



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



ROAD
SAFETY
COMMISSION



Motorcycle Lane Filtering

Post-implementation Review – Summary of Findings

November 2023

Background and Objectives

On 29 March 2021 amendments to the Road Traffic Code 2000 came into effect, to permit motorcycle lane filtering in certain circumstances. The amendments were made on the basis that consultation with stakeholders and the wider community showed there was a high level of support for the practice. It was also identified that the practice could increase safety for motorcycle riders, reduce the incidence of road crashes and decrease travel times. Further, the practice has been permitted in all other Australian jurisdictions, with no identified safety dis-benefits.

In order to assess the practical effects of the amendments, the Road Safety Commission conducted a review of motorcycle lane filtering, 18+ months after the amendments came into effect.

The aims of the review were to determine:

1

Any safety benefits/dis-benefits created.

2

Community awareness and knowledge of the law.

3

Compliance with the law.

4

Any other benefits.

The review included an assessment of crash data, offence data, an interjurisdictional comparison, a community survey including a knowledge test and targeted stakeholder consultation. The main findings of the review are outlined below.

Safety Benefits/Dis-benefits

Survey results:

- Some respondents did not believe that the practice of lane filtering is safe, due to the potential for cars to be side-swiped and because motorcycle riders may be harder to see when they are filtering. These concerns are more pronounced when riders do not abide by the laws, such as filtering at speeds exceeding 30km/h.
- Whilst many motorcycle riders felt that 30km/h was too slow, this is the permitted lane filtering speed across all Australian jurisdictions. Research also shows that motorcycle riders are recognised as vulnerable road users and the risk of death in crashes for this cohort increases where impact speeds are over 30km/h.
- The vast majority of motorcycle riders surveyed believe that lane filtering is safe as they feel safer riding between vehicles than in front of vehicles (where they view the potential to be rear-ended as higher). This was also commonly perceived as being the case when riding near trucks, thus most riders felt that the prohibition on lane filtering past heavy vehicles is a safety dis-benefit. However, there is limited research into whether this practice makes riding safer or not, and other Australian jurisdictions similarly prohibit filtering past heavy vehicles.
- It was suggested that lane filtering could be made safer if riders were permitted to filter between stationary vehicles at intersections and then enter bicycle storage areas, to prevent being rear-ended. However, despite this practice being permitted in Queensland, no research has been undertaken into the safety implications of this practice for bicycle riders.

Crash data:

Whilst crash data is somewhat limited, there has been no notable change in the number of rear-end and side-swipe crashes involving motorcyclists since the law was introduced. Although riders had concerns with some aspects of the law, the majority admitted to riding in accordance with the rules. Thus, the introduction of this law appears to have contributed to safer riding behaviour in general, although there is still work that could be done to investigate possible safety enhancements.

Recommendation:

It was recommended that further research is undertaken on the safety benefits/dis-benefits of lane filtering past heavy vehicles and permitting motorcycle riders entering bicycle storage areas at intersections. The Road Safety Commission is currently investigating the potential for research to be undertaken into these issues.

Main Findings

Community Awareness and Knowledge of the Law

Survey results:

The survey contained a knowledge test and the results indicated that a large portion of the community lacks awareness and accurate knowledge of the law. The majority of riders were aware of the rules, however improvements could also be made in terms of the level of knowledge surrounding the exact manoeuvres that are permitted when lane filtering.

Recommendation:

It was recommended that the Road Safety Commission conducts community education and awareness on motorcycle lane filtering. This includes awareness that the practice is legal, education on the manoeuvres that are permitted/prohibited and encouragement of driver courtesy to motorcycle riders who are lane filtering. Work has now commenced on developing suitable education and awareness material.

In addition to general community education, it was suggested that information on lane filtering (and on other motorcycle rider safety information such as MotoCAP) be included in the Department of Transport's Ride Safe handbook. This recommendation has already been implemented.

Compliance with the Law

Offence data:

Offence data did not show any notable change in the amount of riders being sanctioned for lane filtering related driving offences. Prior to the introduction of the law, riding between lanes of traffic was prohibited. This is now prohibited only if the correct lane filtering laws are not being observed (i.e. maximum speed of 30km/h etc).

Survey results:

The majority of respondents indicated that they had observed motorcycle riders not complying with the rules. This may be because some riders do not agree with the rules or are simply unaware of some aspects of the rules. Despite this, almost half of the riders surveyed stated that they had changed their riding behaviour in order to comply with the new rules.

Due to difficulties in enforcing the lane filtering rules, it was suggested that technology such as new safety cameras could be used to capture lane filtering offences and thus increase compliance levels.

Main Findings

The review showed that the introduction of motorcycle lane filtering rules has not created any negative outcomes for the community. Some positives have been observed, in that many riders have changed their riding behaviour in order to comply with the prescribed conditions of lawfully lane filtering, including at lower speeds and not filtering in unsafe situations, such as school zones. Other benefits include shorter travel times for motorcycle riders and less exposure to heat and exhaust fumes.

Recommendation:

The Road Safety Commission is currently progressing the introduction of new safety camera technology on Western Australian roads. Once this technology is fully implemented, further investigation into the potential use of cameras to capture offences will be considered.

Conclusion

Additional work is necessary to improve compliance with the rules, as well as community knowledge and attitudes towards the practice. Further research is required to determine whether there are potential safety benefits that could result from allowing both lane filtering past heavy vehicles and for motorcycle riders to enter bicycle storage areas after filtering to the front of stationary traffic. The Road Safety Commission will continue to work with stakeholders and peak bodies to ensure that safe practices are implemented and encouraged amongst motorcycle riders and the wider community of road users in Western Australia.