

Date:

Tuesday, 19 February 2008 6:36:36 PM

Wednesday, February 20, 2008.

MEDIA RELEASE

Motorcycles & scooters across Australia may soon be tracked, tolled and fined using satellite technology.

The Roads Modal Group (RMG) meets in Sydney today. The RMG is a committee of transport department CEOs. It advises the Standing Committee on Transport (SCoT) which is the national council of transport ministers. The national introduction of "front identifiers" for bikes will be on the agenda. VicRoads CEO Gary Liddle will represent Victoria.

The front ID proposal sent shock waves through the motorcycle community and industry. It was developed as a policy statement, in secret, by the Pedestrian Council of Australia (PCA). The PCA policy went to VicRoads C 2005. But VicRoads leaked. That led to a draft regulatory impact statement (RIS) on front ID for bikes. The PCA represents its' appointed directors, Harold Scrubby and speed camera promoter, Ray Shuey.

Calls for front identifiers for bikes come after calls for all vehicles to be fitted with satellite-linked, speed-control devices. Such devices are being trialled by the Victorian Police Commissioner, Christine Nixon, and Roads Minister, Tim Pallas MP. Other devices are being trialled in the UK. The technology exists.

More and more Australians are asking how far should we let surveillance technology intrude into our lives. In a free country just restrictions must balance liberties to maintain quality of life.

Front number plates for motorcycles were banned, mainly for safety reasons, decades ago. Perhaps two or three small countries still require them. No manufacturer in the world builds machines with provision

for front plates or stickers. Many of us see front plates or stickers as furphies. The real aim is seen as being to use road riders as a proving ground for the equipment which would then be introduced to all vehicles. The revenue from remote fining could be extraordinary. The profits to suppliers of these devices could be very satisfactory to those companies.

Big Brother will gain massive amounts of data on the movements of private citizens while road safety gains are doubtful. The implications of compulsory electronic tagging of a section of society may please some police but they are frightening to most normal Australians.

The leaked VicRoads RIS has many in the motorcycle community very worried. Over a million law-abiding Australians are licenced to ride motorcycles and scooters. Their choice of transport is legitimate. The number of road riders is steadily growing as car running costs climb, urban streets are jammed and climate change leads many to seek cleaner alternatives to the single-occupant car.

The current push for front ID for bikes came from police around 2000. The motorcycle community has been unfairly villified. The expert body set up to advise Ministers in Melbourne on matters motorcycling is the Victorian Motorcycle Advisory Council (VMAC). VMAC was bypassed. Normal road safety channels were ignored. PCA Directors Scrubby and Shuey did not consult rider or industry representatives at VMAC, the NSW Motorcycle Council or anyone else, about their policy statement.

VicRoads did not consult anyone about the RIS. Apparently last Thursday's VMAC meeting at VicRoads in Kew was the scene of some angry debate.

And Scrubby, Shuey and VicRoads should have consulted VMAC because both documents are based on selected data and embarrassingly bad science. Mention of liability in case of injury caused by front ID seems to have been missed. Both documents ignore the people the front ID proposal will effect. That's bad for democracy and that's bad for Australia. Who will be next in line for

restrictive legislation, developed in secret, with no reference to stakeholders, 4 wheel drivers, sports car owners, power boat operators or light

aircraft pilots?

For more information on the campaign to electronically tag road riders, send me an email.

Damien Codognotto OAM

Independent Lobbyist.

Melbourne.

MRA Life Member.

Ulysses Club 21208.

Mobile: 0419 846 855.