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CRASH RATES *DROPPING* – NOT INCREASING!

The Australian Motorcycle Council (AMC) welcomes the Prime Minister's interest and concerns around motorcycle safety, and looks forward to the establishment of a national road safety advisory council – as long as the true facts are considered in formulating plans.

Speaking in Hobart, AMC Chairman, Shaun Lennard, was responding to comments on Fairfax Radio on Friday 2 May by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

Mr Lennard also added further detail to information released by Infrastructure Minister, Anthony Albanese, showing that the motorcycle crash data in Australia was not as severe as had been represented.

Mr Rudd said on Friday that he had been unaware of the motorcycle crash statistics up until that time, and that the Government would be working to develop national strategies to address what he described as an "appalling" situation.

Mr Rudd was commenting on figures released that day by Minister Albanese, highlighting a 3.1% increase in motorcycle fatalities over the past 10 years.

Whilst welcoming interest in motorcycle safety from the PM, Mr Lennard sought to clarify some of the statistics released by the Minister.

"Whilst the number of motorcycle fatalities has increased by an average of 3.1% over the past 10 years, the number of motorcycles on the road has actually increased by an average of 5.1% each year over the same period. Ten years ago there were around 300,000 registered motorcycles and scooters in Australia. In 2008 it's well over half a million – that's a massive increase. It's around 60% in ten years."

"The fatality *rate* has actually reduced over that period of time – for 2007 it was the lowest it had been in the past ten years. This is in part a reflection of excellent work being done by some of the state jurisdictions in consultation with the AMC's motorcycle rider groups."

In recognising that more could be done by sharing information between the states, last month the Australian Government hosted the first ever Motorcycle and Scooter Safety Summit, in conjunction with the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI), with rider and government representatives from every state and territory.

"At the Summit, we witnessed a real willingness of government agencies from across the country to cooperate; improving communications with motorcycle rider groups. Key stakeholders were exposed to different perspectives on crash data and risk."

“Let’s just continue to deal with the true situation. Whenever I point out that the motorcycle crash rate in Australia is declining, I always get ‘Are you saying that there isn’t a problem, Shaun?’ from Government people.”

“Of course there are still far too many motorcycle crashes in Australia. The AMC is past the ‘blame-game’ though; we want to work on realistic strategies that can bring about further reductions.”

“In the National Road Safety Strategy, motorcyclists are listed as ‘vulnerable road users’ along with cyclists and pedestrians. ‘Vulnerable’ doesn’t mean more likely to crash – it’s saying that if you are unfortunate enough to have a crash, then the outcome is likely to be more severe. This is why motorcyclist *injury* numbers are above those for car drivers.”

“Mr Albanese’s comment last week that ‘your first (motorcycle) accident is likely to be your last’ is neither true nor helpful, and only highlights that the Minister has not been fully briefed on motorcycle safety initiatives.”

“On the other hand, the media release from Mr Albanese made some very positive comments about the Motorcycle Summit, but generally the media has chosen to overlook reporting these.”

“Let’s not have a continuation of what we saw under the previous Government.”

The 2004 House of Representative Standing Committee on Transport report, *Eyes on the Road Ahead*, recommended the development of a national motorcycle strategy, but this went ignored.

“The AMC will be seeking a meeting with the Minister to assist with his understanding of motorcycle safety, and the role motorcycles can play in other areas such as reducing traffic congestion.”

“We also note that out of last Friday’s meeting of the Australian Transport Council – comprising all the transport ministers from across the country – that Mr Albanese has foreshadowed the establishment of a national road safety advisory council. The AMC fully supports this initiative, and welcomes the Australian Government’s commitment to improving road safety for all road user groups.”

Mr Lennard concluded by referring to the forthcoming international motorcycle safety workshop.

“The massive increase in motorcycle and scooter numbers is not unique to Australia – it’s common across the Western world. In recognising that motorcycles and scooters are becoming an increasingly popular transport choice, the OECD’s International Transport Forum is hosting its first-ever international Motorcycle Safety Workshop in Norway in June.”

Mr Lennard will represent Australian and New Zealand riders at the workshop.

“Finally Government’s are recognising that they need to work with motorcycle groups. I will be able to bring back from Europe information and strategies to improve motorcycle safety based on the best information and data available.”

“We look forward to the Prime Minister and Mr Albanese being able to make more positive comments about motorcycling in the future.”

ENDS

Hobart
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For further information call Shaun Lennard on 0417 396 835