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Doug Parkinson, MLC
Chairman, Tasmanian Road Safety
Council

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Draft Motorcycle Safety Strategy Released

A comprehensive draft strategy aimed at reducing the disproportionate number of motorcyclists being killed and injured on Tasmanian roads has been handed to the State Government.

Doug Parkinson, MLC, the Chairman of the Tasmanian Road Safety Council, which has been investigating the issue since early this year, said the draft document was the culmination of one of the most extensive road safety consultations ever conducted in the State.

"More than 360 people completed a survey seeking their views on issues such as educational activities to reduce crashes, improving road conditions, motorcycle rider training and licensing of motorcycle riders.

"There has also been extensive consultation with the motorcycle community and other key stakeholders and research into recent national and international developments in motorcycle safety," Mr Parkinson said.

"In recent years there has been a tragic increase in the number of deaths and serious injuries to Tasmanian motorcycle riders, although it is not a problem confined to Tasmania.

"Last year motorcycle riders accounted for 28% of fatalities and 17% of all serious injuries on Tasmanian roads, and this trend has continued in 2003 with motorcycle riders to date accounting for 31% of fatalities and 19% of all serious injuries."

Among the strategies recommended in the report are:

- Work with key road safety partners such as local government and the Tasmanian Road Safety Task Force to raise awareness of motorcycle safety for all road users;
- Improve opportunities for meaningful involvement of the Tasmanian motorcycle community in decision-making processes relating to motorcycle safety by broadening the membership of the Tasmanian Road Safety Council to include a representative of the motorcycle community;
- Continue to seal shoulders on all new roads;
- Expand the use of high skid resistant water-based paint for road markings in rural areas on state controlled roads to reduce danger to motorcycle riders;

- Promote and expand the use of temperature activated flashing lights on signs to warn of frost and ice on the road;
- Support the compulsory carriage of appropriate front identification for motorcycles at a national level;
- Legislate the use of daytime running lights to make riders more visible to other road users;
- Increase the minimum age for entry to the learner period to 17 years and introduce a minimum six-month learner licence period and the use of logbooks to record a minimum 50 hours riding during the learner period;
- Introduce a power to weight ratio of 150 kilowatt per tonne combined with a maximum engine capacity of 660 cubic capacity for novice riders; and
- Promote voluntary participation in refresher training courses for older and returning riders.

Referring to the suggested raising of the minimum age for learners to 17, Mr Parkinson said that Tasmanian riders aged 16 years continued to be over represented in crashes.

"The Road Safety Council sees a definite benefit in delaying the age at which a rider can go solo to allow for the development of a greater level of maturity and better cognitive skills," he said.

"As well, raising the age to 17 will ensure that the age at which car drivers and motorcycle riders can drive or ride solo on the road is consistent. Based on this rationale Victoria has set the minimum age for motorcycle learners at 18."

The Minister for Infrastructure, Jim Cox, who received the draft report on behalf of the State Government, commended the Road Safety Council on the thoroughness of its work.

"The Government has a duty to do all it can to reduce the incidence of death and injury among Tasmanian motorcycle riders, who form one of our most vulnerable road user groups.

"This draft strategy will go a long way to helping us make a positive difference in this area."

Mr Cox said that a copy of the draft strategy would be available on his Department's website at www.transport.tas.gov.au/safety/index.html to allow interested members of the community who have not had the opportunity to comment to express their views over the next 14 days.

He said he expected to release the final strategy before Christmas.

This initiative is part of the State Government's commitment to Progressing Tasmania Together Goal 13.1: Have a system of government that is open, seeks and listens to people's views and ideas and uses them in decision making at all levels.

Further information: Tasmanian Government Communications Office

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