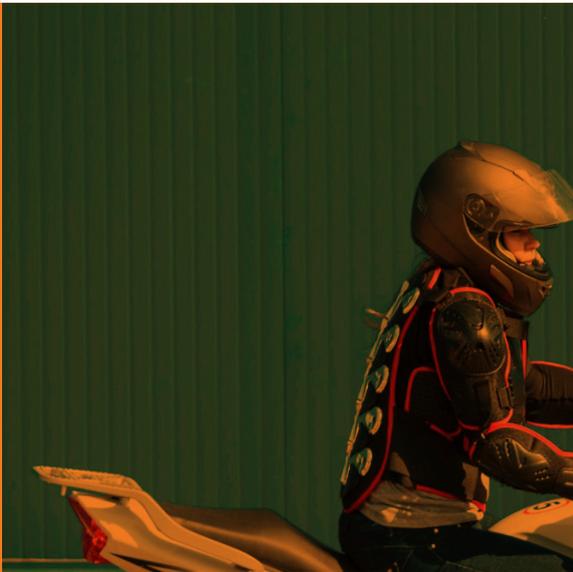


Submission: Junior Motorcycle Recreational Learner's Permit

June 2019



About VACC

The Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC) is Victoria's peak automotive industry association, representing the interests of more than 5,300 members in over 20 retail automotive sectors that employ over 50,000 Victorians.

VACC members range from new and used vehicle dealers (passenger, truck, commercial, motorcycles, recreational and farm machinery), repairers (mechanical, electrical, body and repair specialists, i.e. radiators and engines), vehicle servicing (service stations, vehicle washing, rental, windscreens), parts and component wholesale/retail and distribution and aftermarket manufacture (i.e. specialist vehicle, parts or component modification and/or manufacture), and automotive dismantlers and recyclers.

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Background

The Motorcycle Industry Division (MID) is a key constituent of the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC). The MID is comprised of 130 retail motorcycle business members, that account for 82% of the total motorcycle retail industry in Victoria.

Apart from representing the interests of its members, VACC is charged with the responsibility of communicating to government where practices and policy adversely affects operations within industry, as well as community safety.

Unfortunately, it is the sad case that accidents and fatalities involving motorcycles represent a disproportionately high percentage of road trauma statistics in Victoria, as well as nationally. VACC is committed to advancing motorcycle safety across all motorcycling sectors including road, off-road, competition and agricultural.

Unlike driving a passenger car, truck or bicycle, motorcycle riding demands a unique skill set involving a combination of rider balance, steering, cornering, braking, and throttle control. These skills can take considerable time to develop. VACC believes that the earlier these skills are developed, the better the outcomes in terms of overall rider ability, safety and reduced road trauma.

To facilitate greater rider and the community safety, VACC recommends for the introduction of a *Junior Motorcycle Recreational Learner's Permit* (JMRLP) at age 16, for a minimum 24 month period. A JMRLP would enable junior recreational riding under strict supervision within State forests, parks and reserves, where recreational riding is permitted for licensed riders on registered motorcycles. This would assist junior riders to develop key skills in a controlled environment, prior to obtaining a full motorcycle licence at age 18. Consequently, a JMRLP amounts to a similar initiative to that of obtaining a motor vehicle learner permit to drive a car.

This report outlines the case for the introduction of this important measure.

Key issues

Recreational motorcycle use is a popular activity, with over 40,000 motorcycle users registered in Victoria as at June 2018. Demand for motorcycles is growing, with thousands of young people that are connected to families owning motorcycles, expressing a need to be able to ride legally off-road.

An unfortunate consequence of this demand has been a large growth in illegal riding, often resulting in tragic outcomes for families and the community. Accidents and deaths from such illegal riding by youths, have been heavily publicised in the media in recent times. This has resulted in a large community backlash, and unjustifiably negative perceptions against motorcycle riders and the motorcycle industry in general.

VACC considers this situation to be unacceptable. To this extent, VACC has consulted with its MID members, seeking ways forward and potential solutions to these problems for the benefit of the community and motorcycle industry.

A key proposal emanating from these discussions, that is fully endorsed by VACC, is the creation of a junior motorcycle recreational learner's permit licence (JMRLP). This would be available for junior riders commencing at age 16, and applicable for a minimum period of 24 months. A JMRLP would entail close supervision of the junior rider throughout the 24 month period within State forests, parks and reserves where recreational riding is permitted for licenced riders on registered motorcycles.

Operational requirements

VACC contends that the use of a JMRLP should be subject to strict conditions and operational requirements. These requirements should include but should not necessarily be limited to the following measures:

- A junior rider would be eligible for a junior motorcycle recreational learner permit (JMRLP) at age 16
- An applicant for a JMRLP should hold a Victorian Motor Vehicle Learners Permit (MVLP) for a minimum 24 -month period, after which they can apply for a Victorian Motorcycle Learners Permit
- The recommended cost for recreational motorcycle registration and the new learner permit fee is \$81.70 and \$24.60 respectively
- The junior rider is limited to State forests, parks and reserves where recreational riding is permitted for licenced riders on registered motorcycles
- Supervised structured riding will be conducted by two adults holding full motorcycle licences
- Recognition of a junior motorcycle permit holder is necessary both for Victoria Police and fully licensed riders. All JMRLP riders will be required to wear an orange hi-visibility vest with 'JMRLP' embossed distractively on the back
- Adult riders would be transporting the junior's motorcycles to the ride venue
- The junior rider will participate in structured rides where one adult rider will lead, and another adult rider will tail with the junior rider in the centre. The structured ride will ensure the lead rider chooses suitable tracks and terrain for the junior rider's skill level and can identify any potential hazards like forthcoming traffic, track blockages, erosion etc. The tail rider will monitor the juniors progress on the ride and assist in the event of any incident. The structured ride enables free flowing progress irrespective of climate, dust, rain etc and enables reasonable rider separation for safety purposes
- The fully licenced adult riders are responsible for ensuring the junior riders' motorcycle is recreationally registered and meets all requirements for safe use
- The fully licenced adult riders are responsible for ensuring areas being ridden are designated areas for trail bike riding
- The junior rider may participate in club rides involving large groups of riders, however, the tail rider has the responsibility for supervising the junior's riders and junior riders are not allowed to pass the lead rider(s)
- Junior permit holders are not permitted to ride without two fully licenced adult riders supervising their ride
- Eligible motorcycles can be either a Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS) fully registered motorcycle, a recreationally registered LAMS approved motorcycle or a recreationally registered motorcycle of 250cc or less
- One adult rider must always carry a personal locator beacon (PLB)



- Restricted to riding in daylight hours
- No pillion passengers
- No drugs or alcohol
- Approved full face motorcycle helmet incorporating eye protection
- Riding jersey, full length riding pants, motorcycle boots and gloves
- Motorcycle helmet to helmet intercom may be used.

Focus on up-skilling the junior rider

Whilst the operational requirements as outlined are stringent, they are purposely designed to focus on the upskilling of the junior rider. Young riders are consistently over-represented in trail bike crashes in Victoria, and research shows that this can be due to several factors including a lack of appropriate training; following bad practices from other riders; fatigue; lack of situational awareness; having poorly maintained motorcycles; riding without suitable protection and riding beyond their capabilities.

The measures proposed will ensure that such risk factors are appropriately addressed. Supervised riding under the control of fully licenced adults will provide a good level of rider training and can curb undesirable behaviour in junior riders. Exposure to challenging terrain can be monitored by adult riders who can ensure that the junior's skill level can handle the terrain being ridden whilst their skill level improves.

In addition, supervision removes the risk of young riders riding beyond their capabilities and trying to keep up with experienced riders. Furthermore, adult riders can also monitor potential risks from other vehicles as well as fatigue levels in junior riders. Junior riders will obtain the opportunity to learn about situational awareness from experienced adult riders as well as other key skills. Adult riders can also enforce positive behaviours in young riders by ensuring junior riders use suitable off-road riding apparel and that motorcycles and other equipment are maintained in a safe and reliable condition. Also, in the event of any mishap, the carriage of personal locator beacons is a critical safety initiative that alerts authorities for assistance if required.

VACC believes that the operational measures outlined will ensure that that risk factors relating to trail bike riding by younger riders are suitably mitigated, and that the incidence of accidents in Victoria involving this rider cohort is significantly reduced.

Focus on safety

An analysis of Victoria's *Graduated Licensing System* (October 2017) reveals considerable success in improving the safety of young drivers. Supervised driving with compulsory minimum of 120 hours of logged supervised learner driving practice has contribute to the success of the system.

A two year period of supervised motorcycle riding for juniors in a 'road type' environment where personal and community safety is paramount will contribute to an improved rider skill level and provide a solid level of motorcycle control, recognition of safety amongst vehicles, risk recognition and other safety imperatives prior to the application for a motorcycle learner permit at age 18. All this occurs without the exposure to high risk riding scenarios within general on-road traffic.

VACC therefore believes that the JMRLP provides an appropriate legal means for integration with the Graduated Learning System for motorcycles in Victoria and will facilitate improved safety outcomes for new motorcycle riders across the entire roads system.

Benefits to the community

VACC contends that the creation of a JMRLP would also provide many positive flow-on benefits both to the motorcycle and broader community. These benefits include:

- The opportunity to instil good trail-riding practices and skill sets in young people prior to them obtaining a full motorcycle licence at age 18
- Motorcycle use by juniors in legally designated areas under supervision is eminently preferable to current practices of illegal riding and would encourage junior riders to go through the process of obtaining a permit so they can ride legally
- A JMRLP will encourage family recreational activity, like boating and shooting, where juniors can participate in their recreational activity as a family
- A JMRLP provides an opportunity for participants to trail ride in a non-competitive environment, which they do not obtain in commercially run 'ride parks'
- Ride parks have restricted hours and can be expensive for families to use. Most do not cater for trail riders and their availability is often limited due to long travel distances to visit a ride park
- The uptake of MRLP's would create expected revenues in the order of \$600,000 per annum for Victoria through permit fees and the recreational registration of motorcycles
- There are a wide range of motorcycles that can be recreationally registered and available for junior riders
- Victorian regional communities would receive a tourism boost through increased families visiting regional locations where trail bike riding is permitted. This can lead to increased financial turnover for many regional businesses and more employment
- Victoria has over 30,000 kilometres of legally accessible tracks for recreationally registered motorcycles
- Forthcoming electric off-road motorcycles for junior riders have the potential to increase illegal riding in State forests. Introducing a JMRLP would in part eliminate the expansion of illegal use of motorcycles by juniors, that can't be heard in State forests and juniors would be motivated to apply for a permit.

Summary conclusion

VACC strongly believes that the evidence presented in this submission provides substantial grounds for the implementation of the Junior Motorcycle Recreational Learner's Permit in Victoria.

This initiative amounts to good social and economic policy that benefits both the community, the Victorian government and the motorcycle industry. VACC therefore recommends that it be enacted accordingly.