



# MOTORCYCLE RIDERS ASSOCIATION

OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY INCORPORATED

GPO Box 1768, Canberra City ACT 2601

## NRMA – ACT Road Safety Trust Ride and Thrive Report

The MRA ACT received a \$22,600 grant from the NRMA – Road Safety Trust (Trust) in June 2005 to support a road safety initiative targeting risk management rider development over a two year period.

The objectives of the program were to

- instil in riders an increased sense of risk management and a deliberate intention to lower risk levels through the application of hazard perception techniques, and early and proactive planning for risks
- reduce crash trauma through development and deployment of preventative measures
- increase market appeal to riders of risk management style training as distinct from track based physical control skills training
- deliver a sound rider training model in the ACT that could prove the risk management based experiential (on road) model and implement it nationwide through the auspices of bodies such as Australian Motorcycle Council
- contribute towards self-improvement in the rider training profession and the rider training industry by increasing focus on mental and self-control in all aspects of rider training.

Initially Stay Upright, the local rider training provider, was engaged to help develop the curriculum with intellectual property provided by Roadsense, a company with demonstrated experience and skill in delivering the form of training specified for the project. Difficulties were encountered with curriculum development and resourcing by Stay Upright resulting in Honda Australia Rider Training (HART) being engaged, given they had already developed a course with the required curriculum in line with the Roadsense concepts, and they had, and still have, a rider training presence in the ACT and surrounds delivering Australia Post (“postie”) rider training. The ACT’s Ride n Thrive was based on Honda’s Roadskills course.

The first course was run in February 2006, and the last one conducted in November 2011. There were 12 courses run with 124 participants in that time.

The course participants represented a broad range of ages and experience levels.

The feedback from the evaluations was generally positive, for example

- Course content was all relevant
- Key messages were considered beneficial by each participant
- Course offered either confirmation that they had the right practices in place or introduced new concepts
- Information from the course would enhance their enjoyment of riding and change the way they think and plan when riding
- For some who had experienced a crash in the past, their crash may have been prevented had they been able to apply the risk management strategies learned on the course.

While the objectives of the project were achieved for the participants who attended and the project has been successful in this context, the number of participants and uptake of the course dwindled with time, despite the lengthy periods in between scheduling.

Uptake was influenced by two factors. Firstly, to minimise costs advertising and marketing was limited to the motorcycle community email lists and clubs, and more recently Facebook, however saturation was achieved early and participation levels did not pick up with time. Access to new riders was limited as Stay Upright, the sole provider of learner and provisional rider training would not advertise this course as it was conducted by a competitor company, despite this being sponsored by the MRA as a road safety initiative.

Secondly and as alluded to in the project proposal, this form of training is not popular with riders, it is not 'sexy' like track based training where there is more expectation of physical skills challenge. This also impacted rider uptake of the sponsored training offer, however rider training uptake is suffering a general downturn as evidenced in the recent Ulysses Club road safety committee report.

Other issues experienced included:

- Interstate trainers were not 'seasoned' to our weather conditions and scheduling was based around potentially more favourable weather conditions. Canberra riders can at any time find themselves riding in conditions of extreme heat, cold and wind and need to be equipped both physically and mentally to maximise safety. When experienced on a course, these are opportune times for addressing the risk management and road safety aspects of riding in such conditions and expected weather conditions are part of course preparation advice to participants. Some opportunities were lost with scheduling restrictions.
- Limited dates were available therefore there were fewer opportunities to run courses due to the weather issue above and also because costs were kept to a minimum by timing our courses to coincide with the 'postie' schedule.
- The course format changed over time resulting in less individual feedback and coaching, with commensurate less value to participants.
- Rider trainer skill levels were satisfactory. However for this type of training to be really effective and have returning participants, it requires a rider trainer of above average analytical, conceptual, communication and adult education skill to engage strongly with participants. Concepts and messages need to be packaged and sold convincingly, especially when dealing with riders who have fixed opinions, regardless of age and experience levels.

The rider training industry continues to do what it has always done. The plus side of this is that HART still offer on road experiential learning. The other side is that other providers, notably large national provider(s) still run track based training almost exclusively with offerings of theory courses on roadcraft, which leaves the ACT with no offering of experiential learning with the closure of this project.

In my experience as a rider trainer, participants in class room theory situations can provide text book perfect answers in response to situations and scenarios presented. Students I have observed over a 10 year period almost without fail do not put classroom theory into practice on the open road. It takes observed riding and individual coaching in the real riding environment for the messages to be converted from theory to practice and the risk management application experienced and reinforced.

Given that the behavioral change messages we are trying to impart through this type of course are about pre-emptive hazard perception and risk management with a view to crash prevention and harm minimization, we need to continue to push for a strategy for encouraging better industry skills and offerings, and better rider awareness of what they need, not want. We also need to influence the national road safety strategies to specifically promulgate this type of training for riders, if not other road users.

As an outcome of our experience here in the ACT and the lessons we can learn from this project, I see our way forward is to continue to work with national motorcycle interest groups, such as the Australian Motorcycle Council and Motorcycling Australia, with a collective affiliation with the rider training industry, in the absence of a peak body, to avoid the sole provider situation which was problematic for this project, and historically others sponsored by the Federal Department of Transport. If a particular company is credited, no other company will use the training material, regardless of its quality. Note also that state jurisdictional boundaries can also affect training curriculum and information adoption.

Involving a broad spectrum of industry representatives will facilitate buy in and industry ownership, development of an 'agnostic' curriculum and a shared intellectual property to circumvent the marketing and advertising, and state, issues.

In developing curricula in the future and to encourage rider uptake, a strategy would be to combine the 'sexy' track based training with the on road components. Use the track as the hook however remain focused on the on road experiential learning in delivery, ensuring that content is convincing, thought provoking and behaviour changing.

We need to source or train **highly qualified and effective** risk management rider trainers, train the trainers and curriculum developers to assist in this effort to guide the curriculum development and training the trainers to the higher standard needed. Examples of the calibre of expertise required are to my knowledge Duncan McRae of the NSW RTA (formally the proprietor of Roadsense) and Alex Jerrim. Mr McRae would certainly be aware of others equally skilled.

Marketing in the future needs to pick up on social media using the likes of Facebook, blogs and Twitter to get the messages out on rider safety and attraction to risk management strategies and courses. Ideally these would be front ended by a well know rider 'hero', usually a race rider, who could sell the road safety message. This comes at a cost however should be considered in future costing/grant/funding considerations. Sophisticated and properly funded advertising campaigns should also be factored into future costing proposals.

The lack of access to new ACT riders was disappointing as new riders are focused on learning physical skills in L and P courses, necessarily. The Ride and Thrive Course was their only opportunity for substantial experiential on road risk management training. Other than voluntary rider assistance with mental skills provided by the Canberra Branch of the Ulysses Club and MRA, there is no other way of helping new riders develop effective mental planning and control skills, noting the limitations of track based learning. Though Ulysses and MRA will continue to provide these voluntary and informal services, ACT Government and the ACT Road Safety Strategy need to focus on filling this gap specifically with formal on road risk management training targeting the 'heads skills', even if user pays, if we are to make a difference.

Beyond the scope of this project however for the future and to augment risk management/hazard perception training take-up, incentives for riders need to be sourced. Insurers have been approached in the past to provide price advantages for riders who undertake training however to date this has not proved fruitful. State and territory government licensing and registration models present other options to be explored and exploited. Though these have been explored in the past, nothing has yet been exploited.

The Ride and Thrive project was successful in achieving some of its objectives, and where objectives were not directly achieved, the project was successful in highlighting and confirming the ongoing challenges that face motorcycle safety advocates. I will continue to raise these issues at a national level with motorcycle organizations.

Robyn Major  
Ride n Thrive Project Manager  
16 February 2012.

Appendix A

Date	Participants	Payment (travel expenses inclusive)
4/2/06	10	
5/2/06	10	\$3630.00
5/5/06	4	
6/5/06	12	\$1440.00
28/10/06	12	
29/10/06	12	\$3040.02
3/2/07	12	
4/2/07	12	\$2600.00
16/2/08	14	\$1260.00
7/11/09	12`	\$1080.00
8/11/09	7	\$630.00
18/11/11	7	<u>\$630.00</u>
invoiced expenditure		\$14310.02
Balance to Trust		<u>\$7749.98</u>
<b>Grant total</b>		<b>\$22060.00</b>