooters, a heap of fun. My daughter has always bagged automatic transmissions but took it for a ride. She came back from a ride in town saying she'd be happy to own one. Given the sporting nature of her riding style that's praise indeed.

On the ride it attracted a lot of attention. While not the only scooter there, it was the smallest. There were a couple of other maxi-scooters, including a 650 Suzuki Burgman with sidecar. I received favourable comments from several Harley riders who I was following during the early part of the second leg. They overtook me expecting me to be slow but found that I was able to happily keep up for most of the leg. They were a bit surprised that while they lost me on the straights, I was able to catch them in the corners.

Over the 350km or so of the ride I averaged 4 litres/100 kilometres (25km/l); an excellent result given my weight and the fact that it was being ridden somewhat harder than it would normally be. I would expect that more normal riding would reduce this considerably.

The reliability and solidity of the scooter was impressive. Especially when backed by a 4 year warranty, a huge number of dealers and an impressive supply of parts available to them in the Select warehouse at Carrum Downs. Probably the only thing I didn't like was the screen – I found it awkward to look through it and had real visibility problems in the wet in town. That's a pretty subjective thing however. I know there are a lot of people who prefer to look through rather than over and it doesn't seem to bother most people.

Would I recommend the Firenze? Yes! It would make an excellent scooter for anyone who wants to ride, mainly who wants to do any freeway or distance riding. The ability to happily cruise at 110+ on a freeway and the carrying capacity make it something that's not just an inner city ride but also ideal for a country trip. At around six and a half thousand dollars and with a 4 year warranty it makes quite good value.

Would I recommend the Icicle Ride? Yes! Next year is the 30<sup>th</sup> Icicle Ride – it would be good to see a few more of our members there. It was a bit disappointing not to see any of the usual crowd there. Although two guys I used to work with in Gippsland impressed by riding the 150km down, doing the ride and immediately riding the 150km back.

*Bikes at the final coffee stop.*



*Tony Ellis*



## Are you Injured?

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.

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GRACE PLACENCIO DAVIES & COMPANY  
LAWYERS



## Lobbying

Recent lobbying on behalf of members includes:

- \* Dangerous bicycle lane placement for PTW.
- \* Ongoing lobbying State and Federal ministers for use of road side barriers that are more rider friendly than the dangerous Wire Rope Barriers (WRB).
- \* Ongoing efforts to retain Victoria's footpath parking for all motorcycles and scooters (Powered Two Wheel vehicles).
- \* Ongoing lobbying for the removal of the unfair "levy".
- \* Seeking increased rider safety funding, transparent "Levy" expenditure and better driver awareness education in the Community Policing and Education policy.
- \* Successful lobbying for PTW to be included as part of the overall Victorian Transport Strategy.
- \* Discouraging use of mobile phones by drivers in moving vehicles
- \* Successful protests against lane splitting legislation.
- \* Successful protest against the reintroduction of Front mounted License plates for PTW and the ongoing lobbying against electronic ID tagging.
- \* Lobbying for shared use of restricted lanes by motorcyclists (bus lanes) and built up zone areas.
- \* Removing the levy on 2nd and subsequent bikes if you own more than one motorcycle

## Poor planning places riders in jeopardy

The Motorcycle Riders Association of Victoria MRA (Vic) today called for the placement of some bicycle lanes to be reviewed due to the dangers posed to powered two wheelers (PTW) by the poor planning and lack of consultation involved.

**Bicycle Lanes a Hazard to Motorcycles.** Following the recent call for shared Vulnerable Road User Lanes and the apparent rejection by government of this proposal, MRA (Vic) President John Karmouche called on the Minister for Ports and Roads, Tim Pallas, to take action to ensure that the safety of PTW riders would not be jeopardised by future bicycle only lanes.

Mr. Karmouche stated that in many places, bicycle lanes have been implemented in such a way as to remove options for motorcycle and scooter riders. There are numerous occasions where the proliferation of bicycle lanes has forced powered two wheelers onto the tram lines if they are to legally ride on that stretch of road. "While this is less of an issue for larger motorcycles, smaller motorcycles and scooters find tramlines slippery and they can be quite disconcerting and dangerous to ride on, especially on wet days" claimed Mr. Karmouche.

**Remove Dangerous Lanes.** Mr. Karmouche, arguing for the possible removal of some bicycle lanes, cited Church Street in Richmond and Brunswick Street in Fitzroy as just two of the many roads where the narrowing of available roadway to install bicycle lanes has forced riders over on to the slippery and often poorly maintained tram lines.

*Continued on page 10.*



## Editors Note

Hello fellow riders,  
My name is Barry Marks  
and I am the new editor.  
If you have any interesting  
ride experiences or  
anything you wish to write  
an article about please  
send them to me at  
[marksfam90@optusnet.com.au](mailto:marksfam90@optusnet.com.au)

Looking forward to hearing  
from you.

Ride safely,

Baz.



I DO MY OWN STUNTS

## Membership secretary report

Well it's me again, by now  
everyone should have a nice  
new shiny membership card  
with an expiry date of Feb 20th  
the year AFTER your renewal  
was due, this is to bring  
everyone in line with the new  
membership system as  
mentioned in the previous  
issue of our newsletter.

The date has been chosen so  
as to allow us to give plenty of  
notice and send nomination  
forms etc for the AGM which is  
due by end of March annually.

If for some reason you haven't  
received the card or received a  
wrong card/renewal date,  
please email/call me and I'll  
endeavour to rectify it asap.

Mick Doedee  
[membershipsecretary@mravic.org.au](mailto:membershipsecretary@mravic.org.au)  
Ph 0411 183 258

*From page 9.*

He went on to say that if sharing lanes is not to be an option and the government is genuinely serious about safety then there is an urgent need for a review of existing lanes and for consultation with the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council prior to implementing any new on-road bicycle lanes.

**Official Neglect.** Currently not only are motorcycle and scooter riders excluded from their fair share of road space, they are forced to pay **all** the costs of any safety initiatives (with the exception of some TAC advertising) through the "safety" levy.

Unlike other categories of road users such as cyclists or heavy vehicles, **no** money except levy money is budgeted for the improvement of motorcycle safety. This is truly unconscionable and inexcusable. The government is so unconcerned about this category of legitimate road user that the new 5 year Powered Two Wheeler safety and transport strategic action plan is now six months overdue with still no indication of a release date.

### **For further information contact:**

John Karmouche, MRA (Vic) President – (03) 9877 3004

Email: [president@mravic.org.au](mailto:president@mravic.org.au)

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## *(From page 2)* How the MRA Found its Bearing

Melbourne Branch had taken over the shop that had been Bulley's leather store at 440 Elizabeth Street by this time, and following the collapse of the national body, incorporated the name Motorcycle Riders' Association Australia (MRAA). This was seen as arrogant by the other states and they described the actions of Melbourne president as egotistical when he then named himself national president.

Victoria had had the largest membership but the replacing of the Registers with 'Area Representatives' in 1992 caused an adverse reaction with the MRA members. Area Reps were businesses or individuals who were appointed to sell MRA memberships. A joining fee of \$5 was introduced which was kept by the Area Rep for their service. The membership began to decline as the registers felt disenfranchised and isolated.

The nineties was a turbulent period for the MRA in Melbourne. They were now representing riders on government committees and had many successes but their resources were stretched thin. The shop was understaffed and often closed while the rent increased. Some poor legal decisions added hefty costs. Meetings often degenerated into yelling matches and the public image of the MRA waned.

The shop was finally closed and everything moved to 22 Ross Street, South Melbourne. Eventually the rent even there became too much and in 2005 the MRA moved out of inner Melbourne for a brief period at Quist Court in Dandenong. Yet the MRA has struggled on, every year since 1978 there has been a Toy Run, every summer a Blood Challenge, every year there has been a Phillip Island GP there has been a GP Run, every time a silly law has been introduced for motorcycles or riders, the MRA has fought it.

Without the MRA, riders today would have to: display front number plates on their bikes, pay a separate licence fee, not park on the footpath, not go over 80 kph when carrying a pillion, ride with their headlight on at all times, not have access to LAMS, etc, etc.

In recent years the MRA in Melbourne has been attempting to repair bridges burnt of the past. The name is now MRA Vic and there are many new faces. The original web site <http://www.mraa.org.au> is now a pointer site to other states as "MOTORCYCLE RIDER ASSOCIATIONS OF AUSTRALIA". With advent of other social rider networking sites, the MRVic now works with all the rider clubs and networks returning to its roots as a lobby organisation for rider rights.

*DJ McCarthy 2009*



## GP Run Marshals

For those that have been hiding under a rock for the last millennium or so, there has been a Moto GP at Phillip Island and the MRA and the City of Casey have combined annually to put on the annual GP Run. This takes off from Cranbourne to the Island every year on the Saturday prior to the race.

Part of our gig is we allocate 2 people to the organising committee. We lend our name to it and above all, we always have a presence there in the form of an information stand and more importantly marshals.

This year I've got the gig of trying to organise marshals for the run. If you can be in Cranbourne on Oct 17th and guarantee me your presence on the day for 4 hours or so I can promise you at the very least, a free breakfast and a t-shirt.

I'll provide you with a vest on the day and allocate you a spot. You simply direct traffic so that we have no bikes crashing into each other and no pedestrians run over.

The gig will be from approx. 7:30am-11am or thereabouts. You're more than welcome to tag along for the run, but you'll be tacking on to the end of the ride. All marshals are to assemble in the car park behind Kelly's Hotel.

If you can offer your presence, I'd love to hear from you, either via email to [membershipsecretary@mrav.org.au](mailto:membershipsecretary@mrav.org.au)

or

ph. 0411 183 258.

*Thanks  
Mick Doedee  
Membership secretary.*

## The black ribbon

Few experiences in life can compare with the sense of exhilaration and freedom to be found roaring down a wide open road in top gear, with nothing more between yourself and death than a suit of leather armour and a fibreglass helmet.

Such is the realm of the motorbike rider. It can almost impart a sense of fleeting immortality and of tempting the gods, before dismounting and becoming a frail human being once more.

The adrenalin rush as the rider battles the road and sometimes the beast whose back he rides; forcing foreign wills to bend to his own. Bone, sinews, muscle and steel against nature, taunting her to strike him down - and sometimes she does.....

The black ribbon of tar snakes around mountains, plunges into valleys, dissects the open plain and carpets the maze of the cities. Wherever the black serpent roams so can the black leather clad worshipper on his metal steed; on a pilgrimage only the road cleric controls.

Should the pilgrim fail in courage, skill or resolve, his harsh black mistress/goddess will pluck his life away and leave nothing but a broken rag doll behind.

When I enter this realm - that is when the lifeblood flowing through my veins pulses most strongly.

Anon

## Letter from the Premier

To: Mr Philip Gassap  
Chairman Ride for the Hills Bushfire Victims Relief 2009

Dear Mr Cassap,

### **SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF THE BUSHFIRE TRAGEDY**

I am writing to thank Ride for the Hills Bushfire Victims Relief 2009, on behalf of all Victorians, for the generous support you have provided to those individuals and communities affected by the devastating fires which have ravaged our State.

Many areas have been impacted by the bushfires which have swept across Victoria, taking lives and destroying homes and, in some cases, whole communities. Now many Victorian families are facing the daunting task of rebuilding their lives after devastating loss, and they will need all the help they can get.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund has been established by the Victorian Government in partnership with the Commonwealth Government and the Red Cross. The Fund is being overseen by an independent advisory panel of community leaders including the Red Cross, ensuring contributions are directed to those most affected. The generous and swift support offered by your recent mass motorcycle ride is a testament to Australians' strength and unity in times of crisis, and will be remembered by all Victorians.

I know that all donations will be gratefully received by those who have lost so much, and I thank you for offering to contribute so generously in these already difficult times.

Once again I thank your charity organization for giving so generously.

Yours sincerely

*Hon John Brumby MP  
Premier of Victoria  
20/5/2009*



**MRAVic Website**  
[www.mravic.org.au](http://www.mravic.org.au)

Make this your new home page with the latest Motorcycling news, calendar and forums to keep you informed, in touch and enjoying the most of your right to ride!

- 29 August** Dikes on bikes charity event  
New Hart Centre opening
- 4 September** **MRAVic Quarterly General Meeting**
- 18-20 September** 25th Black Knight Rally
- 3,4 October** Bendigo Motorcycle Expo
- 10 October** Golden Dragon Rally
- 17 October** MRAVic Cranbourne OZ GP Run
- 1 November** Pink Ribbon Motorcycle Ride 2009
- 27 November** **MRAVic Quarterly General Meeting**
- 13 December** MRAVic Annual Toy Run
- 7 February 2010** Ride for the Hills
- 12 March 2010** **MRAVic Annual General Meeting**

All meetings will be held at Bells hotel unless otherwise notified, our website will be updated with any changes should they come to pass.



PO Box 12905  
 A'Beckett Street  
 Melbourne VIC 3000  
 Phone 03 9877 3004  
[www.mravic.org.au](http://www.mravic.org.au)

## Membership Application

I would like to become a member of the MRA for \$25 per annum 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