

CENTRESTAND

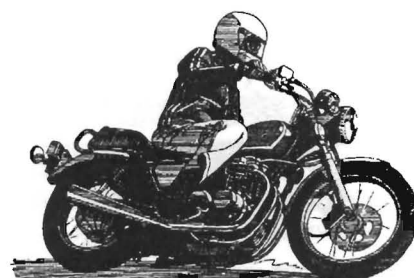
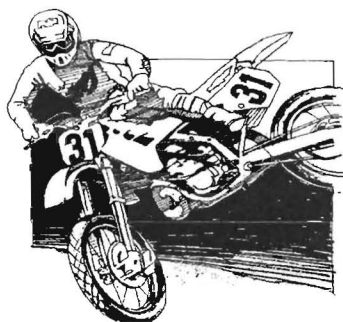
DECEMBER 2004



let those who ride decide

The journal of the Motorcycle Riders' Association of SA Inc. Printpost approved No. PP:530028/00014

**IN THIS ISSUE : TOY RUN REPORT, AMC REPORT, PHOTOS,
POCKET BIKES, AMC CONFERENCE, WORLD HEALTH DAY**



M.R.A.
MOTORCYCLE RIDERS'
ASSOCIATION OF SA INC.

VOL. 21 NO.1
December 2004

**Produced and published by the Motorcycle
 Riders' Association of South Australia Inc.**

PRINT POST APPROVAL PUBLICATION
 NO. PP: 530028/00014

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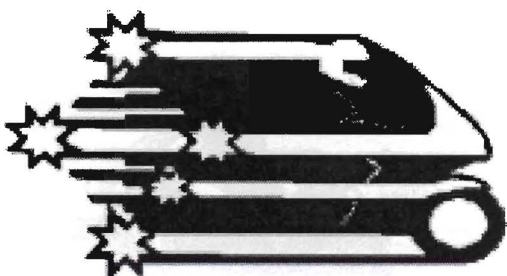
- Subscription gratis to members
- Contributions welcome
- Photographs welcome: colour or black-and-white
- Opinions: contributors' and advertisers' opinions and assertions do not necessarily reflect the views of the MRA
- Deadline: 1st of the month prior to publication

Printed by Digital Documents, 219 Gouger St,
 Adelaide 08 8211 9949

COVER PHOTO: 2003 TOY RUN
 Courtesy of the Adelaide Advertiser

**PUBLICATION : Quarterly - March, June,
 September, December**

**MRA SA Inc. is a member of the Australian
 Motorcycle Council (AMC)**



EDITORIAL

I'm on-side with *Advertiser* Motoring Editor Mike Duffy's comment, in his discussion of the high crash rate of young drivers, that, rather than making life more difficult and proscriptive for them, it would be far more effective to "improve their driver training, their continuing education of safety messages from school, from publicity campaigns, and at home from Mum and Dad as well as policing on the roads. Let's all drive sensibly, no matter what the engine size".

Mike's comment was provoked by the president of the SA Law Society criticising novice drivers' behaviour and suggesting that "probationary drivers should only be able to drive vehicles up to a maximum two-litre capacity", citing the 250cc learner motorcycle capacity limit to support his case.

Good for you, Mike. We motorcyclists have been advocating a move from the capacity limit to a power-to-weight ratio as a much more practical and realistic method of enhancing the safety of novice riders since the MRA began here in 1979.

(In fact, the MRA got formal rider training programs introduced in South Australia in 1987; before that, the MRA was the only organisation to provide novice rider training, which we ran at the Oaklands Park Driver Development Centre at a cost of, I think, \$5 a lesson.)

Over the same period of time we have also been arguing for better driver training, particularly with regard to motorcycle awareness training, better road safety education in schools (it couldn't be worse; there's still no formal program), broadscale and ongoing road safety publicity campaigns, and equitable consideration of the safety requirements of all road user groups.

We've always known we were on the right track, so it's heartening to see that others in the community, particularly those with some prominence such as Mike, have identified the same remedial mechanisms. Let's hope the snowball gets bigger and we see a real commitment to apply the public purse to these practical, albeit long-term, solutions.

By the way, quite a few members wanted details about the shoe pic on September cover of *Centrestand*. It was the promotional stunt of a Malaysian shoe company, street registrable, with lights in the heel and a 1000cc engine. Might be popular with the girls, but could be a bit unstable on the open road.

Ride on, read on, and write in **Peter Mount**

BEAUT SCOOPS

SA M/C Taskforce Pressured on FNP

Pressure has been applied to the South Australian Motorcycle Taskforce to include a recommendation for front numberplates in the SA Motorcycle Safety Strategy that was about to be released to the public for comment.

It is not clear at this time where the pressure came from, except that it was not Transport SA, which is opposed to the reintroduction of the devices for the same reasons as motorcyclists.

The Safety Strategy is a project initiated by motorcyclists for motorcyclists, and motorcycle organisations on the taskforce are outraged that an attempt should be made to undermine the purpose of the Strategy or usurp motorcyclists' control of the project.

Tas Rider Group Forging Ahead

The recently-formed (2003) Tasmanian Motorcycle Council (TMC), under the leadership of John Scheibl, has been invited by the Minister for Infrastructure, Bryan Green, to represent Tasmanian riders on the state's Road Safety Council.

Mr Green said, "With sixteen-year-olds two to three times more likely to have a crash than other newly-licensed riders, I am particularly committed to improving safety for young riders."

He said he has asked his department to look at better ways to train novice riders, and is seeking the views of motorcycle groups.

AMC members were unanimously supportive of the TMC's success in gaining a formal role in the state's safety agenda.

MRA 2004 26th TOY RUN
Sunday December 12

Leaves Anzac Highway Glenelg
11 a.m. sharp

suggestions for improvement within the field generally and their own demographic group in particular.

The purpose of the SA Chapter's dialogue sessions is to bring together organisations and individuals who are interested in discussing road safety related issues in an informal setting.

The sessions last about an hour-and-a-half and include a light lunch. Anyone interested should feel free to attend, and would be most welcome.

FIM Turns 100

This year, the Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) is celebrating its 100 years of existence in the same place it was born, Paris.

Much water has passed under the bridges of the Seine since that day when six motorcycle federations met and founded the organisation. It was created to settle disputes that had already appeared during the first races between different countries, such as the Paris-Madrid race of 1903.

It was also considered necessary to have an international body which could establish common rules and ensure they would be applied fairly across-the-board.

From the six founding nations, today there are 90 that manage thousands of national and international events, as well as World Championships in all motorcycling disciplines.

The FIM's role also includes, at an international level, facilitating relations between authorities and motorcycling bodies, and aspects linked to the production and circulation of motorcycles.

Tassie 250 Changes

Putting high-performance 250cc two-stroke motorcycles off-limits to learner riders is one of the key changes the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council (TMC) expects the state government to make to motorcycle regulations.

TMC spokesman Simon Hryczyszyn said experienced riders had long been recommending a power-to-weight limit instead of a capacity limit for learner riders, and that the move would be a positive step in road safety for that group.

Speedo Needles Needle Needlers

The federal government's Technical Liaison Group (TLG) which is responsible for establishing Australian Design Rules (and on which the AMC has representation), is examining speedometer needle accuracy and visibility.

Manufacturers claim the accuracy of speedos is +/- 3% at the time of manufacture, but that changes in tyre and wheel selection after assembly and distribution can alter this level of accuracy.

With the police in some states arguing for a 1 – 3 kph maximum tolerance in speed limit compliance, despite

the difficulty and impracticability of the manufacturers and Joe and Jenny Public complying, the needling needle accuracy issue is thought to be more a reflection of an enthusiasm for speed camera revenue than have any practical or safety-related merit.

WARNING

Windscreen pillars on several modern small cars can completely block the driver's view of a motorcyclist. Has that driver really seen you?

WORLD HEALTH DAY: Road Safety Is No Accident

The following are extracts from a publication entitled "Road Safety in Australia", compiled and edited by Joe Motha (who also chairs the Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee) and published by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

The World Health Organisation sponsors World Health Day (usually on April 7) each year to commemorate the anniversary of its founding in 1946. Each year the event focuses on a particular health issue and fosters awareness, understanding, discussion and debate on the issue. The event also mobilises action to address the issue through prevention or treatment. For the first time since the inaugural World Health Day in 1950, the day has been dedicated to road safety.

World Health Day attempts to involve a wide range of people at the local, national and international levels. These include health professionals, officials in government, industry and the international development community, and children. The slogan for World Health Day 2004 – *Road Safety Is No Accident* – suggests that road safety does not happen accidentally, but requires a deliberate attempt by governments and their many partners.

In 2001 WHO hosted a meeting of road safety experts from all regions of the world. The meeting developed a 5-year WHO strategy for road traffic injury prevention. The strategy has three objectives:

- to build better systems for gathering and reporting data on traffic injuries
- to make prevention of road traffic injuries a public health priority in all countries
- to advocate prevention and promote appropriate prevention strategies for road traffic injuries

Since this meeting, WHO has been involved in various collaborative initiatives to promote these objectives in low- and middle-income countries.

The global launch of World Health Day took place in Paris, France on April 7. The event included the release by WHO of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*. The report was jointly sponsored by WHO and the World Bank

and contains recommendations for the consideration of national governments.

Motorcycles *From Chapter 22*

Motorcyclists make up a large proportion of those killed and injured on the roads each year. In 2003, 189 riders were killed and in 2001, the latest year for which serious injury data are available, 4348 were seriously injured. Bikers make up around 14% of all people killed on the road and around 19% of those seriously injured each year.

Trends in motorcyclist deaths suggest improvements in rider safety have been lagging behind improvements for other road users. There has been little change in the number of motorcyclist deaths over the last ten years. In 1994 there were 190 deaths compared with 189 in 2003, and there was a significant increase in 2000 and 2002. In comparison, motor vehicle occupant deaths have been trending downwards, although there has been fluctuation in the numbers.

The decrease in motorcyclist deaths in 2003 (16% fewer than 2002) is encouraging although it will be some time before it can be known if this is the beginning of a downward trend or a temporary fluctuation. It is worth noting that the number of motorcyclist deaths in 2003 was still higher than the lowest figure for the decade to 2003 (176 in 1999).

Part of the reason for the lack of progress in reducing motorcyclist deaths may be the increased popularity of motorcycling. In the decade to 2003, the number of registered motorcycles increased by 29% - from 291,800 to 377,300. Over the same period, all other vehicles increased by 23% - from 1,069,200 to 1,316,300.

Continued on p.7

MRA CHRISTMAS DRINKS

**TO BE HELD AT THE GILLES PLAINS
AND HAMPSTEAD RSL, BENNET
AVENUE MANNINGHAM**

TIME : 7:30pm, Monday 20th December

**For Members and Friends. Come and have a chat
with the Committee and wind down before the
Christmas/New Year rush-around.**

**Supper will be served and the bar will be open
See you there!**

AMC CONFERENCE by Peter Mount

Further to the list of office bearers and brief outline of this year's Australian Motorcycle Council (AMC) Conference in the September issue of *Centrestand*, significant matters discussed at the conference are provided here for your consideration.

Rider Training

The national rider training and instructor accreditation proposal is still being pursued with determination by the AMC and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, despite a lack of support from individual state governments.

On the other hand, governments seem to think that poor training, or lack of training, of older motorcyclists accounts for an increase in crashes in that group.

In fact, although the number of older riders has increased by 58% in the last five years, the crash rate has not increased. Rather, riders over 40 have been travelling 17% further – that is, their exposure index has increased by 17% - while their actual crash rate has dropped by 16%.

The ACT government has listened to motorcyclists and introduced a Masters Course for riders coming back to motorcycling after an absence of some years. In other states this need is catered for by rider groups like the MRA and Ulysses, with little or no support from the government.



AMC Conference 2004 Delegates

Road Safety Barrier Systems

AMC member groups are pushing for double W-Beam (similar to that used at race tracks) at sites which are particularly hazardous for motorcyclists, to prevent them sliding underneath and breaking limbs or being decapitated.

Skiprail, a new product that would forever change the way a rider looked if they hit it, and which flies in the face of the current Standard, was introduced in NSW earlier this year and is now running rampant in WA. Watch for it in SA. (See *March Centrestand* for picture and comment...Ed.)

Wire Rope Safety Fence looks set for a long life in Australia, which is more than can be said for any motorcyclists who hit it. Apparently it is a statistical problem, in that there are not enough motorcycle deaths to justify not using it or removing existing installations.

By the way, it may be that Telstra is aiming for some plaudits for its non-discrimination policy in WA, unless the

credit should go to the government's road infrastructural regulatory body. It seems that all manner of road users, not just motorcyclists, may avail themselves of the opportunity to crash into telecommunications poles placed in very close proximity to the roadway, especially near roundabouts.

Special Rego

AMC members in each jurisdiction are examining the feasibility of special registration for motorcycle trailers, trikes and sidecars, any licensing requirements that may be appropriate, the use of helmets with the latter two, and the definitive age of "children", as this is not consistent throughout Australia

Front Numberplates

This issue just won't go away, even though, to some in government, and all motorcyclists, it is a furphy with little validity and no credibility.

In essence, it seems to be driven by people with no interest in or knowledge of motorcycles who claim to be arguing on grounds of social justice, even treatment of all road user groups, and road safety, while denying the real motives, those of maximising revenue and exercising control over a "nonconformist" group.

The only point of rationality in this bloody-minded debacle is that, through the AMC and its member groups lobbying strongly and persistently at government and related levels, the bureaucracy has more-or-less accepted the reasons why FNP's were scrapped in the first place, and are investigating alternative means of frontal identification.

Some authorities, however, such as the police, don't want to wait for technology to enable implementation of the idea, and want the plates back on now, even if they are steel with the potential to maim people.

VicRoads intends, or is in the process of, trialling on 300 motorbikes a decal with a mock-up fixture kit, but the AMC feels the project managers would be unlikely to find 300 bikes that would be representative of the large range of motorcycles available.

Motorcyclists believe that the wrong group is being targeted. Cameras on Victoria's Citylink annually miss out on identifying around 20,000 motorcycles for tolling revenue, yet over the same period don't ID 132,000 cars. WA claims to miss out on \$7.5m from motorcycles, but \$20m from cars. Queensland is waiting to see what the other states do. With the retirement from the SA police force of FNP's main protagonist the pressure for action in this state has diminished somewhat, but MRA SA will still have to maintain its vigilance.

The AMC believes FNP is a revenue rather than a safety issue, and has reconfirmed its policy that it is not opposed to frontal ID in principle, but is strongly opposed to the reintroduction of metal FNP's.

Daytime Running Lamps

Like FNP, daytime running lamps (DRLs) are again on the agenda in the light of a surge of research since the AMC had the Lights On legislation switched off in 1996.

Enlightening as this research is, however, it is tending to illuminate more one side of the issue than the other, with the potential to overshadow areas of concern to motorcyclists. Although we are all familiar with research which focuses on validating a predicted outcome, the bright side of this coin is identification that, if all vehicles have DRLs, riders could be lost in a sea of lights and hence lose the conspicuity advantage which the researchers/authorities are claiming justifies the proposal. However, Dr Allan Williams, of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, argues that this downside “may be more than offset by the benefit of early detection of approaching vehicles”.

On the other hand, Cairney and Styles (2003) of the Australian Road Research Board, have found “ample evidence that DRL will cause glare problems and mask vulnerable road users”, and that “the benefits [of DRL] were likely to be greatest during (if not confined to) periods of low ambient illumination. The road-using public may therefore be substantially correct in their scepticism regarding the effectiveness of full-time DRL obligations”. The public’s (read “motorcyclists’) view is further supported by recent motorcycle-specific DRL research in Tokyo.

The upshot of all this is that the AMC will maintain its opposition to DRLs while keeping a watching brief.

Women in Motorcycling

AMC research has identified two primary areas of concern to female riders:

- Protective clothing currently available does not generally fit women.
- Some women want female rider trainers and female-only training groups.

A few NSW training schools have women-only classes, but these are the only ones known in Australia at this time.

Motorcycle clothing manufacturers will be contacted accordingly. Support for action on this matter has been offered by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries.

Exhaust Noise

A new motor vehicle exhaust noise standard, ADR 83/00, will be introduced on January 1, 2005. For motorcycles, it will be based on a maximum “signature” test level of 92dB(A). This “signature” is the noise output of each individual make and model of bike, and will have a direct relationship to the noise produced in a real world “drive-by” situation, which is difficult to replicate in testing.

Transport SA is currently trialling noise cameras for application nationally, which are similar to speed cameras in operation (and consequences). They register the noise level of the passing vehicle and, if over the limit, take a picture. The triggering system for the “noise-cams” is still in the process of refinement, after which the whole shebang will be included in a Regulatory Impact Statement.

One wonders if the cameras will be set up to take a picture of the front of the vehicle.

ConCom

The AMC, through the ATSB Motorcycle Safety Consultative Committee (ConCom), has, with the support of the other motorcycle representatives, requested that the federal government consider a number of recommendations to facilitate progress in motorcycle safety, particularly:

- Direct funding of the AMC to enable delegates to attend non-government meetings such as those conducted by Standards Australia.
- Development of a national motorcycle safety strategy, including an emphasis on multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes in which the driver is at fault, and single vehicle motorcycle crashes, in which road environment is considered a significant factor.
- Making the AustRoads’ “Traffic Engineering Guidelines Part 15: Motorcycle Safety” freely available to all motorcycle organisations so that they are more easily able to raise relevant issues with local government and other bodies.

Further information on AMC matters can be obtained from the MRA’s AMC Delegate (and President), Sean McPherson.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Hello again folks! People say a change is as good as a holiday; well a new job with a decent wage and no stress is wonderful. 'Busa here I come!!!'

Something to think about - I was asked to join the Union at the new place of employment. I had no hesitation and it dawned on me that some motorcyclists out there will have the same result, yet they won't join the MRA. That saddens me a bit as aren't we a union of sorts protecting bikers' rights? Yet folks see us as unnecessary. I think protecting your lifestyle is pretty important. What do you reckon?

I would like to present a challenge to all our members out there in motorcycle-land to try and convince one person in 2005 to join the MRA. If we all pitch in we'll double our numbers. Let's make that a goal for next year!

The silly season is upon us once more and the fair weather lot are out in droves. Instead of riding on a few wet days to get used to how a bike reacts under uncertain conditions, they keep it all nice and pristine in the shed and when the sunshine comes out they take their pride and joy out and trowel it in good and properly.

Seriously, we have to take the road toll issue responsibly because if we don't we are not be going to be listened to by the government. We know from past results how difficult it can be.

On a brighter note the Toy Run is on the way. I am looking forward to another successful Run.

Bye for now. SAFE RIDING, and I hope the big guy in red brings what you asked for.

Continued From p.4

Motorcycle distance travelled increased from 981 million km in 1999 to 1,681 million km in 2002, an increase of 71%. However, the death rate for motorcyclists is still very high. Between 1998 and 2002, motorcyclists had a risk of death per 100 million km travelled of between 18 and 25 times that of motor vehicle occupants.

The evidence points to two major reasons why motorcyclists have such high death rates compared with other road users.

Risk-taking behaviour

Firstly, motorcyclists involved in fatal crashes are significantly more likely to have been involved in risky behaviour at the time of the crash than other drivers.

- 27% of riders were over the legal blood alcohol level compared with 19% of drivers
- 45% of riders were speeding or riding too fast for the conditions compared with 19% of drivers
- 21% of riders were unlicensed or held an inappropriate licence compared with 9% of drivers

Unprotected road users

Secondly, motorcyclists are unprotected. In the event of a crash they are more vulnerable to serious injury than motor vehicle occupants because, with the exception of a helmet, they do not have protection. Although this does not increase the overall number of crashes, it does increase their severity.

There has been a significant demographic shift among motorcycle riders in recent years. The popularity of motorcycling among older riders has been increasing. This has led to changes in the demographics of rider deaths.

In the 40+ age group, 22 riders died in 1994 compared with 54 in 2003. The 26 to 39 age group saw little change. Deaths in the 17 to 25 group declined from 45% of overall rider deaths to 26%. Increasingly, today's typical buyer is not the stereotypical over-enthusiastic young male or bearded biker but an affluent, professional male.

The number of women motorcyclists killed each year is relatively small – around 9% of all motorcycle deaths – and 8% seriously injured. Anecdotal evidence and an 8% increase in females gaining a motorcycle licence (if data in NSW is representative) suggest some increase in the popularity of motorcycling among women. However, the comparatively low number of deaths make it difficult to identify any trends.

There are some issues of contention in this chapter. Your comments are welcome, and may stimulate discussion for the March edition of Centrestand...Ed

Toy Run Update

By Paul Morgan – Toy Run Coordinator

It's here again. Get your bikes polished and decorate them with Christmas tinsel. Let's make this a really spectacular run for all the people lining the route.

The club leading the run will be Ulysses. The band this year is Marshal Madness. There will be a face painter, blow-up castle and merry-go-round for the kids. Plenty of food and drinks will be available. Santa and St. Vincent de Paul will be handing out balloons to the kids, big and small.

Run badges will be available at the MRA stock tent. Most of the bike dealers in Adelaide will be displaying their new models.

A few things to remember:

- **The Run is on Sunday, December 12.**
- The run starts at 11.00 a.m. sharp at the end of Anzac Highway, Glenelg (see map).
- Arrive early, before 10.30 a.m.
- Follow the instructions of the marshals and the police; they are there to make the run a safe one.
- Do not get in front of Santa; remember, this is a run, not a race.
- Once at the oval, follow the instructions of the police, SES and the marshals about where to park your bike. This way we will be able to get the thousands of bikes into the oval with little delay. *These people are there for your safety, so please follow their instructions and be patient.*
- Admission to the oval is a toy or gold coin donation. Bring a toy of reasonable value, particularly for older kids (12-16 years).
- If you tie a toy to your bike, make sure it is not touching the exhaust.

Thanks to our sponsors, The Mount Barker Council, the City of Holdfast Bay, Toll SPD and B&C Security Services. Thanks also to the SA Police Department, the Society of St Vincent de Paul whose help in organization will make this year's Toy Run a safe and memorable one.

SAMRATS NOTICE

LANGHORNE CREEK RUN

Saturday January 15th 2005

Meet at BP West Terrace 8:30-9:00 for coffee and munchies.
Ride departs 10:00am sharp.

THE ROUTE

Campbelltown-Aston-Uraidla-Oakbank-Hahndorf-Echunga-Meadows-Willunga-Mount Compass-Nankita- Ashbourne-Strathalbyn-Belvidere-Langhorne Creek

Free Ride! Come join the Fun!

For further information contact :
Matt 0431 683 130 or Bryan 0419 818 448
SAMRATS at www.mrasa.asn.au

Road Safety Issues.

By Leslie Dicker.

At the Annual General Meeting in September I took on the committee position of Road Safety Officer. I did so as I thought that because I'm attending the Motorcycle Taskforce meetings as the MRA's representative it would be appropriate that I hold that position in order to argue our case for the rights and safety of motorcyclists.

I intend to give regular reports in this column about the progress of the Motorcycle Taskforce as well as drawing notice to a lot of the problems that motorcyclists face on the roads today.

The Motorcycle Taskforce is currently drafting a policy document called "South Australian Motorcycle Safety Strategy 2004-2007". This document should benefit all motorcyclists by ensuring that the government of the day has a fixed policy on motorcycling. Hopefully this will mean that the previous habit of random activities generated by various pressure groups (not necessarily motorcyclists!) will cease and that governments will use a more rational approach to our problems.

I will not attempt to give a precis of this draft as it's too long and still subject to amendment; however, when complete it will be available to all. It should help us in future to approach governments with our problems, and know that we will get a fair hearing.

I recently bought the 6th edition of "The Driver's Handbook" in order to get up to speed on some of the changes that have been made to the road rules. I noted with interest that in this SA Government publication only three of the 116 pages refer to motorcycles! None of the illustrations giving examples of traffic situations contain motorcycles; however, some of those illustrations do show pushbikes!

On a number of rides I've noticed that many drivers on the open road have little or no idea of the correct way to merge when the left lane ends on a section of road that has an overtaking lane. One of the most common actions that drivers take is to speed up to well over the speed limit in order to prevent the vehicle ahead merging into the lane. Perhaps the next road safety campaign should be to emphasise to motorists the dangers of this habit.

The onset of the summer season will see many motorcyclists who use seasonal registration back on their machines, having not ridden since last summer. These riders need to ensure that their tyres are correctly inflated and have sufficient tread depth for safe riding. The motorcycle also needs to be

thoroughly checked over, paying attention to brakes, suspension, lights etc., as these things can deteriorate during a winter layoff.

Also, be aware that many of the roads in the Hills have had a change of speed limit as well as alterations to corners and surface conditions. Yes, the current speed limit chaos exists in the Hills as well as around the city. For example, if you ride through Gumeracha you will see that it is unsafe to go over the posted speed limit of 50 kph; however, riding on the same road through Mount Pleasant it is perfectly safe to do over 50 kph as the speed limit there is 60 kph!

I wish all motorcyclists seasons greetings and safe and pleasant riding in 2005, and hope to see all of you on the Toy Run.

o0o



WHO CARES ABOUT THE WIND IN YOUR HAIR?

REMEMBER THIS AT CHRISTMAS TIME

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of the northern winter, usually late November to mid-December. Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring.

Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, EVERY single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl.

We should've known... ONLY women would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost.

LOST MEMBERS If you know them please give us their new addresses.

Aaron Briggs, Peter Masters, Carl Kelly, Tony Collier, David Boyd,

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Motorcycle Riders' Association of South Australia Inc. took place on Monday 27th September at the Broadview RSL Hall

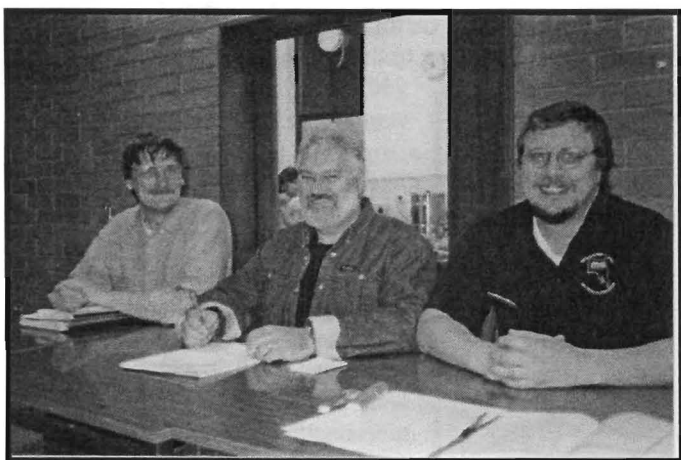
Ian "Milo" Marlow, one of the MRA's few life members (meaning he has been given "life" in the MRA and will not be permitted to escape) was co-opted as Returning Officer, declared all the elected positions of the Association vacant, and presided over the installation of the 2004 -2005 Committee

Notwithstanding the RSL Hall being double-booked, attending members participated enthusiastically in all the proceedings, particularly the post-AGM food.

A full list of the new committee can be found on p.11.

One of the items of business was brought up by Greg Stevens of the Mid-North Register. Greg has been a General Committee member for the past year and has regularly made the trek from Snowtown to Adelaide to attend meetings. He suggested that the Registers be provided with membership positions on the Committee. It would be more relevant for the Registers to be directly represented at the Committee level, would enable more people to be involved in the Committee and would improve communication between the Committee and the Registers.

There was no dissent for this idea so it was agreed that the Committee would consult with the Registers on this idea with the view, if they approve, to include it as a Constitutional change for the next AGM.



The Three Wizened Monkeys : l/r Harald (ex-prez). Milo (im-prezzed) and Sean (prez-ent)

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Les Dicker has been a member of the MRA for yonks and has always been available to help out when we needed him. If he's not due at a rally or race meeting then we can always count on Les to run important errands for the MRA (especially now that he is retired

and the rest of us have to plough under massa's yoke for a few more years. Les received a Certificate of Appreciation from his comrades at the MRA and the first ever MRA watch (not yet for sale through the usual retail outlets).



Sean presenting Les with his certificate and watch

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Harald Lindemann

I am pleased to report that after a few years of declining membership that the membership of the MRA has got to the 400 mark again. Slowly but surely motorcyclists are recognizing the MRA as a group that can represent them in the community and to the pollies. This may not seem a lot compared to the 24,000 motorcycles registered in SA but it is certainly representative of the bikers in SA. Congratulations to all of you. You can really claim to belong to an elite group. Now go out and get a mate to join up

As the new Membership Secretary I have had a few teething problems, starting with software that I didn't have and that then didn't work properly on my computer. So I have a small backlog of membership cards to send out. If you don't get yours by the Toy Run then come and see me in the MRA tent I will probably have it with me.

If your membership is due soon then why not renew early at the Toy Run. We can now give you your new membership card on the spot.

Cheers, see you there.

MONKEY BUSINESS ON BIKES OR SCOOTIN' ABOUT

If you haven't seen them then you must have heard about them. They're called 'pocket bikes' or 'monkey bikes' or even 'mini-motorcycles'. These are 1/6th scale race replica motorcycles with a 49cc two stroke petrol engine. They are quite capable of reaching up to 50kph (some of them 70kph flat out) on the road. The question is, "Are they a motorcycling concern?" The answer to that begs the answers to some other questions like; Are they motorcycles or toys? How do they figure in the road rules? How will the police treat them? A lot of the discussion that I have seen has been heavily negative towards them so I'd like to give a perspective to dwell upon.

Most riders of scooters need a motorcycle licence in order to ride. In four states in Australia (including SA) scooters with a capacity of under 50cc can be ridden without a bike licence. A car licence is sufficient. Most scooters and mopeds would fall into this category. These machines need to be roadworthy and registerable (ie ADRs are applicable).

Now we already know that motorcycle riders need to go through specific theory and practical training in road sense which car drivers do not get. This training has been recognised to be of value in making safer riders and cutting the road toll for motorcyclists. It is of concern to us that people are allowed to ride motorised two wheeled vehicles without the proper training. Because you know what will happen. They will have accidents, sometimes because they don't have the road sense needed for motorcycle riding. When they have an accident, the stats will be applied to motorcycle accidents and will make us all look bad. This could also be used to show that training doesn't work. This would probably not be too bad if the scooters had the power delivery and the speed of bicycles on the road, then they could be treated as bicycles.

So are these pocket bikes scooters? No they are not, because they are incapable of being road registered. Therefore they are toys and should be treated as such. Just as a motorised scooter (skateboard with a t-bar) are toys and not motor vehicles.

For those silly enough to ride them on the road they will find that they are generally unstable because of passenger weight distribution and sensitivity to road surfaces, slow in relation to the rest of the traffic, probably under-braked for the speeds of which they are capable, and hard to see, particularly side-on, being so low.



In Victoria, there has been at least one serious traffic accident involving a 'pocket bike' and fines have been handed out to people riding them on public roads.

But what makes them different to bicycles with motors, skateboards with motors, inline skates or gophers? I really don't know. Skateboards with motors can putt along at a fair rate and they do this both on the roads and footpaths, with seeming impunity. How are they different to pocket bikes, other than they don't look like motorcycles? One of the problems is that they are still too new to be properly recognised by and defined in the national road rules and most state traffic regulations.

What is clear is that they are very expensive (\$800-1000), very dangerous toys if used improperly. They don't belong on the roads (or footpaths). They are being sold without regard to safety and mostly not even by bike shops. In Adelaide, toy stores and auto parts businesses are selling two sizes of bikes as part of their Christmas sales. Will they also be giving warnings on the legalities involved

and the safety issues?

These bikes are a craze, which will end, but probably not before a few people are hurt. When you think about it, there is really nowhere that they can be legally ridden except on private property with the permission of the landowner, which really puts limits on their use. I bet people aren't told this when they buy them.

The other side of the coin is that pocket bikes can be a lot of fun and where they are used responsibly, ie on tracks and under supervision, they are a great advertising asset for motorcycling. Just plug into the internet and search on 'pocket bikes' and you will find organisations that cater for the most fun you can have without putting yourself at risk of being minused by a tin top. A pocket bike on the road gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "Sorry mate, I didn't see you". Only you may not be in any condition to hear.



The MRA supports responsible recreational motorcycling and though pocket bikes aren't motorcycles in the legal sense, if it looks like a motorcycle, sounds like a motorcycle and smells like a motorcycle, it's hard not to call it a motorcycle. At least the public will call it a motorcycle and judge us by how it is used, good and bad. So let's support their use in safe responsible areas

and maybe some of the guys and girls using them will graduate to being responsible motorcyclists on the roads.

If anyone out there has information on pocket bike clubs and track days, let us know and we will spread the word.

Harald Lindemann

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