

Road Safety Inquiry

Monday, 12 July 2021

My full name is Terence Patrick McCarthy. I am a member of the Australian College of Road Safety. I am also the Tasmanian Representative of the Ulysses Club Inc Road Safety Committee.

I am a former member of the Tasmania Police Force attaining the rank of Senior Sergeant before resigning and pursuing other career options. Whilst a member I served in a multitude of areas but spent nearly 10 years within what was then known as "Traffic Control". Whilst stationed within that area I was a motorcycle officer and qualified breath analysis operator. At that time "Traffic Control" was a dedicated Police District with a Superintendent (now Commander) and offices in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport.

I cannot comment on the other areas outside of Hobart but a typical working day at Traffic Control, Hobart had a Sergeant supervisor, a Duty car, an Assist Duty Car, a Bridge Control motorcycle officer, a Tasman Highway patrol motorcycle officer, a Brooker Highway motorcycle patrol, a Sandy Bay Road patrol motorcycle officer, and a city patrol motorcycle officer working these areas until peak hour finished, then the motorcycle officers would be assigned other duties until conclusion of their shift. The same would occur between 4pm and 12mn on weekdays.

These officers were not restricted in police duties, but their primary focus was on traffic matters both crashes and prevention and enforcement of traffic laws. The Police now have far fewer motorcycle patrols in contemporary times due to their relative expense however they were once recognised as being one of the most visible of police traffic resources. Everyone sees a police motorcycle and recognises that it is present for one purpose.

Police motorcycles can attend to crash scenes more quickly than other resources and evaluate injured and get traffic moving to allow other resources to get on site. I am disillusioned about the length of time taken for emergency services to get onto the scene and start treating injured. I would personally like to see some paramedics on motorcycles to get to difficult scenes quickly and provide essential care in a timely fashion.

In very broad terms, I am not convinced that the Police have sufficient resources to have the average motorist conscious of the fact that if they disobey traffic laws they will be caught. A common enforcement situation in other States where the per capita motor fatality rate is lower than Tasmania is that they have a dedicated road enforcement component. A previous Commissioner of Police in Tasmania had the view that all uniform police were traffic police, but the reality is those officers are far too busy with other duties and many are simply unskilled in proper traffic supervision duties. There are now so many demands on police resources it is perhaps difficult to provide the budget needed to have a dedicated and effective highway patrol.

I am a licensed motorcycle trainer working casually for AJL the contracted provider of learner and novice rider licensing programs. I also operate my own business "Right To Ride" which I established to provide further and more advanced training to novice or long term riders.

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I believe Tasmania has embarked on a very successful program of teaching new motorcycle/scooter riders road-craft and techniques useful in enhancing their safety. I am really concerned that long term or returning riders are not being given the same opportunity. Currently long term or returning riders have a subsidy paid by the MAIB to attend training. The course these riders attend is a Check Ride. This course is in actual fact utilised to check on the progress of learners prior to them being assessed for Provisional licences. In that 4 hours it is revisiting and revising much of what they learned on their Pre Learners Course. Someone who has not had that training needs a lot of assistance to be brought up to speed to the detriment of the others attending. It is my view that a dedicated course be established to better address the needs of long term or returning riders.

Providing education and information to road users is one of the key inputs to the Safe System principles of road safety. It would be over 2 if not 3 years ago that I suggested to the Road Safety Advisory Committee that consideration should be made to educating road users in a relatively inexpensive and positive way. My idea was to provide some form of discount for licence renewals where if a licence holder renewed for five years and they passed the road rules knowledge test during the period after receiving their renewal then they obtained a five year renewal for the cost of three years.

The advantage of this process was to bring long term licence holders up to speed with current road rules rather than they rely on knowledge they had when they originally obtained their licence. If they passed the test they received the discount, if not they could of course still renew. This appeared to be favourably received and was referred to the relevant area, but I have not been able to elicit any response since.

Red light camera technology is non-existent in Tasmania. As traffic control signals have changed to deal with the movement of higher volumes of traffic the propensity of road users who consider it appropriate to disobey amber and red traffic control signals seems to have increased. It is the writer's view that installations should be put in place at high risk intersections and the detection equipment be moved from location to location. This will enhance the enforcement of road users behaviour because they simply will not know where the equipment is operating.

Finally, I will comment on the requirement introduced in Tasmania to slow to 40km/h in the vicinity of emergency vehicles at crash and other incident scenes. Essentially, I agree with making it as safe as possible for emergency service workers, but I have some basic problems with the law as it currently stands. I am concerned that a vehicle slowing rapidly to 40km/h may in fact cause a crash and there were instances of this occurring in NSW after the requirement was introduced in that jurisdiction. Consequentially NSW fine-tuned its legislation. Where the speed limit is 90km/h or greater traffic must slow to a speed that is reasonable for the circumstances and stay as far away as safely possible. Where the speed limit is 80km/h or less they must still slow to 40km/h. I cannot understand why Tasmania cannot have the same legislation.



T. P. McCarthy

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Thursday, 26 August 2021

My name is Terence McCarthy, this is the second submission I have made to this inquiry. The first dated 12 July 2021.

As previously advised, I am a member of the Australian College of Road Safety and the Tasmanian representative of the Ulysses Club Inc Road Safety Committee. I am also the President of the Hobart Branch of the Ulysses Club Inc. As a qualified motorcycle trainer for AJL Training Pty Ltd, I am actively involved in the training of novice motorcyclists. I also operate my own motorcycle training business Right to Ride which targets those who already hold a motorcycle licence. I am relatively satisfied with the process the State has adopted in training new motorcyclists and whilst I am not privy to the latest statistics consider, that it is likely the rate of serious injury claims emanating from novice riders is in fact reducing. I am not sure the statistics would be the same for people that have held their motorcycle licences long term.

My focus of this submission is making road users safer. I note this was a key direction in the *Towards Zero Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2017-2026*.

Safe Road Users

1. *Improve the Graduated Licensing System to reduce casualties for 17-25 year olds.*
2. *Introduce safety initiatives to reduce motorcyclist serious casualties.*
3. *Encourage safe road user behaviour through education and enforcement.*
4. *Reduce driver inattention and distraction to reduce serious casualties.*

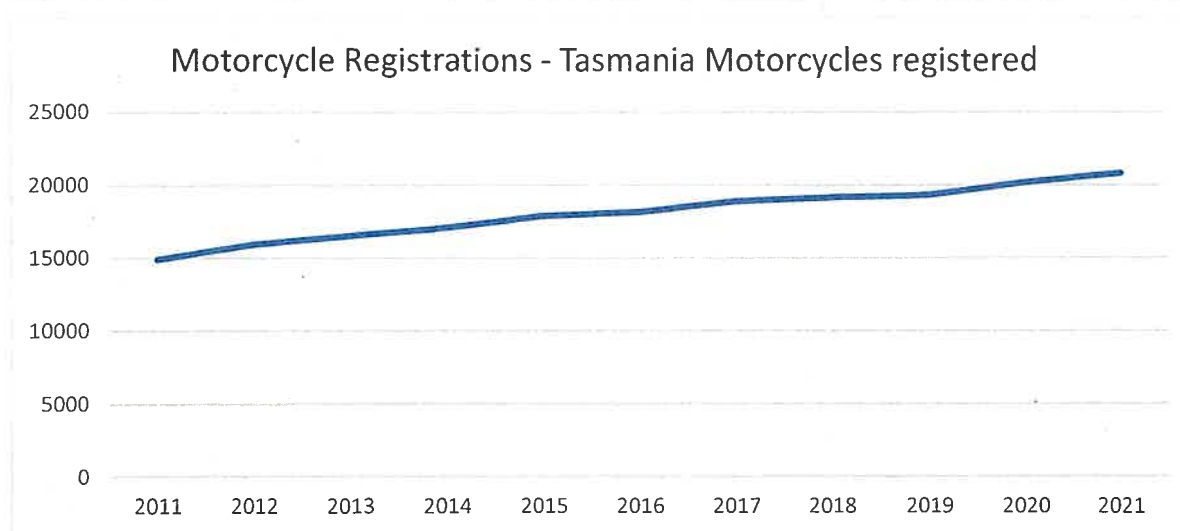
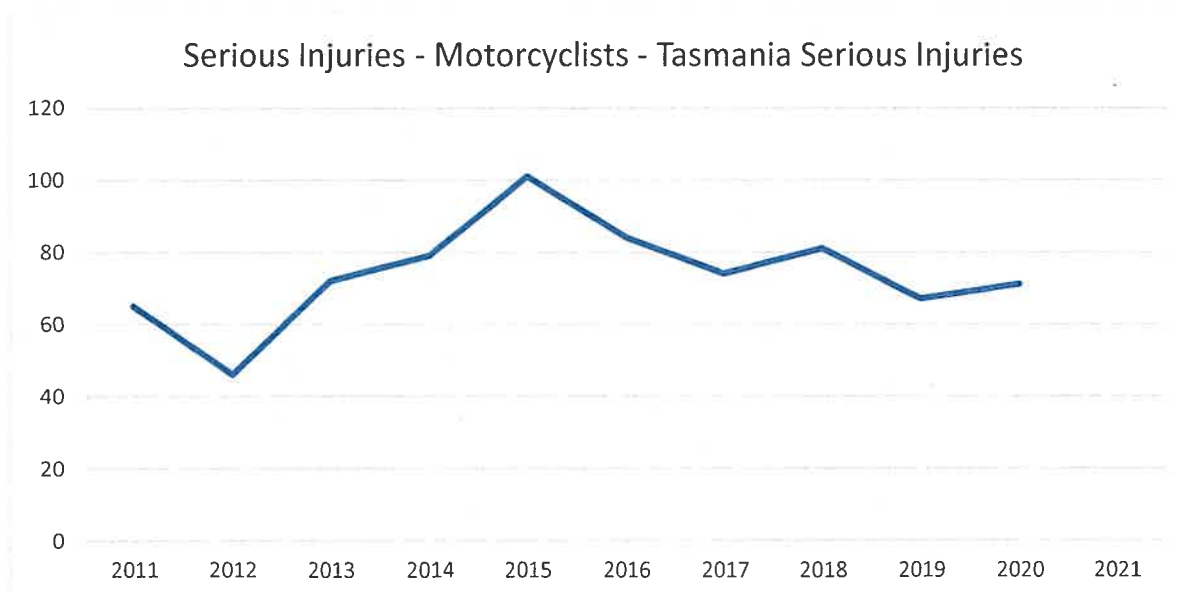
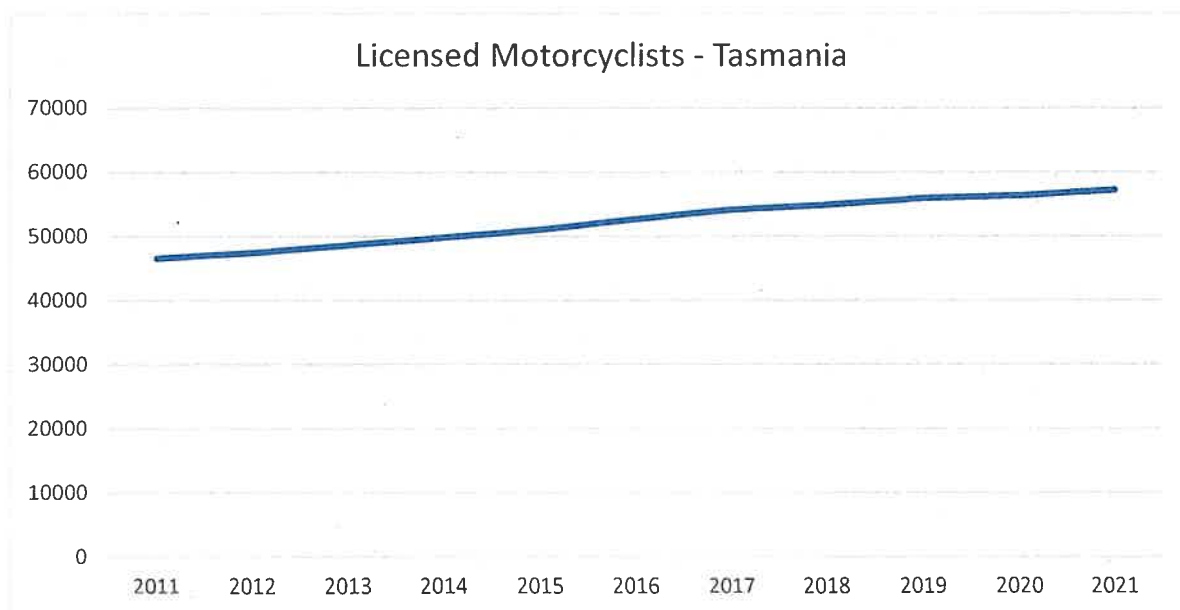
Looking at the Tasmanian Crash Statistics to 30 June 2021 in relation to motorcyclists we have seen a 500% increase in motorcycle fatalities from 2020 in year to date terms but it is only a 30% increase over the 5 year average. This is probably related to restrictions that were in place during 2020 in regards to the pandemic. In relation to serious injuries, motorcyclists are up 12%, cyclists are up 600% but all other areas have stayed the same or dropped.

The statistics I am quoting below come from information available on the www.transport.tas.gov.au website.

Motorcycle registrations have increased by 29% since 2011

Motorcycle licence holder have increased by 20% since 2011

From 2015 there has been a decrease in serious injuries from 101 down to 74 in 2020 despite an increase of licensed riders by 10% and the number of motorcycles registered by 12%



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This equates to one serious injury for every 504.7 licensed riders in 2015 to one serious injury for every 792.7 riders in 2020. In terms of fatalities, in 2015 one loss of life for every 7281.8 riders where in 2020 this tragic loss was one life for every 14071.2 riders. From a motorcycling perspective it is now safer to ride a motorcycle than it has ever been.

I think it could be safely argued that the improved training of motorcyclists and the better technology utilised in motorcycles has contributed markedly towards these changes in terms of safety. Perhaps it is now time to work on car drivers as they are the vast majority of road users.

Tasmania still needs to work on some aspects of the "Safe User" direction. The other parts of the direction are encouraging safe road user behaviour through education and enforcement and a reduction in driver inattention and distraction to reduce serious casualties.

Until recently there has been little done in enforcement of issues that distract or cause driver inattention. Anecdotal evidence suggests mobile telephone use plays a significant role in driver distraction and inattention. Tasmania Police recently introduced unmarked motorcycles presumably to aid in enforcing legislation that requires safe use of mobile phones in vehicles.

It is my view that the real issue with road safety in this State is enforcement. Our laws are similar if not identical to other States. In many cases our roads are in as good if not better condition. Whilst our vehicle fleet is older, it is rare that vehicle condition is found to be a significant contributing factor to serious injury or fatal crashes.

It would seem that whilst the majority of citizens obey traffic regulations, there is a temptation to disobey regulations because there is a much lower chance of being brought to account.

In the latest *Austroads Guide to Road Safety Part 4 – Safe People* it refers to the contribution of "human error" in road traffic crashes as between 75% to 90%. Those errors are categorised as 'slips, lapses, mistakes and violations'. All of these error types will involve breaches of the road regulations, with the level of seriousness varying depending on the type of error. The community perception is that the road safety problem is associated with extreme behaviours involving speeding, impaired driving and high levels of risk taking. To be fair this is because the media report on these types of crashes almost exclusively.

Interestingly the guide also refers to education as being important. It would seem that Government relies on the licencing system to create a base level of education and understanding regarding the operation of traffic, however even though the road user meets the regulatory requirements they may not be adequately equipped to understand the changes in legislation, vehicle technology because at no stage are they retested.

Distracted road users are subject to higher crash risk. Whether that is vehicle controls, external factors or other factors such as mobile phones. These distractions have an effect on all road users including pedestrians and cyclists.

Education of drivers is an area where it is my personal opinion that the system appears somewhat reluctant.

The Road Safety Advisory Committee has produced two publications *Top 10 Misunderstood Road Rules* in Tasmania. This was followed by *5 Most Misunderstood Road Rules*. The reality is the vast majority of road users do not know where to find this sort of information. I regularly survey students attending learner motorcycle courses ranging in age from 16 years 6 months through to persons in their early 70s and few have heard of the Road Safety Advisory Committee or how to access the

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website. So whilst the information and consequential education is present perhaps it is not really reaching its target audience. Surely road safety messages are more important accompanying vehicle registration renewals than custom number plate advertising. By way of praise, I should state that the recent TV campaign involving Road Torque does seem to be targeted correctly. So far I have seen truck safety, roundabouts, real mates, the safe system and plates plus episodes.

Finally, I am not convinced the information on the RSAC website regarding wire rope barriers is particularly accurate. The vehicle appears to be travelling well under the speed limit, the driver clearly steers the vehicle, and it seems inconsistent with recent media film of an incident on the Midlands Highway. Of particular concern is how many other jurisdictions are now stating that they will be replacing their wire rope barriers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. P. McCarthy', written in a cursive style.

T. P. McCarthy