

Motorcycle licensing discussion paper

Improving road safety for motorcycle riders in Queensland

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Introduction

Motorcycle riding has increased in popularity in Queensland in recent years. More people are using motorcycles for commuting and recreational purposes for a variety of reasons: for example they are cheaper to run than a car; they take up less parking space; and they may help the rider avoid traffic congestion.

The below table shows the steady increase in registered motorcycles in Queensland over the past five years.

Year	Number of registered motorcycles
2010	159,540
2011	166,922
2012	175,851
2013	184,125
2014	190,283

However, motorcycle riders are one of the most vulnerable road user groups, and continue to be over-represented in the Queensland road toll. Motorcycle rider and passenger fatalities accounted for 16.6 percent of the road toll in 2014, despite motorcycles comprising less than five percent of registered vehicles. As at 23 July 2015 there have been 32 motorcycle rider or passenger fatalities in Queensland. This represents a 60 percent increase (or 12 fatalities greater) for the same period in 2014¹. Novice riders are an especially vulnerable road user group due to their lack of riding experience². Riders in their first years of riding are involved in more crashes than riders with more years of riding experience³.

The most direct way to improve safety for motorcycle riders is to ensure that new riders have appropriate skills and adequate experience to ride a motorcycle on the road.

What is the paper for?

We are seeking the views of Queenslanders about how to improve the safety of motorcycle riders in Queensland. In particular, we are seeking feedback about the testing and licensing requirements for obtaining a motorcycle learner licence and progressing through the system to an unrestricted open motorcycle licence. Do Queenslanders think the current arrangements adequately prepare novice motorcycle riders for riding on our roads, or are there areas for improvement?

We are looking at motorcycle licensing holistically and are seeking feedback on possible changes to various elements of the current system, including:

1. The requirements to obtain a motorcycle learner licence - should a practical pre-learner training and assessment course be undertaken?
2. The requirements to progress from a motorcycle learner licence – should there be a minimum tenure period?
3. The requirements to progress from a restricted (RE) to an unrestricted (R) motorcycle licence – should there be a practical assessment and how long should the minimum tenure period be?

¹ Data Analysis Unit – Department of Transport and Main Roads.

² McKnight and McKnight, Young drivers: careless or clueless? Accident Analysis and Prevention, 2003, 35, 231 – 235 (Referenced in TMR, *Submission No. 34*, p.19).

³ Haworth and Nielson, Motor scooters and mopeds: Are increasing sales translating into increasing crashes? Transportation Research Board: Journal of the Transportation Research Board, 2008, 2074 (Referenced in TMR, *Submission No. 34*, p.19).

4. The Q-Ride training and assessment course - are the current competency standards appropriately focussed, should there be more focus on attitudes and would there be benefit in standardising the course and the number of hours spent training?

It is important to note that these ideas are not government policy and are for consultation purposes only. We want to hear what Queenslanders think before considering the possible implementation, costs and likely benefits of any new initiatives.

Have your say

Community feedback on this discussion paper will be obtained through an online survey on the Queensland Government's *Get Involved* website (see www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au). The survey will take 10 to 15 minutes, depending on how much feedback respondents wish to provide, and will be open for community feedback for six weeks, from 27 July to 6 September 2015.

Queenslanders are invited to review the discussion paper and complete the online survey to share their views on the current motorcycle licensing system and possible changes.

1. Getting a motorcycle learner licence

What happens in Queensland?

To obtain a motorcycle learner licence in Queensland a person must have held a class C (car) provisional or open licence for at least one year, and must pass a knowledge test. The requirement to hold a car licence is intended to ensure novice drivers gain driving experience and hazard perception skills in a safer vehicle and environment before progressing to a motorcycle learner licence. The knowledge test ensures that new riders have basic knowledge of the rules and requirements for riding a motorcycle.

The current process does not require new riders to have basic motorcycle handling skills (such as motorcycle operation, balance and stability) before getting their motorcycle learner licence and learning to ride on a road.

What happens elsewhere?

All other states and territories require new riders to pass a knowledge test to get their motorcycle learner licence. Queensland is the only jurisdiction that requires a person to hold a car provisional or open licence before they may obtain a motorcycle learner licence, however some jurisdictions impose additional requirements on new riders if they do not hold a car licence.

The majority of other states and territories require new riders to demonstrate basic motorcycle handling skills through completion of a pre-learner training and assessment course (pre-learner course) to obtain a motorcycle learner licence. Western Australia and Victoria currently don't require a pre-learner course, however Victoria is proposing to introduce a mandatory pre-learner course in late 2015.

What could Queensland do differently?

We are seeking feedback on the requirements to obtain a motorcycle learner licence, including views on whether Queensland should have an off-road pre-learner course.

Pre-learner courses ensure novice riders gain basic riding knowledge and motorcycle handling skills in a safe environment before riding on the road, potentially improving road safety outcomes for a vulnerable road user group. Introducing a pre-learner course was recommended by the former Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee in its 2012 Parliamentary inquiry into the motorcycle licensing process in Queensland, and supported by motorcycle rider safety research undertaken by the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q).

If a pre-learner course was introduced in Queensland it would likely be provided by Q-Ride registered service providers, who currently deliver motorcycle training and assessment courses as part of the motorcycle licensing system. It is likely that the cost of a pre-learner course would be comparable per hour to the cost of the existing courses delivered by Q-Ride providers. If the pre-learner course was four hours long, then the cost of the course would be approximately \$220. This would be in addition to the current costs associated with the motorcycle licensing system.

Have your say via the online survey at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au

2. Progressing from a motorcycle learner licence to an RE licence

What happens in Queensland?

To upgrade from a learner licence to an RE licence, riders must complete a practical assessment. If they live within a 100km radius of a Q-Ride training area they must complete a Q-Ride training and assessment course. If they live in remote areas of Queensland, outside the 100km radius, they may undertake a Q-SAFE practical riding test. Last year, over 95 percent of RE applicants completed a Q-Ride course to progress from a learner licence to an RE licence.

There is no minimum period of time that learner riders must hold their learner licence if they complete a Q-Ride course. Riders who undertake a Q-SAFE practical riding test must hold their motorcycle learner licence for at least six months before they are eligible to progress to an RE licence.

As the majority of learner riders complete a Q-Ride course, the majority of learner riders do not have to hold their learner licence for any minimum period. Research conducted by CARRS-Q indicates that the median time learner riders hold their learner licence is 27 days⁴. This short time spent as a learner rider means newly licensed riders often have very little practical riding experience.

What happens elsewhere?

The majority of other Australian states and territories impose a minimum period of time that learner riders must hold their motorcycle learner licence. New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory require a three month period; the Northern Territory and Tasmania require a six month period. South Australia requires between nil and 12 months, depending on the applicant's age and whether or not they hold a licence of another class. Western Australia does not require a person to hold the licence for a minimum period of time; a person must instead complete 25 hours of supervised riding.

All states and territories require learner riders to complete a practical assessment to progress from their learner licence.

What could Queensland do differently?

We are seeking feedback on the requirements to progress from a motorcycle learner licence, including views on whether Queensland should have a minimum learner licence tenure period.

Minimum learner licence tenure periods reinforce the importance of the learner period in the motorcycle licensing system, encouraging skill development and promoting the accumulation of on-road riding experience. This may improve road safety outcomes for this vulnerable road user group, as novice riders in their first years of riding are involved in more crashes than riders with more years of riding experience.

If a minimum tenure period was introduced in Queensland all learner riders would be required to hold their motorcycle learner licence for a minimum period before progressing to an RE licence. The current minimum period of six months for learner riders who undertake a Q-SAFE practical riding test could be applied to all learner riders, or an alternate period such as three months could be applied.

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⁴ Motorcycle Rider Safety Project – CARRS-Q Overall Summary Report August 2012

3. Progressing from an RE to an R motorcycle licence

What happens in Queensland?

RE motorcycle licence holders may only ride learner approved motorcycles (LAMS) and, during the first 12 months of holding their RE licence, must not carry a passenger and must comply with a zero alcohol limit while riding.

To progress to an R motorcycle licence, licence holders must hold their RE licence for a minimum period of one year and then complete a practical assessment. If they live within a 100km radius of a Q-Ride training area they must complete a Q-Ride course. If they live in remote areas of Queensland, outside the 100km radius, they may undertake a Q-SAFE practical riding test.

What happens elsewhere?

All other states and territories require the equivalent of an RE licence to be held for a period of time before a rider can progress to the equivalent of an R licence. The majority of jurisdictions impose zero alcohol limits and passenger restrictions for at least one year, depending on whether or not a provisional licence is issued. In South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia the restricted licence must be held for one year. New South Wales and Tasmania require the restricted licence to be held for one to three years depending on the age of the rider when the licence was obtained. In the Australian Capital Territory, if the person holds a licence of another class the restricted licence must be held for one year; if no other licence is held, the restricted licence must be held for three years. In Victoria, the restricted licence must be held for three years.

Only Queensland and Western Australia require riders to complete a practical assessment to progress from an RE to an R motorcycle licence.

What could Queensland do differently?

We are seeking feedback on the requirements to progress from an RE to an R motorcycle licence, including views on whether Queensland should change the minimum tenure period or the requirement to complete a practical assessment.

Novice riders are a vulnerable road user group because of their riding inexperience; riders in their first years of riding are involved in more crashes than riders with more years of riding experience. The risk of involvement in a serious crash is greater in the first three years of unaccompanied riding, with the risk decreasing for each year thereafter, before reaching a plateau in about the eighth year of licensure.

A minimum tenure period for holding an RE licence ensures novice riders develop experience and higher order skills prior to progressing to riding a more powerful motorcycle. The RE licence period, including the zero alcohol limit and no passenger restriction, could be extended to ensure novice riders ride under conditions of reduced risk for a longer period.

Consumption of alcohol at any level can have a greater impact on riders than on car drivers⁵, as motorcycles are less stable and more sensitive to rider dexterity and road conditions. Riding also places different and additional demands on the rider, such as coordination, balance, and concentration⁶. Any impairment that

⁵ Mannering and Grodsky (1995), Statistical analysis of motorcyclists' perceived accident risk, *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 27(1): 21-31 Qld Motorcycle Safety Strategy Paper 2009-2012

⁶ Haworth, Ozanne-Smith, Fox and Brumen (1994), Motorcycle-related injuries to children and adolescents, Report No 56, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Qld Motorcycle Safety Strategy Paper 2009-2012

reduces a rider's ability to cope with these demands can significantly increase crash risk, which is especially important for novice riders.

Carrying a passenger increases the total number of people at risk, and in the event of a crash, the severity of injury to the rider is greater when a passenger is carried⁷. A rider carrying a pillion passenger requires more advanced skills because of the passenger's impact on balance and stability of a motorcycle.

If the minimum RE licence period was extended, providing novice riders with more time to develop experience and higher order skills under conditions of reduced risk, the requirement to complete a practical assessment to progress to an R licence could be reviewed. The technical aspects of riding an R motorcycle are not fundamentally different from riding an RE motorcycle with safe riding more strongly associated with behavioural factors and higher order skills, which are developed over time, than with technical vehicle control.

Have your say via the online survey at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au

⁷ Haworth and Schulze (1996), Motorcycle crash countermeasures: literature review and implementation workshop, Report No 87, Monash University Accident Research Centre. Qld Motorcycle Safety Strategy 2009-2012

4. Undertaking a Q-Ride course

What happens in Queensland?

The Q-Ride course is the primary method of practical riding assessment in Queensland. It is a competency based training and assessment program, delivered by registered service providers in accordance with competency standards set by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR). Each registered service provider develops their own training and assessment program based on the competency standards, however all programs are approved by TMR before being used.

To successfully complete the course, participants must demonstrate competence in the following four areas. The competency standards specify the skills and knowledge that must be demonstrated by participants in relation to each of the competency elements.

1. Prepare motorcycle for operation, ensuring the motorcycle is safe, serviceable and complies with legal requirements. Participants must perform pre-ride safety check, identify key items for maintenance, and mount and dismount the motorcycle.
2. Manoeuvre motorcycle at low speed, adopting a safe riding position and safely and efficiently operating controls at low speeds. Participants must start and stop the motorcycle, move off and stop, change gears and perform low speed manoeuvres.
3. Control motorcycle at road speeds, safely and efficiently manoeuvring the motorcycle at various speeds. Participants must carry out counter-steering manoeuvre and execute braking procedures.
4. Apply road craft, safely and efficiently operating the motorcycle on public roads. Participants must understand defensive riding principles, apply roadcraft and appropriately manage riding situations.

The Q-Ride course takes an average of six hours to complete, however the course length will vary depending on how the registered service provider delivers their program and the capabilities of the participant. Participants progress through the course depending on their ability to demonstrate competency in each task. There is no set minimum time for the course or for individual training elements.

What happens elsewhere?

In the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Tasmania applicants complete a standardised eight hour training course including a practical assessment, while applicants in South Australia complete a half day training course including a practical assessment. These courses have a standardised course curriculum that specifies the way in which the training and assessment must be delivered. The course in the Northern Territory is an eight hour competency based training and assessment course, similar to Q-Ride. The content of the courses are all similar to Q-Ride in that they focus on motorcycle control and manoeuvring, including accelerating, turning and braking, and road riding skills.

Victoria and Western Australia do not have training courses, applicants must pass a practical riding assessment. However, Victoria is developing a compulsory training and assessment course proposed for introduction at the end of 2015.

What could Queensland do differently?

We are seeking feedback on the Q-Ride course, including views on whether Queensland should change the competency framework, include more focus on attitudes, introduce a standardised curriculum, or mandate the number of hours spent training.

Safe riding requires good vehicle control skills, but is also strongly associated with behavioural factors and higher order skills such as hazard perception and attitudes to risk taking. Stronger emphasis on behavioural factors and higher order skills in the Q-Ride course, which focusses mainly on vehicle control skills, may improve road safety outcomes for this vulnerable road user group.

A standardised training curriculum with specified learning processes and activities, each with set times, ensures a consistent and equitable course, and a uniform minimum period of training for all novice riders.

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