



MOTORCYCLE RIDERS ASSOCIATION
N.S.W. BRANCH
P.O. BOX 232
SPIT JUNCTION, N.S.W. 2088

MEMORANDUM TO : ALL BRANCH COMMITTEES
FROM : ROSS GOODMAN, PRESIDENT
SUBJECT : THE BATHURST ISSUE
DATE : 15 APRIL 1983

It has been brought to our attention that the Victorian Branch is committed to action outside their state regarding the events of the recent Bathurst race meeting. We feel that this is a serious situation and can do the M.R.A. in NSW and the future of the race meeting no good whatsoever.

The NSW M.R.A. had a marquee manned by committee members on the mountain during the weekend. Myself and three other committee members were in the compound prior to and during the confrontation. We had an excellent opportunity during this time to observe police behaviour. People were repeatedly warned to move away and police "spotters" were used in an attempt to ensure that those arrested were indeed guilty. We also witnessed several people who had been brought into the compound released by these "spotters". When I attempted to dispell the crowd with the use of a loud hailer I had rocks and abuse thrown at me. It was a frightening experience. However, some onlookers did leave the scene.

In the period leading up to Bathurst we repeatedly informed our members of the danger of acting as spectators and the repercussions of being involved in any confrontation with police. We used the same catch cry that we used in 1982: "If it happens, walk away". Because of the relative peace of 1982, we did however become a little complacent. We felt that the problem might have been solved. This, of course, was not true.

Unfortunately though, despite all these warnings, there were still spectators, and some were arrested. Should we now support them? This committee feels not.

However, we are willing to support any person that was falsely arrested or harrassed by the police at any time other than during the confrontation, although not financially. We urgently need statutory declarations from people involved in or witness to incidents, particularly those which occurred prior to the confrontation.

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We also informed our members that there would be no possibility of us providing any legal assistance this year. The NSW M.R.A. would be a lot better off financially if we had not had to bear the burden of Bathurst '81. Legal representation for those arrested in 1981 has cost us \$9,069. Donations of \$3,984 were received, of which only a third came from interstate Branches and Registers. This has left the NSW M.R.A. covering the balance of \$5,085.

Because of this, plus the fact that no other M.R.A. Branch has had any direct involvement in Bathurst since 1981, and the issue was not raised at the recent National Conference, we feel that it is a NSW matter and should be dealt with by us. Also, at Government level it is thought of as a state matter. Even should you now consider it a national issue, bear in mind that there is no national body as yet to act upon it. Therefore it can best be handled by the Branch in whose state Bathurst is situated and whose committee was present at the event.

We strongly feel that any interference from other Branches at this stage would seriously harm further negotiations. There has already been too much exaggeration and supposition by those not present or directly involved with the event. I urge you not to add to this situation.

The NSW M.R.A. held meetings with the police prior to Bathurst '82 and '83, and have received their co-operation in a number of areas. We have supported their actions during the confrontation, but have attacked them on other issues, and in particular their P.R. of the event. We expect that there will be a meeting called between all those involved, and we have requested that we be invited to attend. However, this invitation is already in jeopardy because of statements made by the Victorian President.

The NSW M.R.A. has worked hard to attain respectability with the NSW State Government and its Police Department. Providing that nothing upsets this situation we expect that what we have to say will be taken seriously. We will be presenting an extremely good case for having the compound relocated away from the camping area, and also voicing our complaints against certain areas of police involvement.

Should we not get successful results from this we intend to take the matter further.

We have been active since the event and are at present taking action against a Sydney newspaper and television station for improper reporting. If you wish to take similar action in your own state please ring me on (02) 938 5496 at home or Adele Mitchell on (02) 237 5660 during business hours and we will supply you with the relevant facts on the issue.

We would like to hear any suggestions or information you have regarding the issue, and will keep you fully informed of proceedings. But please do not underestimate the serious consequences of acting on your own in this matter.

cc All Sub-Branchees and Registers



Motorcycle Riders' Association

MRA HOUSE
184 BRUNSWICK ST.,
FITZROY 3065.
(03) 417 2718
(03) 419 5737

28th July, 1983

The Hon. N.F. Greiner,
Leader of the Opposition,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY N.S.W. 2000

Dear Sir,

Last Sunday, namely the 17th July, 1983, I had an opportunity of watching your interview on the Channel 9 program "Sunday." It seemed to me that you were concerned about certain aspects of the operation of the New South Wales Police Force and, as I also share this concern, I seek an opportunity to discuss this with you.

Since 1979 I have had reason to complain about the performance of the New South Wales Police through my position as Foundation President of the Motorcycle Riders' Association. I have recently accepted the position of Honorary Life Patron of the Victorian branch of the Motorcycle Riders' Association and it is now my responsibility to promote the well being and good name of this branch.

As the first aim of the M.R.A. is to promote road safety, this aim can be hindered by a bad public image of motorcyclists. It is my view that adverse publicity has occurred with the Easter Motorcycle Races held at Bathurst, and the blame for this must rest with the Police Department's handling of the event and inaccurate media coverage.

I am sure you are fully aware of problems encountered at Bathurst each Easter and I believe that the incidents of violence at this event, which is a recurring problem, is indicative of the poor performance of the New South Wales Police in dealing with this problem. I feel that there is something wrong when allegations are made each year, both in and out of the media, as to the wrongful arrest of innocent people and police brutality.

..... contd/2.

A.C.T., New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia,
Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and Gt. Britain

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As a result of the campaign instigated by the Victorian branch of the M.R.A. in 1981, these matters were brought to the attention of the New South Wales Police Department and the Ombudsman. Specifically, the allegations made were that Members of the Force were not wearing identity numbers and consumption of alcohol was taking place by Officers on duty. Additionally, the rescue unit sent up by our branch to assist in giving first aid was hindered in its operation by Members of the Force. As a result of this and the bad publicity that the Police Department obtained, the attitude of the Department changed in 1981 and a low profile was kept by the Members of the Force at Bathurst. As a result of this change in attitude, there appeared to be no problems or, as often put by the media, "riot" occurring.

However, in 1983 the problem resurfaced and discussions are taking place as to the possible use of tear gas and a water cannon at the 1984 event. It appears to me that what was traditionally a sporting event of world standard has now developed into a war style situation.

Therefore, it is my belief that if the 1984 event is allowed to proceed, and is managed and handled in the manner previously demonstrated, then serious injuries will result in respect of innocent Australians who have gone there solely for the purpose of enjoying a world wide sporting event.

I advise that the M.R.A. Victoria is not suggesting that every person in the crowd is innocent whilst present at Bathurst, but we are prepared to work to try and rid the Bathurst event of the loutish element that is present from both sides. We have invested many thousands of dollars in the past years supplying all night entertainment, inclusive of music and movies, first aid and the presence of our rescue unit. We have never, as an Association, experienced any problems with the crowds or the townsfolk of Bathurst. However, we have encountered a negative and, at times, aggressive attitude from the New South Wales Police Department.

Further, the criticism must not only rest with the Police Department but the organisers and promoters of the event. It is of note that the Council and people of Bathurst have very little say in the conduct of the event.

In view of the magnitude of the problem, the M.R.A. Victoria branch believes that an independent inquiry into the running and promotion of the event should be held. In that inquiry, the roles of the Bathurst Council, Police and media at the race meeting should be examined in full. Additionally, recommendation should be made for the improvement of facilities for campers at Mount Panorama, inclusive of adequate lighting. The Police policy and actions must be scrutinised to the fullest extent and the Bathurst Council should be invited to play a greater role in the organisation, promotion and running of the event.

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Furthermore, it is of note that the main media information source at Bathurst is through the Police Station, and the Council organising the event should make a Press Room available, inclusive of telephones and a typist. All media releases should be typed and copies filed and all interested bodies should have access to the Press Room and a daily press conference should be held.

I now enclose information relating to Bathurst and relating to the work done by the Motorcycle Riders' Association in respect of road safety and charity events. I will be happy to meet with you to discuss these problems and other material that is held in our Bathurst file.

I would appreciate receiving your comments on this matter and I believe it is relevant to note that the M.R.A. Victoria has an excellent working relationship with the Victorian Police Department.

Yours sincerely,

D. CODOGNOTTO
Patron,
M.R.A. Victoria.

Encs.

m.R.A.

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N.S.W. BRANCH
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27 July 1983

The Hon Peter Anderson MP
Minister for Police and
Emergency Services
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY 2000

Dear Mr Anderson

I refer to your letter of 9 June 1983, and in particular, your reference to statements attributed to you about this incident. I would also like to address the question of the the conduct of Police Public Relations on the morning of 3 April 1983.

However much the media may have a duty to enquire into events, it reports from whatever sources are available, and it would appear that the substantial exaggeration of the scale of the disturbances derives directly from statements made by Police Public Relations. Unfortunately I cannot accept your denial of statements made concerning the numbers involved because they were clearly heard by members of my committee. In the first instance you were seen and heard on commercial television news on the evening of Monday 4 April, and in the second instance you were heard in an interview on Radio 2GB on the morning of Tuesday 5 April.

It would appear that you were relying on the same source of information as the media.

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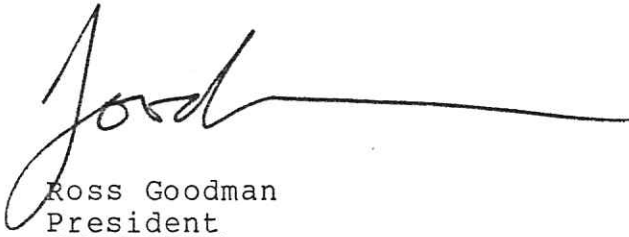
I am advised that the exaggerated accounts of the numbers involved and of matters such as the use of gelignite can be attributed initially to a Police press conference held on the morning of 3 April in Bathurst. Although none of the Sydney media referred to the source of its information, the Western Advocate, copies of which are enclosed, did. You will see that this paper's account of the disturbances on Monday 4 April relies heavily on quotations from Constable Bill McClurg, a Police Public Relations spokesman. Page 3 of its issue of Tuesday 5 April quotes a Police spokesman as follows: "There were about 5,000 of them and only about a hundred of us".

Our Association has made several complaints to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and the Australian Press Council concerning some aspects of the reporting of the weekend's events, and I have no doubt that these bodies will, in due course, identify the Police Public Relations spokesman as being responsible for the counts of numbers involved, which I am pleased to see are now confirmed as being exaggerated. Whether the media can be held responsible for relying solely on this account is, of course, a matter for the Council and the Tribunal. However, I believe you should enquire into the conduct of Police Public Relations on this occasion, as a number of important issues arise:

- . You, yourself, seem to have been misinformed in the public statements which you made.
- . The credibility of Police accounts of events may well be called into question by the Australian Press Council and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.
- . The public were rightly alarmed at the reported scale of the disturbance.
- . The implication that all the several thousand people camping on Mt Panorama were involved defames those who either played no part in the disturbance or were even unaware that it was occurring.

I hope you will understand that these comments are not intended in any way to justify the conduct of those involved and what took place. I feel, however, that your credibility as the Minister responsible, and most importantly, that of the Police Department is at stake. I do hope that you will have appropriate enquiries made and let me know their outcome.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ross', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ross Goodman
President

cc Mr George Paciullo MP



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The Hon Peter Anderson MP
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Dear Mr Anderson

Thank you for your letter of 9 June 1983 concerning the disturbances which took place at Bathurst over the Easter weekend. I was pleased to have your confirmation that several hundred and not several thousand persons were involved.

I was also pleased by your hope that something positive would eventuate out of the meeting arranged between my Association and Assistant Commissioner K J Pyne, but I have to say that we were gravely disappointed with this meeting which took place on 15 June. I was particularly concerned that there was no indication whatsoever of any approach to Police relations with members of the public in the future, other than that disturbances were inevitable and that the Police would need to be better prepared for them.

I formed the impression that Assistant Commissioner Pyne had already determined the Police Department's future course of action and did not in fact seek a dialogue with motorcycle riders which could perhaps bring about a joint approach to avoiding future confrontations.

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Chief Superintendant Andrew Gallagher, on behalf of Assistant Commissioner Pyne who was unable to attend the meeting, indicated that his intention was to make a number of structural alterations in the area of Mt Panorama Police Station, and in particular, that the roadway in the vicinity would be paved and that the area encompassed by the cyclone fence would be expanded. He was unable to suggest any Police initiative which would, in our view, prevent a repetition or even an escalation of the disturbances of this and other years.

We had been pleased to see press comments attributed to you to the effect that you had ordered the Police Commissioner to provide a full report on the incident and make suggestions for a trouble free future.

It is the lack of action on this latter point which now concerns us most.

Firstly, we believe that the role of the Police at Bathurst should be clarified, bearing in mind that the maximum number of people present is of the order of 15,000 (not 30,000 odd as reported), that perhaps only 2,000 - 3,000 people camp on Mt Panorama and that no other sporting event in Australia commands a Police presence of this kind. We note from past experience that Police have declined to attend to spectators encroaching on areas prohibited under the Speedway Act, that they do not attend to what might be loosely called 'offensive behaviour' and they have proven unable or unwilling to deal with disturbances which threatened the safety or welfare of spectators. They do, of course, provide a most valuable service in terms of traffic control and general assistance to the members of the public, providing of course there is no disturbance at the time.

We cannot accept, however, that this undoubtedly useful role justifies the presence of the Tactical Response Group, the location in the middle of a spectator area of a fortified Police station, or indeed several hundred Police officers brought to Bathurst for the weekend at considerable public expense. The public is clearly left with the impression that the whole occasion has become a ritual for Police and hooligans alike, that it is in effect a self-fulfilling prophecy and that the Police station itself provides a clear focus for the aggression of the unwanted minority of troublemakers.

Our proposals for handling future events at Bathurst are as follows:

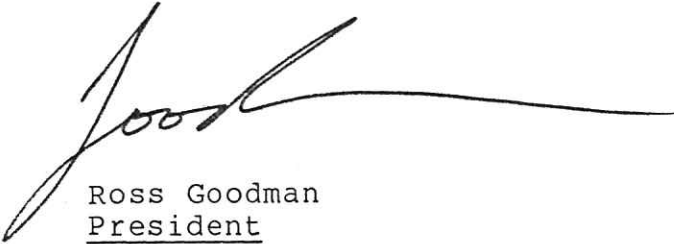
- . Relocate the centre of Police operations to a point that is readily accessible to the whole of the circuit but remote from the camping and main spectator areas.
- . Ensure that Police officers are selected for this duty who are not unsympathetic to the lifestyle of spectators and who are trained in the psychology of potentially aggressive crowds.
- . Ensure that regular Police patrols occur throughout the camping area in such a way that they can establish a rapport with campers but do not provide a focus for aggression.
- . Keep the Tactical Response Group off the mountain unless its services become essential.
- . Ensure a continuity of command over the next few years so that the frequent changes of policy we have experienced do not re-occur. Encourage the Auto Cycle Union, as organisers of the event; the Motorcycle Riders Association, representing many of the campers; the Bathurst City Council, being responsible for the circuit and the camping area; and the Police Department itself to all make some constructive attempt to avoid such occurrences in the future.

Please also refer to the attached copy of our more detailed submission which was presented to Chief Superintendant Gallagher, and to the lead story in the latest Revs Motorcycle News, a copy of which is also attached.

Considering the unsatisfactory outcome of the 15 June meeting I would be grateful for your agreement to meet with my Association to discuss our concerns.

You have my assurance that my Association will make every effort to assist and find a solution to a problem that has concerned us all for some years now.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Goodman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ross Goodman
President

cc Mr George Paciullo MP