

TRANSCRIPT

ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Inquiry into motorcycle safety

Wangaratta — 29 November 2011

Members

Mr A. Elsbury

Mr T. Languiller

Mr J. Perera

Mr M. Thompson

Mr B. Tilley

Chair: Mr M. Thompson
Deputy Chair: Mr T. Languiller

Staff

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Witness

Mr N. Weeks.

The CHAIR — Can you tell us your address and postal address, Mr Weeks?

Mr WEEKS — <Address confidential>.

The CHAIR — You have heard the general injunctions and instructions given to people speaking. I will not repeat them at this hour other than to ask whether there are any comments you would like to make to the committee from your perspective in relation to matters concerning motorcycle safety.

Mr WEEKS — All I would like to say is that I have been riding motorcycles for 35 years. It has been really interesting to hear different points of view today and that sort of stuff. I am talking from my own perspective, but I will say training is a very important part in relation to motorcycle safety. I have done the HART course that was talked about here earlier on today down at the Winton racecourse. I found that course very informative, and I would really like to see those sorts of things extended and improved on, because there were quite a few motorcyclists there that day.

The CHAIR — I will hold you there in that you are speaking in support of training along the lines of the HART course which was good value. Are there any other comments? Just to help you along, you made a comment in relation to pillion passengers.

Mr WEEKS — Yes, I made a comment about a pillion passengers. I believe it is a part of the motorcycle to be able to carry a pillion passenger as far as that goes.

The CHAIR — So you are speaking in support of the ongoing role of pillion passengers.

Mr WEEKS — Yes, and attitude as far as safety and training is the big thing in that sort of line as well. You can put on your high vision and all that sort of stuff, but if the rider has not got the right attitude, then it is not going to make them any more visible or less prone to having an accident.

The CHAIR — What has brought you here today?

Mr WEEKS — As I said, I have been riding motorcycles for 35 years. I have just come along to hear what was being said. I have heard lots of different things in the media and everything else. I just wanted to hear what exactly was being said and discussed. I thought this was more a meeting to hear what was sort of going on. I did not realise it was more an information session for you members as a committee to hear what was going on, so it has been an informative day for me as well. I was not 100 per cent of what was going to take place.

The CHAIR — Do you have a view on filtering?

Mr WEEKS — I do it, but filtering — —

The CHAIR — We could leave it at that for the moment.

Mr WEEKS — Like Bill Gore said, it is not a big issue here in our area because there is not a lot of traffic. I will sometimes pass one or two cars to get in front. Sometimes I sit behind. It is one of those things I do not do all the time.

The CHAIR — Protective clothing?

Mr WEEKS — Yes, but in saying that I have not got it on today. I have Kevlar jeans on but I am not wearing a jacket today.

The CHAIR — Or gloves?

Mr WEEKS — I have gloves. I always wear gloves — that is a must, I reckon.

The CHAIR — Do you believe any other items of clothing should be mandated apart from a helmet?

Mr WEEKS — I have heard people say — like the gentleman there, Greg — helmet, gloves, jacket and boots and all that sort of stuff, but I do not know. I wear it, but to mandate it puts a different spin on it, if you know what I mean. I do not want to sound negative about it, but it comes back to the attitude. If it is mandated, I will wear it. Like what Bill said on the high-vis, he does not wear it himself but he wears it as a police officer.

But if it was mandated, he would wear it. I am a bit the same with protective clothing. If it is mandated, I will wear it. But I do not wear it all the time, as far as that goes.

The CHAIR — Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Mr WEEKS — I would just like to thank you for letting me come up and say my two bob here and now.

The CHAIR — Wait one moment. My colleagues might have some questions.

Mr LANGUILLER — Just very quickly, how did you hear about the hearings today?

Mr WEEKS — I was actually sent an email. I am a member of the Christian Motorcycle Association and there was an email sent through that from Damien about the meetings. I just went to the website and found out there was a meeting here in Wangaratta.

Mr LANGUILLER — Why do you ride?

Mr WEEKS — For enjoyment, thank you for asking. Yeah, I actually do it for enjoyment and for community. I am on my motorcycle now. I have a car sitting at home in the shed, but it is easier to get on the motorcycle. I can park it very easily, especially just coming up to the city. I just ride in, you can park easily and that sort of thing too. So it is a convenience as well as enjoyment. And I commute with it; I ride to work and stuff like that. It is multifaceted.

Mr ELSBURY — Have you had any prangs?

Mr WEEKS — Very good. Yes, I have. I had a major one 10 years ago. I actually straight-lined a corner and went into a fence. I went over the handlebars, and if it was not for a full-face helmet, I would not have this beautiful face I have now because I faceplanted the ground, knocked myself out, broke a leg, smashed my wrist and all that sort of stuff. But in saying that, it did not put me off motorcycling at all. I am very wary. That was over near Omeo, by the way. Not on the Great Alpine Way — on the Omeo Highway.

Mr PERERA — What class of motorcycle do you ride? What is the size? The cc?

Mr WEEKS — I am on a 650cc now, but I have ridden everything from a 175cc up to an 1100cc. I have owned everything in between. I am currently riding a 650cc.

Mr PERERA — How do you compare? Do you feel safer on a bigger bike or a smaller bike? What is the comparison? What is your preference?

Mr WEEKS — That is an interesting question actually. There is no real difference, I do not think. Maybe a bigger bike gives you the feeling that you are safer but you are no safer on a bigger bike than a smaller bike. The 175cc I had was an off-road trail bike, and I have ridden it on-road and off-road and I have fallen off in the bush but a lot of those falls are slow-speed accidents. The time I fell off and hit the fence, that was a high-speed accident so you tend to hurt yourself a bit more on the road as opposed to off-road. It is interesting to hear the stats where 70 per cent of road trauma is off-road now. That is what interests me actually.

The CHAIR — In this region.

Mr WEEKS — Yes. I have ridden off-road all my life, so I have had some falls off-road but none of them have been major. Sliding in mud and all that sort of stuff, falling off in creeks, but nothing with any major damage.

The CHAIR — If you have any other reflections or thoughts, feel free to keep in touch with our committee. We have an email address.

Mr WEEKS — I would like to get that if I can at some stage.

The CHAIR — We can pass it on through our executive officer, Kylie Jenkins.

Mr WEEKS — That would be good.

Mr TILLEY — You mentioned earlier that you were not sure how today would go, but let me say that your contribution, every contribution, is extremely important.

Mr WEEKS — I would like to thank you for that.

Mr TILLEY — You mentioned then that you spent a fairly substantial part of your riding life off-road.

Mr WEEKS — Yes.

Mr TILLEY — In that 35 years of riding both on-road and off-road, are there any skills or anything that you have done that has enhanced your riding, your system of operating or the style of riding that you use? Do some of those skills that you have learnt in off-road riding apply to on-road riding — for example, your handling, your balance or general control?

Mr WEEKS — It is funny you ask that because when I did the HART training course I was riding the 1100cc motorcycle at the time and I was riding it like I was riding a trail bike where I was staying upright and the instructor said, 'Hey!'. He said straightaway, 'You are a trail bike rider, aren't you?'. I said, 'Yeah'. He said, 'You do not use these principles on the road'. I said, 'Oh, okay'. Coming back to what I was saying, that training was invaluable to me. He showed me how to go around a corner on bitumen, and as soon as I did that riding on-road just became so much easier and I felt so much safer doing what I was doing.

That is why I cannot emphasise that part of it enough, especially for people coming back to riding who might have ridden trail bikes or smaller bikes years ago. All of a sudden they are on these big bikes and they need to be refreshed on handling these new bikes because they are more powerful. I would just like to thank you again for letting me have a chance to talk.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your time here today. I would also like to thank Mr Codognotto for his attention during the day and also Mr Sunderland for his time under occasional duress with prior injury. Thank you for being here and for your valuable remarks. I also thank Mr Lemin for coming along. If you feel you want to say anything else, you can come to Wodonga tomorrow.

Mr WEEKS — Training is priority no.1, believe you me.

The CHAIR — That will be the note on which we will finish. Thank you.

Committee adjourned.