

FCAI Response to the Queensland Inquiry into Motor Recreational Activities

Introduction

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (**FCAI**) is the peak industry body representing the interests of Australian importers and distributors of new motor vehicles and motorcycles, including All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and Side by Side Vehicles (SSVs). A list of our members can be found on our website www.fcai.com.au.

The FCAI welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Inquiry into Motor Recreational Activities in Queensland. The Importers of Motorcycles, ATVs and SSVs are heavily invested in this Industry with a significant majority of their products being used in a recreational capacity.

The opportunities to use these products in a responsible and safe manner is a high priority for the Importers, and despite the focus of this enquiry, the products are used in a much broader context than the three areas listed below (taken from the ToR document).

Nevertheless, the three areas we are able to provide input on are;

- Circuit racing and historical motorcycle clubs.
- Recreational and charity ride days.
- Dirt motorcycle or motor cross clubs.

Given the nature of the FCAI members (i.e. Importers of new motorcycles, ATVs and SSVs) we will not be providing information relating to historic motorcycles and their activities, other than to say, that they (historic motorcycles) are a component of the overall motorcycle community dear to many (mainly) older riders, and owners and participants tend to be heavily engaged and enthusiastic about their machines and using / restoring / displaying them.

The nature of modern motorcycles is that they tend to be quite specific in their uses. In the past a motorcycle would have design features and capabilities (within the constraints of the era) to be used over a wide variety of terrain and activities. However over the past 3 to 4 decades the universal nature of motorcycles capabilities has given way to products more specifically designed to be used on certain terrain, and for certain activities. Motorcycles are now specifically designed for on-road use (road bikes) and for off-road use (dirt bikes). Of course there are varying degrees of specificity/exclusivity, but generally they do not cross over, particularly in usage.

There is one group of motorcycles that is now being specifically targeted at the “go anywhere” market, the so called Adventure Bikes. However for the purposes of this submission we will respond to the ToR in terms of road bikes, and off-road bikes (dirt bikes), with a specific mention of ATVs and SSVs.

Road Motorcycles

Circuit Racing

Circuit or “Road” racing, conducted on closed circuit courses is a specific activity, for the most part managed and controlled by Motorcycling Australia (MA). MA sanctioned events are held at approved circuits, with the appropriate insurances, safety measures, licence arrangements (including

personal insurance), and racing class structure. This sport has spawned world champions at the pinnacle of the sport such as Wayne Gardner, Michael Doohan, Casey Stoner, and now current day rising star Jack Miller. This type of racing activity remains popular with a certain sector of motorcycle enthusiasts, and has created a new field of activity for road motorcycle riders, that is the "Ride Day". Road motorcycles are taken to, and used on a road-race track, and under supervision of the event organisers, usually with some form of training or guidance from riding professionals.

Many road bike riders realise that the only way to enjoy the full performance capability of their motorcycle is to take it onto the race track, where they do not face the everyday road hazards (distracted drivers, uneven and broken road surfaces, etc.), and can concentrate on improving their skill level in a safe environment. This has many benefits, at both a personal level, but also at an industry level, where the consumption of replaceable items (tyres etc.) and the need for maintenance etc. feeds back into the local dealership, and the local economy.

The small businesses associated with this activity, such as Rider Training Schools, Race Track training, and the circuits themselves (as a business) derive consistent income from these motorcycle riders. So the economic benefits are spread over the broader industry.

There is also evidence that there are mental health benefits from the activity. The high skill and fitness levels needed to ride a motorcycle, have proven health benefits for the rider, and as a result the wider community.

Recreational and charity ride days

For many years, the road riding motorcycle community has been associated with raising money and providing joy for a wide variety of charities, and groups of people. The "Toy Run" is a prime example, an annual run held just prior to Christmas, where motorcyclists gather for a ride to a central point, where they deposit their donated gifts for (usually) underprivileged children. It is my understanding that this event is in its 40th year of continuous service to charity. There are many charity rides held around the country each year, some using specific types of motorcycles (such as the Honda CT110 "Postie Bike").

In general these events have an element of adventure, an element of fun and participation, but with the ultimate aim of raising funds for a specific cause (usually closely associated with the organisers).

The benefits for the charity(s) are obvious, but the benefits for the broader community also need to be recognised. Often travelling through the rural and regional areas of the state, the boost to the local economy is of great value.

There are also larger national, and in some cases international events, designed to raise money for charity by connecting people across the nation and across the globe. One such event is the Distinguished Gentlemen's Ride (DGR), <https://www.gentlemansride.com/> which uses its profile to raise money for men's health.

There are any number of these activities going on at any point in time, some of which are long standing events, others that are "one off" events, springing up out of the enthusiasm of an individual or group of individuals, usually driven by personal experiences. The connection and use of motorcycles, and motorcycle rides to facilitate charitable work seems to be very well accepted by both the general public and the motorcycling community.

It should be noted that charitable activity is not restricted to road motorcycles, with many off-road rides and activities now being held to benefit charities.

Off-Road Motorcycles

Many children in Australia over the past 50 years or so, have grown up with access to a small capacity off-road motorcycle. The introduction of the Japanese manufacturers such as Honda, Yamaha, Kawasaki and Suzuki, in the 1960's and 70's, brought good quality, mass produced minibikes to Australia, and from the very beginning Australians adopted this product enthusiastically. This beginning in motorcycling has been repeated tens of thousands of times over the last 50 years, and as such generations of Australians have an experience of motorcycling, and many went on to become life-long riders.

Off-road riding takes on several variations. Motocross riding is the closed circuit (usually competitive) component, enduro riding is a different form of competition, using either large areas of private land or state forest. Where public land is required, the riders are required to have a registered motorcycle and also have a motorcycle licence. Then there is trail riding, again using public roads, and state forests for scenic, and sometimes challenging off-road riding, and more recently there has been an increase in what is known as Adventure Riding. This activity is on public roads (including forests etc.), usually over longer distances, and seeking to "get away from it all" by travelling into rural and remote regional areas, camping or utilising caravan park or cabin accommodation to facilitate longer trips away from home.

In all of the above activities, the common theme is riding "off-road biased" motorcycles, and enjoying being outdoors, in the environment, and for the most part, participating in an activity that challenges the rider both physically, and mentally.

Many participants will articulate the common themes of companionship, riding with family/friends, and enjoying the outdoor lifestyle, that off-road motorcycling gives them. Irrespective of the type of off-road riding, the use of off-road bikes has direct benefits to a broad suite of businesses.

As with the organised road ride days, many other organisations and small businesses have developed out of the off-road motorcycle industry, running ride days, day tours and trips to special points of interest. Motorcycle tours, training, coaching, travel company's, long distance adventure tours, and importantly the rural and regional towns they visit, are providing services and accommodation to travelling motorcyclists, and all have benefited from these off-road riding activity's.

Queensland is particularly well suited to the Adventure Tourism market, with several organisations providing Cape York adventure tours (some for over 20 years), and others such as Daryl Beattie Adventures (owned and run by ex-Grand Prix racer Daryl Beattie <http://darylbeattieadventures.com.au/>) providing tours crossing the state and the nation, based out of Queensland

Recreational Vehicles (ATVs and SSVs)

It should also be noted that there is a small sector of off-road riding, utilising either ATVs or, increasingly, SSVs. These vehicles allow a different type of person, the ability to get out into the country, and where allowed, to experience the tracks and trails on a stable and relatively comfortable 4 wheel vehicle. This also allows them to carry equipment, to facilitate other types of outdoor activities, such as fishing, and hunting.

Legally using an ATV or SSV is sometimes a challenge, as obtaining the appropriate registration for the vehicle, to allow public land access, can be difficult. A great benefit for these vehicle type users would be a form of "recreational registration", whereby state forest access (public land access) could be legally allowed with appropriate safety standards being maintained (i.e. Helmet use, some form

of licencing and insurance). This is long overdue, and should be resolved as a matter of some urgency by the Queensland State Government (and other State Governments, for that matter).

Considerations

Motorcycling in Queensland; the numbers:

- In Queensland (2018), there was just under 690,000 motorcycle licences on issue. There are approximately 2.1 million motorcycle licences on issue Australia wide.
- Although there is fluctuation in the total numbers, each year between 14,000- 24,000 Motorcycle Learner Permits are issued in Queensland
- In 2017, there were approximately 210,000 registered motorcycles in Queensland
- Queensland currently is home to approximately 20% of Australia's population, but it is home to approximately 24% of the total number of registered motorcycles in Australia. Perhaps a reflection on the climate and accessibility in Queensland.
- Like all states there is a significant second-hand market for motorcycles in Queensland, with most industry observers estimating approximately 3 second-hand registration transfers for each new motorcycle sold in each state.
- Across Australia there are approximately 880 businesses selling both new and second-hand motorcycles, employing around 4000 people.
- There are numerous "spin-off" businesses, particularly in Queensland, servicing the motorcycle industry, but more importantly the motorcycle riding community. From Rider Training and Licencing, to Tourism, Track days, Ride days, Ride Parks, Trail Tours, Adventure Tours to service and repair businesses, motorcycling contributes to the state economy at many levels.

The economic impact of the motor recreation industry to Queensland, including opportunities to grow the industry to create jobs for Queenslanders;

The above set of Motorcycle data, indicates that there is a significant and important motorcycle industry in Queensland. The Queensland climate is particularly conducive to motorcycle riding, and this is reflected in the above average number of registered motorcycles in Queensland, relative to the population.

The contribution of the industry to Queensland's tourism sector and opportunities to grow Queensland's share of the motor recreation tourism market;

As discussed above, motorcycling has been the driving force behind a significant number of tourism businesses in Queensland. With many desirable destinations, local businesses have capitalised on the motorcycle tourism market. With operators of such long standing success in the community such as *Cape York Tours* <https://capeyorkmotorcycles.com.au/> (Owned and operated by Roy Kunda), to Tangalooma Resort ATV rides <https://www.tangalooma.com/activities-tours/atv-quad-bikes>, tourism and motorcycling have been mutually beneficial partners for many years.

The legislative, regulatory and policy framework in which the industry operates in all levels of government, and options for reform;

As discussed in the above section (ATVs and SSVs) Queensland would benefit significantly from a "Recreational Registration" scheme, similar to that being run in Victoria <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/registration/new-registration/register-a-motorcycle> (in regard to motorcycles) and similar to that being run in Tasmania <https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/registration/conditional/restricted> (in regard to ATVs and SSVs).

Options to improve the safety of all industry participants;

Safety is always a consideration when motorcycles and other recreational vehicles are discussed. In regard to the use of two wheeled motorcycles, the general culture of the requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) is accepted. In particular helmets are an accepted safety measure. This culture needs to be transferred to be included in the use of ATVs and SSVs.

In Queensland, wearing of PPE is slightly compromised by the climate. By necessity, PPE is sturdy, and often heavy, and therefore does not allow for the wearer to be adequately cooled in warmer and more humid conditions. The operators of any activities associated with motorcycles and ATVs/SSVs, must be encouraged to provide the PPE for the users, and then insist that it is worn by the riders under their supervision. The correct, modern, well designed PPE, made using the latest technology in materials should be used, offering both protection, and the benefits of being lighter in weight and more breathable in terms of air flow and cooling ability.

The impact on youth training and community engagement from motor recreational activities, including health and well-being outcomes;

The health benefits of recreational motorcycle riding, and indeed competition riding, cannot be under estimated. The necessity of “getting out-doors” and families undertaking activities together is closely associated with (in particular) off-road riding. As the participants get older, the group activities associated with motorcycle riding, be it road or off-road, means that people associate with “like-minded” individuals, and within the motorcycling community, there is a sense of camaraderie, and with younger members of the group, a sense of protection.

Off-road ride parks, are a particularly good and safe way of allowing under aged teenagers (13 – 18y.o.) to enjoy their riding, whilst they are unable to ride legally on public roads, or in the state forests. Quite often their individual skill levels are quite high, and they need to be able to develop those skills in a controlled environment, under supervision, and with the advantage of being covered by insurance, should the unfortunate happen.

The impact of the industry on road safety outcomes;

Whilst I am unaware of any scientific evidence, anecdotally it is widely agreed that, younger people with a reasonably high degree of motorcycle riding competence, will go on to be better and safer road users. Their physical skills, and competence usually mean that when tackling the roads (as learner drivers or riders), they are free to concentrate on the road situation, the road rules and traffic, rather than on the physical task of riding or driving (that being second nature to them).

Challenges facing the industry and the role of government in supporting the industry to continue creating jobs for Queenslanders;

One of the biggest challenges to the motorcycle industry, is the issue of safety. In terms of road riding, of course the challenge of keeping motorcycle riders safe is everybody’s concern. Queensland (like other states) has introduced more stringent licencing conditions, has lifted the age at which a person can obtain a licence to ride a motorcycle on the road, and introduced other initiatives to attempt to make riders safer. This is an approach that has been taken in many states in Australia.

Unfortunately this approach is discriminatory towards people wishing to use a motorcycle as a form of transport (or recreation) as it has significantly increased the cost of entry into motorcycling. It has also shifted the focus of road safety away from those drivers who are either so lacking in skill, or who drive in such a distracting environment (mobile phone usage, other “in-car distractions”) that they put all road users in danger. Unfortunately the vulnerable road users (VRUs) which include motorcycle riders, pushbike riders and pedestrians, are at greater risk of injury (or worse) through no fault of their own.

There is some good news on the horizon, with the introduction of in car technology, which is now aiding the VRUs. In car systems such automatic emergency brake assist, and other methods of vehicle detection and avoidance now being built into the car fleet, will gradually mean that some of the distracted driving mistakes, will be corrected by technology.

The recent introduction of the mandating of Antilock Braking Systems (ABS) on road motorcycles in Australia should also have a positive benefit for the riders.

With the motorcycle industry recording three years of negative sales growth, and the increasing stringency of on-road licence testing regimes, it may be appropriate to follow the NSW lead, and offer subsidised rider training courses. In an effort to increase the quality of new riders, a number of extra requirements have been placed on intending riders. As mentioned above, it is difficult to argue that riders, particularly new riders, should not be better equipped skills-wise, to tackle the roads, however the cost of licencing is therefore increasing, and in some instances younger people could be priced out of the industry. Whilst some may think this is a good outcome, in reality it is, in all likelihood leading to an increase in people willing to, or needing to choose to ride, unlicensed. This is the least desirable outcome, and one that could be changed quite quickly, if a government subsidy were applied to motorcycle licence training courses.

In the off-road area, the introduction of electric motorcycles should eventually dissipate one of the biggest challenges to the motorcycle industry, in particular on the urban fringes, where there has long been a divisive social issue, that being noise made by internal combustion engine motorcycles. Electric powered kids minibikes are virtually silent, and are becoming more readily available (and accepted). This product will migrate up the "food chain" of motorcycling, and electric products will eventually become the norm, allowing their use in areas where there is currently some conflict.

Secondly, access to public land is an area where the Queensland Government can have the greatest positive impact on this industry. The key to the longer term success of the recreational motorcycle industry, is having a safe and legal place for (particularly) younger (pre-licence) riders to pursue their pass-time. Access to designated riding areas, within close proximity to outer suburban areas, easily accessible by the public, is the key to success. Socially there are benefits to be gained, by allowing easy access to designated off-road riding areas, as the number of illegal riders (particularly under aged riders) could be significantly decreased. Thus giving a generation of younger people a better start in life, where coming into conflict with the legal system (police) may be avoided.

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