A new motorcycle graduated licensing system

VicRoads has been working with the motorcycle community and road safety experts towards implementing a new Graduated Licensing System for motorcyclists in Victoria.

Riding a motorcycle is growing in popularity. In particular, the growing number of motor scooter riders and commuters suggests that riding has become more of a mainstream activity and is not the sole domain of motorcycle enthusiasts.

While the road toll among car drivers, including novice drivers, has decreased over recent years, the fatalities among motorcyclists have not decreased by the same extent. Research indicates that inexperience is a major contributor to Victorian motorcycle crashes, with learner and first year licensed riders comprising almost one-third of all motorcycle fatalities and serious injuries.

Graduated licensing systems

Graduated Licensing Systems worldwide have demonstrated that having a systematic process of phasing in driving privileges over time has reduced the incidences of crashes among young novice car drivers. It is a system which delays full licensure by providing beginners with the opportunity to first gain experience and to acquire critical driving skills under conditions of low risk. As the novices gain maturity and experience, licensure restrictions are gradually lifted and eventually, all restrictions are removed and the novice is granted a full licence.

VicRoads is working towards a number of changes to the current motorcycle training and testing regime with an emphasis on a robust process for riders to graduate through different phases as they develop their riding skills.

Discussion paper

In 2010, VicRoads released [Graduated Licensing for Motorcyclists - A Discussion Paper [PDF 1.8 Mb]] on graduated licensing for public consultation. About 200 submissions were received and over 70 people contributed their ideas and solutions at public forums. VicRoads also
worked with its road safety partners; Victoria Police, the Transport Accident Commission and the Department of Justice to discuss the options and help formulate new policy recommendations. Motorcycle licensing practices worldwide were also reviewed.

VicRoads also took into account a number of recommendations from the Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety, completed by the Parliament of Victoria Road Safety Committee in 2012.

Victoria’s Road Safety Action Plan

As a result of this work, the [Victoria’s Road Safety Action Plan 2013-2016](#) released in 2013, included a commitment to introduce a graduated licensing system for motorcyclists to help beginners develop critical riding skills under safe conditions.

Proposed changes

The New Graduated Licensing System will be introduced in two stages.

Stage 1

Any motorcycle learner permit or licence issued from 1 October 2014 will be subject to the following conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Phase</th>
<th>Licence Phase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ride with headlight on at all times</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• wear a high visibility vest or jacket whilst riding</td>
<td>• no mobile phone use</td>
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<tr>
<td>• if tested on an automatic motorcycle, restricted to riding an automatic motorcycle</td>
<td>• no towing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• must display L plates</td>
<td>The duration for the conditions will be increased from the current 1 year to 3 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>• compulsory carriage of permit</td>
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Stage 2

Planned to be introduced in late 2015 will include:

- a new pre-learner training curriculum which will be required to be undertaken by all learner applicants
- new on-road learner test
- an assessment of capabilities as learners gain experience
- new on-road licence test.

Who will the changes apply to?

Anyone issued with a motorcycle learner permit or licence on or after 1 October 2014 will be subject to the new conditions. A person issued with a learner permit prior to 1 October and subsequently issued with a licence on or after 1 October will be subject to the new conditions.

Any person converting an interstate or overseas motorcycle licence who has not held a motorcycle licence for 3 years will be subject to a pro-rata restricted period after the commencement date.

Mobile phone use

Anyone issued with a restricted licence from 1 October 2014 will not be permitted to use a mobile phone, either hand-held or hands-free, for any purpose while the motorcycle is moving or stationary in traffic. Note that this includes not being permitted to use functions like playing music or using the phone for navigation. They can use the phone whilst legally parked. This rule already applies to all learner permit and probationary licence holders.

A high visibility vest or jacket must be worn by a rider issued with a learner permit on or after 1 October 2014.

A learner motorcycle rider must not ride a motorcycle unless the driver is wearing an approved high visibility vest or jacket that is visible and securely fitted and fastened.

This requirement is only for motorcycle learner riders and does not apply to any other licence holder.

The standards for a high visibility vest or jacket

All motorcycle learners issued with a learner permit on or after 1 October 2014 must wear a high visibility vest or jacket. A high visibility vest or jacket must meet one of the standards listed below and have a label or mark on the garment that shows the standard.
The standards for a day and night high visibility vest or jacket are:

- AS/NZS 4602.1:2011 High visibility garments
- ISO20471 or EN20471 High visibility - Test methods and requirements

Automatic and manual motorcycle

If you are tested on an automatic motorcycle from 1 October 2014 you will have an automatic condition applied to you learner permit or licence for 3 years and you will be restricted to riding an automatic motorcycle.

**Automatic** - a motorcycle that is not fitted with a clutch, or is fitted with a clutch that operates independently of the rider.

**Manual** - a motorcycle that is fitted with a rider-operated clutch.

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**Motorcycle GLS FAQs**

**Q: Will the new GLS impact riders with a licence issued before 1 October 2014?**

No, it won’t. Existing licence holders will not be impacted by the new GLS.

**Q: Will the new GLS impact existing learner rider issued with a permit before 1 October 2014?**

The new learner conditions will not apply to a learner permit issued before 1 October. However, the new conditions will apply to any learner permit or licence obtained on or after 1 October 2014.

**Q: Will riders be required to hold their motorcycle learner permit for a longer period?**

No, the period of holding a learner permit will not change but riders must complete the assessment of capabilities before they can sit the motorcycle licence test. The maximum period for a learner permit will remain at 15 months and the minimum holding period will remain at three months.

**Q: Why have the licence conditions been extended from one year to three years?**
The change to the length of time brings the licence restricted period for motorcycle riders into line with that for car drivers. New riders will be introduced to riding progressively through the graduated system which provides a structured transition as the new rider’s experience and maturity increase. It helps protect new riders while they gain experience by giving them the best chance of avoiding high risk situations.

Q: I hold an interstate motorcycle licence and want to obtain a Victorian motorcycle licence what will happen?

As of 1 October 2014 the restricted period will increase from one year to three years. Anyone obtaining a Victorian motorcycle licence after that date needs to complete the three year period or provide evidence of holding a licence interstate for at least three years to be exempt from the restriction. The restriction period will be reduced by any period the licence has been held interstate or overseas after the age of 18.

For example; if your interstate motorcycle licence was issue 1 July 2013 and you converted to a Victorian licence you would have an end restriction date of 1 July 2016.

Q: Are all of the motorcycle restricted licence conditions in place for three years?

Yes, all of the conditions will apply to the restricted period which is three years. A full three years must be completed. If your licence is suspended, the end date of the restriction period will be increase by the suspension period.

Q: Is there a discount for the three year period if I hold a car licence already?

New riders are over represented in crashes and nearly all new riders hold car licences. The GLS does not reduce the conditions for a new motorcycle rider based on the holding period of another licence type.

Q: Is it illegal for a rider to eat or drink water while driving or stopped at the traffic lights?

All riders must have proper control of their vehicle at all times. If an activity such as eating or drinking leads to the rider losing proper control of the motorcycle, then the rider can be fined.

Q: Why do I have to wear a high visibility vest or jacket?

The protective benefit of high visibility clothing has been established by more than 20 years of research. High visibility clothing has been shown to assist drivers detect a motorcyclist earlier and respond more quickly than they would if the motorcyclist were not wearing high visibility clothing.

Q: What is the fine for not wearing a high visibility vest or jacket?

The traffic infringement fine is currently $147.61.
Q: What colour can the vest or jacket background material be?

The standards say that the background material for fluorescent vests and jackets are orange, red or yellow.

Q: Where can I purchase a vest or jacket?

High visibility vests and jackets are widely available from a range of stores including those selling safety work gear, hardware stores and on-line stores.

Q: Do I have to wear a high visibility vest or jacket once I am off my learner permit?

No. Although it is no longer compulsory to wear a high visibility vest or jacket it is recommended that you consider continuing to wear high visibility clothing when riding your motorcycle. The protective benefit of high visibility clothing has been established by more than 20 years of research and high visibility clothing has been shown to assist drivers detect a motorcyclist earlier and respond more quickly when they detect a motorcyclist.

Q: I only want to be trained and tested on an automatic scooter where can I do this?

All of the motorcycle trainers who undertake testing have automatic motorcycles and most of these are scooters.

Q: Why do I need to ride with my headlight on?

A number of tactics exist to help other road users see motorcycles, and using the headlight at all times is one of them. Using your headlight during the day is a simple intervention that could help prevent crash related injury and death.

Q: Is there a fine for not having your headlight on?

The traffic infringement fine is currently $147.61.

Q: As a restricted rider will I have to attach a restricted rider plate to my motorcycle?

There is no ‘R’ plate for restricted riders. However, if you are a probationary rider you will need to display a ‘P’ plate.

Q: Many learners already get training, why make it compulsory?

The current training is not consistent across Victoria and the new curriculum will provide consistent and more effective training for all riders. Riders will now be able to compare providers and make an informed choice knowing that the training program they will receive will be identical.
Q: If the new requirements are too onerous, won’t this result in more people riding without a motorcycle licence?

VicRoads is keen to ensure that changes to the licensing system do not increase unlicensed riding. VicRoads will promote the benefits of a new motorcycle GLS to prospective riders and remind those without a licence of the risks associated with unlicensed riding.

Q: Will a graduated licensing system for motorcyclists make them safer on the roads? How?

Yes. Research shows that better preparation before getting out on the road can lead to increased safety and reduced crashes. That is why a key component of the motorcycle GLS is a compulsory education program for novice riders. This along with a greater emphasis on experience aims to reduce motorcycle crashes.

Our experience with the introduction of GLS for car drivers which showed a 31 per cent reduction in first year drivers (18-20 year olds) being involved in fatal or serious injury crashes – with an estimated 75 fewer fatal or serious injury crashes each year gives us confidence the motorcycle GLS will reduce motorcycle crashes significantly.

Q: Will the motorcycle graduated licence system be evaluated?

The motorcycle graduated licence system will be evaluated in a similar way to the car graduated licence system. An evaluation framework will be developed in late 2015 with the evaluation being completed in five years.

Q: How is this being funded?

The Victorian Government is using funds from the Motorcycle Safety Levy to support changes to VicRoads’ licensing system, as well as the development of new training and assessment requirements to cater for the motorcycle GLS.

 Levy is collected specifically for projects that improve the safety of motorcyclists.

Q: Will the new graduated licensing system mean more costs for riders? Won’t that lead to riders choosing to ride unlicensed?

The new GLS has been created following a lengthy consultation with rider representative groups, academics and riders themselves and is aimed at achieving a balance between costs to riders and improved road safety outcomes. The cost of a learner permit and driver licence will remain the same. The training and assessment costs under the new system are still to be determined, but VicRoads will be working with training providers in the development of the system to ensure that any increase is kept to a minimum.

Q: If changes are made to the current system, will there be any increased costs for existing motorcyclists?
There are no new requirements planned for existing motorcycle licence holders and the GLS does not include any planned increase in permit or licence fees.

Q: Why is an assessment of capabilities included as part of the learner phase?

A significant problem with the current system is that during the learner phase, a learner is generally unsupervised. The assessment of capabilities will ensure a rider’s progress is monitored and they receive good advice during this high risk stage and that appropriate skills are developed.

Q: Who’s responsible for rolling out the motorcycle licensing system?

As the state’s licensing authority, VicRoads is responsible for motorcycle licensing and for identifying ways it can be improved. Accredited training providers are responsible for delivering rider training and testing on behalf of VicRoads.

Q: What will the training for novice riders look like? How long will the training take?

That will be determined as the curriculum is developed. This work is currently underway and will be completed in mid 2015. This work will be completed in consultation with expert motorcyclists.

Q: Why is the curriculum being made compulsory?

Currently the majority (more than 95 per cent) of people who sit the motorcycle learner test undertake training and there was overwhelming support from the public consultation to make this compulsory for all pre-learners. As a compulsory requirement, VicRoads will also be able to better audit training delivery to ensure a consistent program is provided to the community.

Q: What other initiatives are being put in place to improve motorcycle safety?

Victoria’s Road Safety Strategy 2013-2022 includes actions relating directly to motorcyclist safety:

- A mandatory requirement that motorcyclists wear boots that are at least ankle high to better protect against foot, ankle and lower leg injuries
- Strategies that will close the gap in traffic offence detection rates between motorcyclists and other road users
- Efforts to encourage the Federal Government to introduce an Australian Design Rule for Antilock Braking Systems to be fitted on all new motorcycles sold in Australia.

These are in addition to the new GLS which is also part of the Road Safety Strategy 2013-2022.
Q: There’s been criticism of the motorcycle levy – how much has it raised so far and what’s it being used for?

Since the introduction of the levy in 2002, the money raised from the levy has gone directly into projects which provide safety benefits to motorcyclists.

Up to 31 December 2013, the levy has raised $56.6 million, with funding approved for 173 motorcycle specific road improvement projects on popular motorcycle routes and at locations with a history of motorcycle crashes.

It’s also funded 60 research and development projects with a focus on things to make motorcycling safer. Details of all funded projects can be viewed on the VicRoads website.

The Victorian Auditor General has reviewed the motor cycle safety levy and the programs it has funded and found “road safety agencies have been successful in reducing the number of motorcycle deaths on public roads since 2002”.

For further information or to receive updates on the new Graduated Licensing System please email: motorcycles@roads.vic.gov.au

State Government of Victoria
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