

LDP Policy On Motorcycles

(Draft for comment 17 June 2008)

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) believes those who choose to use motorcycles and scooters should not be discouraged by government policies.

The use of motorcycles and scooters is a matter of individual choice. So long as nobody else is likely to be involuntarily harmed by that choice, it is not appropriate for the government to interfere in it.

Motorcycles and scooters represent an economical, convenient and environmentally favourable means of transport that also places fewer demands on roads and other infrastructure.

The LDP will implement the following measures:

1. Ensure that motorcycles and scooters are included in parking facilities, primarily through amendments to the Building Code of Australia.
2. Reduce taxes, tolls and other charges on motorcycles and scooters to no more than a quarter that of cars.
3. Allow motorcycles and scooters to use public transport corridors such as bus and transit lanes.
4. Ensure motorcycle and scooter safety is given the same priority as car safety in road design and construction.
5. Encourage voluntary adoption of European CE standards of safety clothing for motorcyclists, accompanied by accurate labelling.
6. Remove obstacles to the establishment of readily accessible rider training courses at moderate cost.
7. Remove any requirement for front number plates.
8. Make the wearing of helmets optional (while strongly encouraging their use).

These measures are additional to the LDP's [policy on traffic laws](#), which includes:

9. Set speed limits at, or slightly above, the 85th percentile. This would result in an increase of 10-30 km/h in the limit on roads where drivers felt it was safe to travel at such speeds, while perhaps leading to reductions on less safe roads.
10. Give low priority to enforcement of any traffic laws intended to protect road users from themselves while having no impact on innocent victims.

Discussion

Many people choose to ride motorcycles and scooters for the sheer enjoyment they provide. However, there are also many practical reasons for using them.

Modern motorcycles and scooters are fuel efficient, cheap to operate and have low exhaust emissions. They are also almost completely recyclable.

They represent a very efficient means of transport, occupying a quarter or less of the space required by a car and causing far less road wear. They also require much less room to park and can utilise areas that are not suitable for cars.

For commuters, motorcycles and scooters represent a highly attractive option. They are not subject to the physical constraints of walking or cycling or the scheduling and over-crowding problems of public transport. They can handle traffic density far better than cars and substantially reduce traffic pressure, particularly when replacing single occupant car journeys.

Despite these advantages, state and federal governments regularly ignore motorcycles and scooters or treat them the same as cars. They are also subjected to regulatory controls based on historical perceptions about safety, noise, bikie gangs and other assumed evils.

Parking for motorcycles and scooters tends to be in chronic short supply. In many cases motorcyclists are expected to use and pay for the same parking facilities as cars, despite requiring much smaller areas. Motorcycles are also more vulnerable to bumping by other vehicles and cannot safely display parking tickets, making certain types of parking unsuitable.

Cars are smaller and lighter than trucks and usually charged less to use motorways. Motorcycles are smaller and lighter than cars but are usually required to pay the same toll as cars.

Trucks pay higher registration fees than cars, but motorcycles and scooters are often required to pay the same or similar registration fees as cars.

Motorcyclists are often not permitted to use public transport lanes, despite the fact that they almost never impede buses and other lane users.

The standards for road safety barriers are based on tests involving cars, not motorcycles and scooters. Data on motorcycle safety is seriously deficient.

The safety of motorcycles and scooters is reduced by painting roads with slippery marking paint and using steel plates, hazardous crash barriers, rigid guide posts, light poles, posts and signs close to the roadway.

Deteriorating roads become hazardous due to loose surfaces; cracks are repaired with slippery crack sealant; surfaces are grooved without adequate warning and loose gravel is used on sidetracks and repairs.

Europe has an objective system for rating safety clothing that allows motorcyclists to choose clothing suitable for their needs, but clothing that fails the European standard is sold in Australia and motorcyclists cannot identify it due to a lack of accurate labelling.

There are numerous barriers to the establishment of rider training courses. Many are the same faced by small businesses anywhere in Australia, but regulatory barriers relating to issues such as liability and business licensing affect rider training providers particularly severely. As a result, there is a shortage of accessible, affordable rider training courses. The result is reduced levels of rider expertise and safety.

Front numberplates on motorcycles and scooters are a hazard to riders and bystanders due to protuberances and sharp edges, as well as constituting an unnecessary cost. The motive for reintroducing them is simply to generate revenue from speed cameras.

Although the wearing of helmets makes great sense, it is not the role of the government to protect people from poor judgement so long as nobody else is harmed. Criminalising the non-wearing of helmets is an unacceptable intrusion into the realm of personal choice.

Further Information

Motorcycle Council of NSW
<http://www.mccofnsw.org.au/>

Australian Transport Council
<http://www.atcouncil.gov.au/>

National Road Safety Action Plan
http://www.atcouncil.gov.au/documents/nrss_actionplan_0708.pdf

Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
<http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/>

National Transport Commission
www.ntc.gov.au

National Marine Safety Committee
www.nmsc.gov.au

Austroads
www.austroads.com.au

New South Wales

New South Wales Department of Transport
www.transport.nsw.gov.au

New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority
www.rta.nsw.gov.au

Victoria

Victorian Department of Infrastructure
www.doi.vic.gov.au

VicRoads
www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

Queensland

Queensland Transport
www.transport.qld.gov.au

Queensland Department of Main Roads
www.mainroads.qld.gov.au

South Australia

Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure
www.dtei.sa.gov.au

Western Australia

The Department for Planning and Infrastructure
www.dpi.wa.gov.au

Western Australian Department of Main Roads
www.mrwa.wa.gov.au

Tasmania

Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
www.dier.tas.gov.au

Northern Territory

Department of Planning and Infrastructure
www.nt.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory

Australian Capital Territory Department of Urban Services
www.urbanservices.act.gov.au

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