



G.P.O. Box 1895, Adelaide, SA 5001  
Mobile 0421 289 714. Fax (08) 8201 5086  
Email: harald.lindemann@flinders.edu.au



18 May 2013

An open letter to the Motorcycling Public of South Australia regarding the SA TOY RUN

Dear Riders

In 2012 the MRASA Toy Run Committee agreed to charge riders who wanted to be part of the festivities at the end of the Toy Run ride at Callington Oval. This was the first time that a fee had ever been charged and while most riders had no problem with this a degree of negative feedback has generated that the Toy Run Committee felt needed to be answered. What follows is essentially the text of a letter I sent to a disgruntled rider who has decided with other like-minded riders to hold their own Toy Run in 2013. Here I attempt to explain our decision.

*I have to say at the outset, that most of the members of the Toy Run Committee share your concerns about the introduction of a fee and worry about a backlash from riders regarding participating in future Toy Runs. We expected something like your reaction from some riders. Nevertheless, the Committee has agreed to continue with the oval entrance fee for 2013.*

*I don't want you to think that your concerns were not taken seriously. On the contrary. Our discussion was a continuation of discussions that were held throughout 2012 and culminated in the MRA Toy Run in its current configuration. The fee is not simply a cash grab by the MRASA. It is a way of making sure that the Toy Run survives in today's economic climate. If we could do it some other way we would. We just saw no viable alternative. We are also very aware of the traditions of the Toy Run and its 'ownership' by South Australian riders.*

*Some background:*

*The Toy Run is put on by the Motorcycle Riders' Association of South Australia. All riders are welcome to attend, whatever they ride and whatever club they belong to. It is not limited to members of the MRASA. In fact, over 95% of the riders attending are non-members of the MRASA. Members of the MRASA establish the Toy Run Committee every year and spend the bulk of their voluntary time contribution to the Association in organising the Toy Run from April through to December every year.*

*The Toy Run was developed keeping in mind the three main aims of the MRASA -*

- *To strive for fair and sensible legislation*
- *To improve road safety*
- *To promote a positive image for motorcyclists*

*Again, the work done in pursuit of these aims is done on behalf of all motorcyclists in South Australia. Why? Because it has to be done to ensure that riders get a fair deal from the government when passing legislation and from the general public in how riders are treated on the road. The MRASA makes sure that State and Federal laws relating to road safety and motorcycling get the benefit of the opinion of motorcyclists when they are being formulated. We are listened to by the pollies because we are recognised as being experts in this field. Without the MRASA and other likeminded organisations interstate the riders of South Australia would still be limited to 40kph in town and 80kph in the country if they rode with a pillion or the non-skid paint for road markings would never have been developed and used in South Australia, to mention a couple of our successes.*

*The Toy Run was seen as an integral part of all three of these aims. Essentially, the first two aims were met by running the Toy Run as a fundraiser – largely through donations – for the MRA so that we could send people to meetings and conferences where we could influence policy makers and to have motorcycling policies professionally developed. The third was met by the Toy Run to get as many riders as possible to support a charity event to collect toys and funds for disadvantaged families at Christmas while at the same time letting the general public know who we really are; their own sons and daughters, friends and neighbors.*

*In the early days this was fairly easy as the Toy Run cost virtually nothing to put on and our demands for funds were not great, but as the MRASA and the Toy Run developed, things changed. The organisation became more professional in its core work and the Toy Run grew year by year. You will have noticed the growth in numbers attending the Toy Run every year. Every venue we have used, we have outgrown. We used to gather in the tiny car park at the end of Anzac Highway, Glenelg. Now even using the highway itself and side streets is insufficient. We used to use Woodside Oval and then Hanhdorf Oval as an end to the run but these and Glenelg got too crowded and ultimately too difficult for safe traffic management.*

*While the Toy Run was expanding it also became increasingly more expensive to put on and became subject to more and more restrictions and demands of Council and Government departmental regulations. To cater for these demands usually meant spending money for permits, security, signage, insurance and various facilities required for large events.*

*An example is toilets. At Woodside we used the oval toilets and they, although pretty grotty at the time, were sufficient. At Hahndorf we used the toilets that were built for when the Schutzenfest was held there, but more recently as a condition of the liquor license for the day we had to hire some portaloos as well. At Callington we now provide banks of toilets. We didn't bother with toilets at Glenelg as the traders there were happy enough to open their doors for the riders. As the number swelled the Council asked us to hire some portaloos to place out on the grass and now at Victoria Park we are paying for the hire and cleaning of the public toilets for the Sunday morning while the riders gather for the run.*

*From spending nothing on toilet facilities we now spend nearly \$4,000 for a necessary service to riders. Without these services the Toy Run would be shut*

*down. This scenario is repeated with other expenses to the point where it costs around \$24,000 to put on the Toy Run, and this is expected to continue to rise. It would cost more but many people and businesses donate time, in-kind help or provide sponsorship for the event because they support the work of the MRASA and support the Toy Run.*

*This money has to be found. In the past it was provided through donations on the day, through sponsorship and also through site fees on the day but these are all becoming ever more difficult to obtain. We have been lucky enough to have had sponsorship from the Motor Accident Commission over the last few years but we know that this will not be ongoing. A number of motorcycle traders no longer attend the Toy Run because it is too difficult to get staff for the day. They all want to ride in the Run. Added to this is the considerable pressure that the Toy Run Committee is under to provide fee-free or discount sites for the day from clubs and community groups which see the Toy Run as a way to raise funds for themselves.*

*There have been times in the past when the Toy Run has made a loss and Association members' funds have been used to underwrite the event. This is not a desirable state of affairs, particularly in the long term and especially when we consider the number of non-member riders and members of the non-riding public who attend the event.*

*In making the big change to charge for entrance to the oval festivities we recognise that South Australian riders, who have made this event their own, have different ways of celebrating the Toy Run.*

- *There are those who just want to go on the Ride – they treat it as just another weekend run and peel off at or before Callington to spend the day elsewhere. They tend not to bring a toy.*
- *There are those who want to donate a toy or two but don't really want to spend the day at the oval. They have other plans and they have always just dropped off their donations and left. For these riders we have provided a 'drop and go' facility at both entrances to Callington Oval and for 2013 we have decided, after listening to riders' suggestions, to provide sales of Toy Run badges at the 'drop and go' spots for those who want a commemorative badge.*
- *Then there are those who want to be part of the whole event, at Victoria Park, on the Ride and at Callington Oval. These riders will continue to be supported in the way they expect.*

*All of these riders are catered for, whether or not they provide a toy or donation, and all are part of the expenses required to make the day a success.*

*We all want the Toy Run to continue, and we want it to continue so that riders have an enjoyable day and are able to provide toys and funds for Vinnies to distribute, but these days without a consistent income from the event to cover costs, we could not hold it. The \$5 entrance fee is a modest amount to cover costs and to make sure that the work of the MRASA continues. Most other community events charge a lot more. It was \$10 to get into the Gawler Swap Meet last year. I know that many riders also pay to buy toys to donate and we and the Vinnies appreciate it. You are right, it is about the charity, but it is also about the work that the MRASA does on*

*behalf of riders all year long, and it is also about ensuring that this important event for riders and South Australia does not fail.*

**If you have an interest in the continued success of the Toy Run here in South Australia – certainly the biggest Toy Run in Australia, if not elsewhere, please feel free to share this letter around to other riders who might have an interest in the issues raised. The more we talk about it the better we will all understand what is happening, and maybe we'll find a way to solve our problems.**

**Please email me if you have any queries or feedback on the Toy Run.**

**Ride Safe**

## Harald Lindemann

Harald Lindemann  
MRASA 2013 Toy Run Coordinator  
toyrun@mrasa.asn.au