

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Melbourne — 19 October 2011

Members

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Witness

Ms H. Ellis.

The CHAIR — Just by way of background, Heather, the formality of the committee preamble includes comments to the effect that we have received 68 submissions. We are grateful for the input of people who have contributed to the work of the committee and also for the opportunity presented at public forums like this for committee members to take on board further evidence and ask questions. What you say is being recorded by Hansard. You will get a copy of the transcript, which, once amended for typographical errors, should be forwarded back to the secretariat. You have the benefit of parliamentary privilege, which has a number of implications. At the same time, should you wish to say anything in camera, we would be happy for you to do that as well. I ask members and those in the gallery who still have their mobile phones on to kindly turn them off. We look forward to your contribution. We will give you time to speak to your presentation, and then we would be happy to respond to questions and also ask questions.

Overheads shown.

Ms ELLIS — Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present my verbal evidence today at the inquiry into motorcycle safety. While I am giving my presentation there will be a slide show of club motorcyclists. My recommendation is to extend the VicRoads club permit scheme to all road-riding recreational motorcyclists, so that slide show will be happening while I am speaking.

I speak to you today as a concerned motorcyclist and an independent motorcycle safety advocate. I am a motorcyclist with more than 30 years experience riding both on and off-road. I rode an off-road motorcycle alone through Africa and central Asia. I was also a motorcycle courier in London for 12 months. It was all part of my journey. In total during my world motorcycle travels I rode my bike every day for nearly four years.

I see that there are two categories of motorcyclists: those who ride recreationally and those who ride to commute. Some of course do both. My submission addresses the rights of the road-riding recreational motorcyclists. Presently the club permit scheme can be utilised by members of VicRoads authorised motorcycle clubs who own motorcycles older than 25 years. The scheme operates as on-road registration for the motorcycle. A club permit allows holders to ride for a maximum of 90 days per year and not just on club-sanctioned rides. A club permit costs \$123 per year for a 90-day permit, plus approximately \$50 per year for club membership.

I presently ride a 1984 Moto Guzzi 500cc which is registered under the VicRoads club permit scheme and overseen by the 59 Club, a 1960s rocker inspired motorcycle club. I am also a member of the Moto Guzzi Club of Victoria, the MRA, the VicRoads-led Motorcycle Advisory Group, which you have discussed on several occasions here today, and the Victorian-based IRG, an independent think tank on motorcycle safety. Professionally I am a journalist, previously employed by News Limited, and have worked in PR for the international development organisation Plan International.

Motorcycling for me, as well as a large number of other motorcyclists, is not just a form of transport. In fact from my own observations it appears that most of these recreational motorcyclists only ride their bikes on weekends during dry weather. They mostly drive cars for transportation. Motorcycling is our recreational activity, and for many of us it is also a lifestyle and what defines us. This is the changing face of motorcycling — a change that is rapidly growing, a change that this parliamentary inquiry has acknowledged in its terms of reference and a change that has also been acknowledged by the TAC, which stated in its 2010 report that two-thirds of motorcyclists ride recreationally. According to the TAC the changing face of motorcycling represents nearly 110 000 of the 160 000 road-registered motorcycles in Victoria in 2011.

If we can assume recreational motorcycling is equally high nationally, this represents over 460 000 motorcycles of the 700 000 registered motorcycles, as stated in the Australian Bureau of Statistics census on motor vehicle registrations 2011, this represents a national growth of 47 per cent and a growth in Victoria of 40 per cent since the previous census in 2006.

However, our government, through its motorcycle safety advertising campaigns and its departments' recommendations submitted to this parliamentary inquiry, appears to be on a mission to portray motorcyclists as risk-takers, as people who live outside the law, as temporary Australians who need to be protected from themselves. This could not be further from the truth. In fact motorcycle fatalities have dropped significantly over the past 28 years, from 482 in 1982 to 224 in 2010, as reported in the federal government's *Road Deaths Australia — 2010 Statistical Summary*. During the same period motorcycle registrations have increased

dramatically. In just the past five years motorcycle registrations have increased by nearly 50 per cent. The report suggests that by 2016 there will be over 1 million motorcycles registered in Australia. Motorcycling is here to stay, as are motorcyclists who are passionate about motorcycling and their right to ride. For example, I am here today speaking to you to help bring about a positive response to increasing motorcycle safety that is based on community values and cooperation rather than control and conflict.

The reality is that the recreational motorcyclist is often middle-aged and owns a car. As well as paying a car registration they also have a registered motorcycle or even two or three motorcycles, all of which are mostly used recreationally, about 60 times per year. These motorcyclists may also be a husband, a wife, a boyfriend, a girlfriend or any other combination. They mostly own their own home, work full time and have adult children. They are often members of a recreational motorcycle club group. When they ride on weekends they eat, drink and sleep in many small towns throughout regional Victoria. They also support Victoria's motorcycle retail sector through regular servicing of their motorcycles as well as purchasing motorcycle parts and accessories.

Unfortunately I am unable to provide statistical research to support my views, as no such research on road-riding recreational motorcyclists has ever been conducted. I can only go on my own observations as a motorcyclist and as a 10-year resident of Healesville, at the foothills of the Yarra Ranges, where hundreds of motorcyclists ride every weekend, particularly when the weather is fine.

What has all this got to do with improving motorcycle safety? Within this changing face of motorcycling lies an opportunity for our government to help improve motorcycle safety now and well into the future. This opportunity lies in extending the club permit scheme to all road-riding recreational motorcyclists. Extending the scheme would operate the same way as the present club permit registration system operated by VicRoads — that is, motorcycle and scooter riders who ride recreationally would be required to join a club that is authorised by VicRoads to issue club permits as their motorcycle registration.

In addressing the terms of reference of this inquiry, my recommendation is a new initiative that will help reduce motorcycle crashes and injuries, particularly among novice riders for the following reasons. When novice riders complete their learner permit training they would have the option to join a club and register their motorcycle under the club permit scheme. As clubs oversee the scheme, there is an expectation that members participate in club rides. Members registering their motorcycle under the club permit scheme must also abide by road rules. If they do not, they can lose the privilege of the club permit registration. The safety benefit, as for all recreational riders, would provide safe opportunities for novice riders to participate on organised rides with experienced riders.

Organised club rides or just riding to a regular club meet for coffee are usually held on weekends, particularly on Sundays, with departure at 9.00 a.m. or 10.00 a.m., one of the safest times for learner riders to be on the road and riding to the departure point. The drunks are long gone, the shops are mostly still closed and church services have not yet ended. Learner riders and even those who have moved to a probationary licence can use the ride to the club meeting point to gain on-road riding experience in a relatively safe traffic environment. They can then participate in an organised ride and gain further riding experience as part of this group ride.

Channelling learner riders into the club plates scheme is also a more realistic option than the presently proposed supervision by a licensed rider on-road riding component of the learner phase of VicRoads proposed motorcycle graduated licensing system. For many of those on learner plates who do not know a licensed motorcyclist, it would be very difficult to ride on-road under supervision. Do not be fooled into thinking that this would deter only the very keen from getting a motorcycle licence. Loopholes in the system would soon be found. New riders would still get their licences but with even fewer on-road riding skills.

But if novice riders on learner permits were channelled into the club permit system, they would not only be legally able to ride to the starting point of sanctioned club rides but would then participate in this club ride, where they could concentrate on improving their riding skills and not on the route, as they would be following a ride leader who also controls the speed of the group to keep within the speed limit. By participating in the club ride, novice riders can also benefit from the advice of experienced riders on road safety, particularly on the awareness of potential road dangers. It would be a sort of informal mentorship because, after all, when you get a group of motorcyclists together the topic of conversation is mostly all things motorcycling. This also includes how to stay upright.

Many clubs also hold regular service days where members can further improve safety by learning basic maintenance such as for brakes and steering on their bikes. Once these novice riders have graduated to a probationary and then open motorcycle licence, they will do so with improved on-road riding experience. They may then also use their motorcycle for both recreational use and as a form of transport. As such they may opt out of the club permit scheme and get full registration for their motorcycle.

Under the terms of reference the inquiry is also keen to learn the attitudes of riders towards safety and risk-taking, including drugs and alcohol, travelling at inappropriate speeds, the use of protective clothing and fatigue. I can only speak from my own experience as a road-riding recreational motorcyclist with a motorcycle registered under the club permit system. On club-sanctioned rides, riders follow a leader who controls the speed. Most experienced motorcyclists do not take drugs or drink alcohol over the legal limit while riding. This is why they have reached this point of experience in their life.

To ride a motorcycle requires constant awareness, which is not possible if one is under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Club rides usually stop for lunch at a country pub with one or two light beers consumed along with a hearty pub meal. On the return ride back to Melbourne there is always an afternoon coffee stop, allowing riders to rest and avoid fatigue.

Motorcycle culture, especially within a recreational motorcycle club, is all about wearing a leather motorcycle jacket and vest adorned with patches and badges as an expression of one's individuality. If leather pants are not worn, then there are Kevlar-reinforced jeans, which at first glance appear to be ordinary jeans. I seriously question any research that states that motorcyclists prefer to wear jeans instead of protective pants. One just needs to ask for sales figures from motorcycle clothing manufacturers such as Draggin Jeans. Black leather motorcycle boots complete the look. Of course we all wear helmets.

This inquiry is also concerned with riders and drivers attitudes towards each other. Recreational motorcyclists often ride as a group and as such are highly visible to drivers. This coupled with having their headlights on means that if motorcyclists are not seen, it is the driver's inattention to his or her surroundings beyond what is happening within their car that is at fault and not the lack of visibility of motorcyclists.

As most motorcyclists also drive cars and therefore pay car registration, they are already paying double in registration fees. In fact it is not uncommon for a couple who are also motorcyclists to pay up to four or more registrations per household per year in Victoria. That is two cars and two or more motorcycles which are all used recreationally. Due to this imbalance and the fact that road safety is funded from registration fees for all other road users, the motorcycle safety levy needs to be abolished. If this cannot be done, it needs to be used entirely for rider training and education.

As the government is seeking ways to work with non-government stakeholders to achieve motorcycle safety outcomes, extending the club permit scheme would be a positive step towards this. As I have already pointed out, I do not represent any motorcycle club in my submission. Therefore the first step would be to bring non-government stakeholders together to determine how extending the club permit scheme may work.

I would suggest that it be a requirement that those clubs authorised to issue club permits, or any new clubs that form as a result of extending this scheme, need to hold at least one organised club ride per month and also have a regular meeting point once per week, say on Sundays, similar to the 59 Club, which meets every Sunday at 10.00 a.m. in Healesville.

Since my submission to extend the club permit scheme was lodged with the inquiry in July this year, I have spoken to many motorcyclists. The majority feel this is a common-sense approach to improving safety and rider skills after people complete training. Of course all motorcyclists feel it is also a just and democratic approach, as they are angry about the unfairness of the present registration system where they pay almost the same registration on a car as on their motorcycle, which is used recreationally. Then there are those who are angry with me for meddling with the club plate scheme in the first place. 'You will ruin it for the rest of us', was often a comment. While I am undeterred, it does indicate that there is an unhealthy level of mistrust simmering in the motorcycling community towards government. The other most often voiced comment from my fellow motorcyclists and even friends who are not riders was that the government will never do it because they will lose too much revenue.

Let us take a closer look at the likely financial benefit to the community if the club permit scheme was extended and thus further fuelled the growth of recreational motorcycling. If, as the TAC states, two-thirds of motorcyclists ride recreationally, that is 110 000 motorcyclists not including those who travel to Victoria from interstate for events like the GP. If each one of these motorcyclists spend, as I do, about \$50 on a day ride, including, coffee, a meal and petrol, then this is \$5.5 million a year. Like me, these recreational motorcyclists may also go on an average of 20 organised club rides per year. Then they could be spending approximately \$1 billion per year, and this does not include overnight rides when the spend includes accommodation, extra meals and drinks. As all reports indicate, recreational motorcycling is growing rapidly.

The financial benefit to the motorcycling retail sector is an even more significant contribution, but by far the biggest contribution is the club permit scheme, which, if extended to all road-riding recreational motorcyclists, would be the opportunity for novice riders to gain road-riding skills from experienced riders and therefore improve motorcycle safety.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to present to you today.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. We appreciate your presentation, complemented by some very interesting photos. I think my colleague who is a member for Western Metropolitan Region might be contemplating taking up the sport again.

Ms ELLIS — We have a lot of fun. There is great camaraderie.

The CHAIR — The prospect of him taking up a flying licence has just diminished with that presentation.

Mr LANGUILLER — Thank you so much for your contribution. I am mindful of the fact that you have been with us for a day and a half or thereabouts. You have certainly sat through today. I personally think there is a role for clubs, and we need to work through that, but in order to do so we need to dispel certain perceptions or misconceptions in relation to clubs.

I have asked a few people around the table, ‘What do you think of motorcycle clubs?’, and the first and immediate reactions from, I think, five people were quite negative. Then when I pressed on and asked the questions, ‘Why?’ and ‘Where do you get these ideas from?’, and so on and so forth, they began to back down. But the general perception of ordinary people who are not associated with motorcycling and clubs is, for whatever reason, wrong. I think we are coming to know the reasons now. Can I ask you how many clubs there are in Victoria? Do we know?

Ms ELLIS — I am not sure.

Mr LANGUILLER — Do we know of the membership?

Ms ELLIS — I do not know. I do not even know if those figures are available. I do not know if anyone is even collecting those sorts of statistics.

The CHAIR — There are some clubs who do not release their statistics.

Mr LANGUILLER — This is a subject that we have not talked about in this inquiry. From my point of view I think it is important that we do, whether we do that now or we do it on notice and subsequently receive submissions from other submitters, including you, if you want to, because I believe that there is a much greater role for motorcycle clubs in training and mentorship. I really like the terminology that you have used.

Ms ELLIS — That is why I am here today.

Mr LANGUILLER — I really believe that is the case. It happens in all clubs. I belong to a club where we basically have to help each other. I am an iceberger; I swim long distance with people. Typically you go out and swim with old-timers, so to speak, who know the trade and understand some of the tricks of the sport and so on. Partly I believe there is an objection at a community level, and we will have to deal with institutional prejudice, and I mean institutional prejudice in terms of the agencies, government departments and politicians themselves in relation to motorcyclists. In my judgement, certainly at a community level, anecdotally there is a perception that I think we need to try to help to overcome in relation to motorcycle riders and certainly clubs. That could

help in some way to find a space and an agenda for very good institutions — and I mean the clubs and the community — to play a very significant part in the future. But the mentorship part I think is terrific.

Ms ELLIS — When I got my motorcycle licence it was actually in the Northern Territory. My father took me to the police station, and the police sergeant said, ‘Can she ride a motorcycle?’. My father said, ‘Yes, she can’, and that was my motorcycle licence. ‘There you go’, and off I went.

The licensing system in Victoria now, to me, is really similar to my first experience of when I was a motorcycle courier in London. The first company I worked for said to me, ‘If you can survive the first three weeks, you’ll be all right’. That is the same thing now, I think. Once you get your learners permit, if you can go out there and survive the first three weeks on the road, you will be all right. It should not be like that. It is a sink-or-swim situation. The riders come out after getting their learners permit and they are just thrown into the deep end, not channelled into any kind of system. There is no option other than them having to pay for their post-rider training themselves. A lot of people just do not have the money to do that.

Mr LANGUILLER — Can you expand further on the concept of the club permit registration.

Ms ELLIS — It was introduced so that all the older motorcycles could be on the road. They are used recreationally, and they are only taken out occasionally, once a month or so, on weekends. Then there was a push to have motorcycles that were, say, 25 years old included. Then there was another push, and that is the new club plate scheme now. Previously you could only use your club-plated vehicle or club-permit vehicle on a sanctioned club ride or drive event. Today I am here on my motorcycle, which has a club plate. I can use my motorcycle for 90 days per year in any way I like. I can commute into the city. I actually come into the city about once a month. I ride my motorcycle into the city, and I am on a club plate. But if I was a commuter coming into the city every day to work, it would not work. I would have a full registration, because I would quickly use up my 90 days.

Mr LANGUILLER — What is the cost to you personally?

Ms ELLIS — I think it is \$129 now for vehicle; it has gone up. When I paid back in July it was \$123 for the year, for the 90-day permit. Plus you have to be a member of a motorbike club. I pay \$50 to the club, and they actually oversee the permit. They sign all the documents, and then I pay VicRoads the \$123. If I am not a member of a motorbike club, I cannot get the club permit. The two are integral to each other.

Also with the 59 Club that I am a member of, it is not as if you can just join up to get the club permit. Some motorbike clubs are actually operating like that. The 59 Club actually wants you to come along and see if you like being part of the club, if it is what you want to do, rather than just join up straightaway. You join up, and then there is an expectation that you will participate in club events, and they can actually withdraw your membership if you do not. If all the clubs sat down and talked about what the terms would be of operating the club permit scheme, it would be an expectation that members participate in rides and not just sign up to get the cheap registration and that is it, off they go, as a way to get around paying for registration. The two clubs I am a member of, the Moto Guzzi club and the 59 Club, both have service days. It is so good to take your bike there. I learn how to do things on my bike to keep it safe: to make sure the brakes are safe, the steering bearings are fine and all those sorts of things are working correctly.

Mr LANGUILLER — Do you see any potential role complementing the DECAs and the HARTs of the world and the training agencies and organisations?

Ms ELLIS — The learners need to go through those organisations to get their learners permit, and some people will still take on post-learner training to get the additional training, but I think the club permits — the two can kind of work together because it is all a cost factor at the end of the day. Some of this post-learner training is really quite expensive; you are looking at \$100 a day, and not everybody has that kind of money to go out, especially people who want to just ride recreationally. If you are looking at improving training in that sense, that could be where the TAC levy could fund and subsidise training. You could have a learner training system, not just a car park somewhere but actually taking a leader and taking three or four learner-riders on the road, teaching them to filter in traffic, teaching them to follow around the city.

Mr TILLEY — Thank you, Heather. I want to continue on club permits. I appreciate all the esprit de corps and the camaraderie, being a class of people doing things together and what it creates and the opportunities and

things like that, and before I go any further, this is not a case for arguing for or against revenue. I am certainly not in a class of people who want to see an increase in day-to-day living costs for anybody whatsoever. I want to find new and better ways where we can meet the demands of the costs of living today and be able to participate in legitimate activities that as Victorians we want to do, and motorcycling is certainly one of them. I do recognise the benefits that tourism brings. As a politician I represent a great part of Victoria in the north-east of the state where we have some bloody terrific rides, and we know what the economic drivers and the benefits of all of that are, but I want to have a discussion with you particularly about compliance. This is the nuts and bolts of it. So that you are aware, I have a working history where I drew a salary from working in the field of law enforcement and compliance and dealing with not only club things but trade plates and unregistered permits. From hearing and talking with people when they are intercepted I can tell you I have heard everything — I probably have not but I am not surprised by human nature either. If this was developed as a recommendation, what about the compliance issue, because with a class of people it is quite often open to abuse? This is probably quite hysterical, but there are outlaw bike gangs, for one example. I am not saying that for a moment, but people are always looking for ways to shortcut loose ends in legislation and things like that. How do we ensure legitimacy and the keeping of club ethos?

Ms ELLIS — With the club permit scheme you have a logbook and you have to write down every ride you do. Before you go on the ride you record it and if, for example, I am stopped and I am asked to produce my logbook and I have not filled it out, it basically means I am riding my motorcycle unregistered and I could incur the same fine as somebody who is driving or riding an unregistered vehicle. That would be one way.

With a club plate you have a different coloured plate; it is white letters on maroon, so it stands out as something different to the normal registration. If you have a motorcyclist who thinks, ‘I will get a club plate and I will commute’, they would be seen regularly riding in and out of the city, and the highway patrol might notice that bike again and again and pick them up that way.

Mr TILLEY — You would hear from Victoria Police and they would say they are underresourced.

Ms ELLIS — If you look at the figures, it would be, say, two-thirds. The TAC have said that two-thirds of motorcyclists ride recreationally. I really cannot see that there would be compliance issues. People are using their bikes on weekends. Now these people pay full registration on two and three motorcycles plus their car every year. I have a car as well so I am paying for the car and the club plate. I cannot see why they would do it when they are not commuting anyway. If you look out there when you are driving around, you see that the number of scooter riders has grown; there are a lot of people out there riding scooters. But motorcyclists who commute from the outer suburbs into the city, there are not that many of them. Ten years ago I used to commute a lot; I was riding in and out of the city every day. Rain, hail or shine I would be on the bike. There were not a lot of motorcyclists out there then, but there are less now. On the occasions when I do commute it usually is rush hour into the city and rush hour out of the city again. It is the recreational motorcyclists. If they have a club plate, it will not make any difference to them. They are not going to be riding their bike any more than they would anyway. Even I find it really hard to use up my 90 days for the year. I am up to about my 19th ride now and we are nearly towards the end of the year so it will be hard for me to use up my 90 days.

Mr TILLEY — So you are well travelled; you have seen many parts of the world and no doubt met many interesting people. Are there any other jurisdictions where you have seen something similar?

Ms ELLIS — No, I am sure it is out there but I have not experienced it because previously I have not been involved in motorcycle groups or recreational motorcycle clubs up until now.

Mr TILLEY — On a separate note, do you see a place for club rides and how they would look with graduated licensing schemes?

Ms ELLIS — Under the proposed GLS, they are wanting to have this supervised on-road training after you get your learners permit, and as you have heard numerous times over the past three days, that is just not going to be practical because not many people know somebody to ride with them. That means they are going to have to hire somebody and they will not, they will find a loophole around it. Even if we base it on a logbook system where you have to write down and somebody has to tick it or sign it, give their licence number, you have just got to ring up a mate and say, ‘What is your licence number?’. They will not do it; they will still have the same or less on-road riding skills than they have now.

For example when I was in the 59 Club we would meet on every Sunday at 10 o'clock in Healesville. If somebody lives in, say, Doncaster, they have a purpose to ride out to Healesville. They are a new rider and they are really nervous about getting on their bike because they do not have the skills. On Sunday it is dead quiet. I do not know if you have been out on the roads at that time on a Sunday morning but there is not much traffic, and off they go. That riding from the front door of their house, say from Doncaster to Healesville, gives them on-road riding experience in quite a safe environment, so they get out there and they go on an organised ride. There might be an organised ride. They have a coffee and chat to a few people and then they ride home again. They are sort of going with the flow of the traffic as they are coming back into the city, but they have had the riding out to Healesville to warm them up and make them feel a little bit more confident. The more times you are on the bike the more experience and the more skills you get and the more confident you are because you become aware of road hazards.

Mr TILLEY — It is not like golf practice, it has got to be good practice.

Ms ELLIS — Yes. Riding around a car park and a training venue is not the same as riding on the road. When you are with a group of motorcyclists you always talk about this happening or that happening, so new riders will learn about potential hazards on the road: what cars are doing, what to do when you are coming up to an intersection, looking out for cars, not rushing off. For example, if the light turns green, you do not rush off through it, you look because there could be cars running the red light coming in the other direction. It is all this sort of stuff that you are constantly looking out for, and new riders do not know that. It is better for them to hear it from somebody like myself or other experienced riders than actually having a near miss.

Mr TILLEY — On a closing note, because my colleagues want to ask some questions as well, and on the lighter side — Moto Guzzi — is it a romance of everything that is available worldwide in the market?

Ms ELLIS — Yes. I think once you have ridden the Moto Guzzi, you will never ride anything else.

Mr TILLEY — I had to ask. I have never ridden one.

Ms ELLIS — They have soul.

Mr LANGUILLER — No comment from the gallery.

The CHAIR — We are moving on in time; we do not have much time left before we have to take our next speaker. My colleagues have a couple of quick comments and questions.

Mr PERERA — Just a quick one, Heather. What is the camaraderie or friendship like? What do you do in a motorcycle club? You said you have a participating club and they have the right to kick you out. So what do you do? Do you ride in the morning and then you have forums and stuff like that, or what do you do?

Ms ELLIS — With the 59 Club, they meet every Sunday. People have coffee and chat, and some people have breakfast. After that, at about 11 o'clock or 11.30, they say, 'Okay, where are we going to go for a ride?', and off they go for a ride around the hills. Then there might be an organised event or an annual event that they have or other organised rides. They will post on the forum on their website, and you meet at that point.

The Moto Guzzi club have one organised ride every month. That happens the same every year, so you will go along to that. They do not actually have a weekly meet-up, but they have one regular ride. They also have other social events as well, like somebody's 50th birthday — because again a lot of them are middle aged — or different parties and so forth where they all get together.

Mr PERERA — So they do not provide motorcycle safety programs or any training for newcomers?

Ms ELLIS — No.

Mr ELSBURY — The scheme is mostly for 25-year-old bikes; is that correct?

Ms ELLIS — At this point the bike has to be 25 years old or older.

Mr ELSBURY — How many of those bikes would be on the LAMS list?

Ms ELLIS — I would imagine all of them, because they are all quite low capacity, low weight motorcycles. It is not usual to find bikes that are old that are the big, high cc, high weight-to-ratio motorcycles.

Mr ELSBURY — If we were to put new motorcycles in amongst the older vehicles, how would they be grouped?

Ms ELLIS — It all comes back to the fact that we are talking about recreational road riding motorcyclists. These are people who do not ride their motorcycles every day. They may ride the bike once a weekend or on average maybe 60 times a year. Whether it is a LAMS bike or a non-LAMS bike is really not the point. It is like having a boat licence or boat registration: it is a recreational activity; it is a pastime. It is not a form of transport but it is being treated as a form of transport.

Mr ELSBURY — While I do accept the whole fact that you are saying it is not a LAMS issue, if you are asking new motorcyclists to come on board and get involved, especially someone like me — I am restricted as to what bike I am allowed to ride at the moment — it is a LAMS issue, if you want newer people getting involved.

Ms ELLIS — But that is a good thing. I would not like to see you, as a new rider, on a high cc motorcycle and a very heavy motorcycle that you might not be able to touch the ground from properly, that is too heavy and too powerful for your level of skill. The LAMS scheme is very good for new riders.

The CHAIR — Ms Ellis, thank you very much for giving of your time this afternoon and for your insight, which will help balance a number of issues that we will be dealing with as we prepare our report.

Ms ELLIS — I just to want add a couple of other comments to what people have said here today. On the statistics, again I will reiterate what other people have said here today: they are not being collected adequately, and they need to be divided into two separate groups: on-road rides and off-road riding under the recreational rego or unregistered and being ridden on properties and accidents that happen in that situation, so that the two lots of statistics are divided. If you do that, there will be a dramatic difference in the fatalities that you get. Having them all lumped in together is not really giving a true indication of what is happening out there.

Then the statistics on crashes or fatalities and injuries need to be divided into people who commute and those who ride recreationally. This is where the club plates scheme would come in. Recreational riders are mostly under the club plate scheme. Those statistics would be really easy to gather. Then I think you would also find a big difference, because the more you are on the road in traffic the more likely you are to probably have an accident, if you do not have the skills. Rob from the VMC spoke before about the Motorcycle Advisory Group. I sit on that group and I totally agree with his suggestions about how it is structured and about the meetings that are held at VicRoads. They need to be held in a neutral environment, such as the Melbourne town hall. I received the minutes from the first meeting we had, and they were absolutely, completely, non-reflective of what went on at that meeting. I brought up several suggestions; they were not minuted. Other people in the meeting brought up suggestions; they were not minuted either. Why are we there?

The CHAIR — Heather, thank you. You are making some very good points. I wonder if you could just sharpen them a little bit, at the moment.

Ms ELLIS — The last one was driver awareness. For the training of car drivers, there need to be training sessions on road hazards. I mean, I am sure that now it is included what you do if a dog runs out in front of you or a pedestrian crosses the road and so forth. There also needs to be a component on motorcycles, so that they are aware of motorcycles on the road — some sort of interactive training session. I do not think a car driver needs to get onto a motorcycle and ride around the city, but there need to be some interactive computer-based training sessions, so that they can see where motorcycles are. They need to really emphasise the fact that they need to use their indicators and not do U-turns suddenly — push the dangers of that really strongly in driver training.

The CHAIR — They are some excellent comments. Thank you for them. Should you have any other ideas, feel free to forward them to the secretariat. You have made a most worthwhile contribution to our proceedings. Thank you very much.

Witness withdrew.