

INQUIRY INTO VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

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The Staysafe Committee
Chairman: MP Geoff Corrigan

Vulnerable road users

Dear Sir

I would like to make a submission on the above subject to assist you in understanding the experience of a new motorcycle rider becoming a road user.

My background

Age 55 – fit and active

Experience; Never ridden a motorcycle before November 09, but was keen to learn a new skill to broaden my range of life experiences.

Heavy vehicle truck license held for some 30years

Other licenses held are – Pilots – Forklift – Crane – Boat – Jet ski

Motorcycle license 6 months

Riding a motorcycle would be the hardest skill I have undertaken and when you consider the range of equipment that I have used it is said with some knowledge of acquiring skills. The skill is not staying up right on the bike it is fitting in with the traffic flow around you and maneuvering around corners.

Getting your “L” plates – you do 2 x ½ day courses in an enclosed area the size of ½ a football pitch. If you can start - stop - and stay on the bike – listen to the information given you get a slip to get your “L” plates from the RTA. At the course you never get out of 1 or 2nd gear maybe 20k is the highest speed. To me this is inadequate to put someone in traffic. It shows no understanding if the person can handle the bike or is safe to themselves or other road users. (“L” license completed at Rouse Hill training centre)

After I had my “L” Plates and before I went on the road I booked in at St Ives Rider training centre for Post Learners one day course. This course followed on from the “L” Course. The Post Learners is basically the same as the Pre “P” coarse and was just the training that I needed to go on to the road with a relative amount of confidence. During the course we were given good practical advice on buffering in traffic. We spent several hours riding on a private road with no traffic so you could get up to 80ks, go around corners, stop from speed, be assessed as to how you are positioned on the road / bike while riding in a real situation.

After this we were taken on a road ride as a group, stopping frequently to assess the traffic situations we had encountered and our riding style / safety.

This is what is required before getting your “L” Plates to be competent and ride on the road in traffic. Ie you have a skilled rider with you when you do your first ride.

Areas of concern when first riding

I was very surprised at the length of time that it took me to becoming confident with **cornering**. You have to judge your speed / gear – position on the road – watching for bumps/ water/ loose gravel on the road surface – cars coming towards you etc. roundabouts are also hard with slow turning/ balance and cars coming in all directions.

I practice most days and it would have taken 6 month to really start feeling confident that I was going well on 95% of the corners. Ie – I was in exactly the position on the road I wanted be in rather than say drifting further in or out on the bend.

Turn indicators – Are a problem to remember to turn off - you only have a visual reminder and when you are learning it is hard to get into the habit of turning them off. Cars do it automatically.

The problem is when they are left on; the traffic around you does not know what you are doing. The main concern is having a left hand indicator on when a car coming out of a street on your left hand side pulls out in front of you, because he thinks you are going to turn. I really think that bikes should have a timer on the indicator so that it will cancel rather than keep indicating.

Staying with the traffic Flow – Speed - If you do not stay with the speed of the traffic, cars and trucks are wanting to pass you – cut you off. So having a bike that can do the speed is important for safety. I have ridden a small scooter 100cc and it was very intimidating compared to my 650cc. I can see how push bikes on main roads would cause a real problem as they are not compatible with the traffic they are in. It is the same if you put Push bikes in with walkers.

Safety Gear - At the “L” –“P” course you must have a helmet and protective clothing but once you have your license you only need a helmet. I think that a padded jacket and gloves should be compulsory with correct footwear.

Young riders – From my driving experience I see many young riders riding their bike in a manner that increases their chance of having an accident. I feel letting a 16 year old on the road with no control is like letting a 16 year old “L” in a car without a licensed driver beside them. Bike riders should be limited to 18 and over or have a “P” car license first so they have a better idea of how traffic and the road system works.

Conclusion

I would suggest that more training is required inline with the Post learners course with additional information on cornering safety before an “L” license is given out and the age of younger riders be raised to 18 years.

Trusting the above is of assistance

P Matthews

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