

**THE MOTORCYCLE RIDERS' ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA INC.**

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**The Deciding Factor**

*The National Magazine of the*

*Motorcycle Riders' Association of Australia Inc.*

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**John McNabb,**  
c.c all board members

John,

Re our conversation this week in regard to the financing of overseas conference attendances, and the allegation that I am attempting to claim undue expenses from MRAA in relation to same.

In 1993, then Vice President Chris Lamblin attended the NCOM conference in America. MRAA paid for his trip but as I wasn't involved I have no idea what that amounted to in monetary terms.

In 1995 I attended the NCOM/ICOM conference in Minnesota. The trip cost me personally around \$1800. I didn't keep exact records since I had no intention of claiming any reimbursement from MRAA. I still have no intention of making any claim in regard to that trip and have never even raised the subject. The trip cost MRAA nothing so any side trips to Chicago or any other expense are not only irrelevant but are not anybodies business but my own. In fact the trip would have cost me around \$2300 if not for a very kind passing around of the hat on my behalf by delegates from America and Europe. Whilst away my wife received a cheque from MRAA for \$100. I don't know if this was in part reimbursement for the trip or for some other expense I had paid from my own pocket. The attached pages from the February 1996 Deciding Factor will shed more light on this matter.

In early 1996 I had decided to send 2 delegates to the next conference (in May 1996). Looking for a way to do the thing at no cost to MRAA I decided to raffle a motorcycle, hence the Thunderbird raffle. As funds from the raffle would not be available until January 1997, I paid for those 2 delegates (Dave Humphries of MRAA and Greg Hirst of NSW motorcycle council) to attend from my own savings. This cost me \$5050.30 (receipts are held by me and I shall provide other correspondence re that conference if requested). The raffle duly raised a profit of approximately \$9000, not as good as it could have been but not bad considering my inexperience. **Be well aware, the one and only purpose of the raffle was to finance those 2 delegates to the conference.** It would not have been held if not for that, and the fact that it raised an extra \$4000 for the association on top of the cost of the conference is a bonus.

In April of this year I will be attending the FIM conference in Luxembourg. As before the trip will be at zero cost to the association, I will pay myself or will raise the money by some other means independent of the association.

The importance of these trips cannot be overestimated. The Luxembourg conference will determine the structure of the riders rights movement world wide for the next decade. **MRAA is going to be a part of it!**

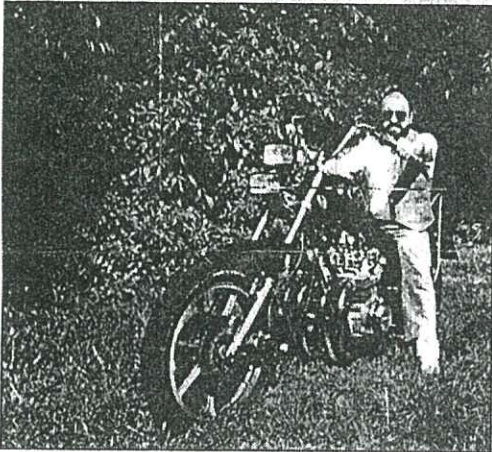
Jim Cutts.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Bloody tough year '95. But we got through and ended with a magnificent Toy Run (No. 18). Work has already begun on the next one on December 15, 1996.

The MRAA represented the motorcycle community at dozens of meetings with state and federal officials, all in business hours. Vice President, Jim Cutts, was your rep at the International Coalition Of Motorcyclists Conference in North America. He paid his own way and is now developing tighter links with the overseas rider's rights movement. He is also TDF Editor. He has a job, a family and a dirty big Triumph which keeps him sane under the workload.



Membership Secretary Guz Hirst "posing".

Membership Secretary, Guz Hirst, was welcomed to the MRAA Board in '95. Guz has a lot of experience as an official of the Motorcycle Action Group in England. Since moving to OZ he has been helping MRAA support the Federation of European Motorcyclists and ICOM so we can stem the tide of anti-bike laws com-

ing out of the European bureaucracy and from what the yanks call the "safety nazis". Things like air-bags, leg protectors, pillion and road bans etc.

## STATE DIRECTORIES!!!

We would like to run advice for all States on;  
**What's available!**  
**Where to get it!**

If you have a favourable experience with a:  
**Retailer - a Hotelier - a Tour organizer**  
or **WHATEVER,**

approach the business and offer them a column centimetre for \$8 an issue on a four column A4 page.

The Directories will be run in Editorial style. This is a major part of getting **The Factor** back to it's former glory!

**The Factor** must pay for itself as Membership fees are swallowed up in the high cost of Lobbying!

We print 5,000 Factors four times a year.

All copies are mailed to riders.

None are wasted.

**INTERESTED!** call Carla on 9544 7963 or write to: **PO Box 454 Somerville Vic 3912**

Guz is organising a group to represent Australia at Eurodemo in Belgium in August.

Eurodemo is held by FEM every two years. It is a show of strength by the world motorcycling community against unfair and/or unworkable bike laws being churned out in the name of European Unity. Remember the Eurosausage? It's you and me, the ordinary road rider that has to stop the rot. We can't rely on the motorcycle industry.

While they are selling enough expensive big bikes in the West, and millions of small scoots in Asia and elsewhere, to keep profits OK, the industry won't rock the boat. You'll see them at costly car shows like Darling Harbour last October. You'll see them spending big bucks at circuit days which by their nature virtually exclude novices. But you won't see the "majors" getting behind things they don't control.

Why? Money! Motorcycles are only part of most companies range of products. They sell everything from musical instruments to cars. If bikes are banned the majors will just switch suitable staff to outboards or lawn mowers or whatever. Unified Europe is the biggest market in the world. The European bureaucracy is the greatest generator of anti-motorcycle regs for the rest of the world. Our problem is that the bike industry will roll over before supporting it's customers. History tells us not to rely on the industry. Think about the lights-on & wire rope fights. When was the last time you saw any of the majors supporting massive media events like Toy Runs? Check the advertising support they give this consumer publication. There are exceptions to every rule so read our ads and support the advertisers who support you through the Deciding Factor.

The number of road registered machines in OZ has fallen dramatically in the last decade. Do you see the industry looking to the future and conducting clinics to get kids safely into motorcycling as is done in football, tennis, snow skiing and so on? The MRAA initiative in Vic, the Rider Training Awareness Day, was such a clinic for beginners. It died in 1995.

Liberal Transport Minister Baxter could not find the \$10,000 needed to run the RTAD in spite of claimed concern about bike safety. A committee was set up. Yes Minister. The industry wasn't going to fund it. The MRAA didn't have enough cash and was outvoted. It MAY be held next year. Motor shows and track days continue.

One dealer told me. "From my point of view, motorcycling's never been better." I thought to myself that what he meant was that he'd never done this well out of born-again riders buying big buck bikes. He also felt the MRAA was an organisation "whose time had come". I don't think so. Consumer strength is in getting together in groups like the MRAA. The Canberra Celebration and Eurodemo show that the consumer has more political muscle than the industry. We have to use it better.

Australia must catch up to the rest of the world in this. So Guz is recruiting members in OZ, chartering a jet, hiring bikes and arranging club hospitality in England. We'll carry the Australian flag to Eurodemo in Brussels. 35,000 riders from around the world gridlocked Paris two years ago. Missed that. Won't miss this. It'll cost about \$3,000. What a trip! You have to be an MRAA member to get this deal. For info ring Guz on 03 9528 3097. Hurry because 14 of the 20 places are gone.

1996 promises to be a hard, busy year but with massive potential. We have to keep active on the Victorian Road Safety Reference Group, the Motorcycle Safety Forum and the Off-road Motorcycle Safety subcommittee. In Canberra we work with the NSW Council and the Ulysses Club to represent you to the Federal Office of Road Safety. I am a member of the AustRoads Road Environment Committee looking at road hazards for riders around the country.

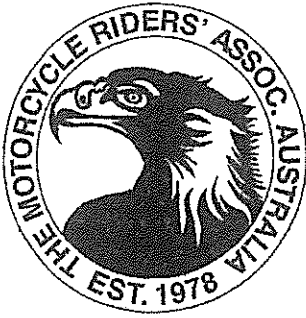
In Vic we have won a significant battle to rid our roads of the deadly wire rope barriers. But the war isn't over. Other states continue to install "cheese cutters", probably because they are cheaper in the long run. A few motorcyclists cut in half don't seem particularly important to the bean counters.

Anyway, our team fights for your safety and rights and works with the other truly national reps at a federal level. The MRAA HQ in Elizabeth Street has increased our workload. It also strengthened the MRAA by increasing membership and cash-flow. 1996 looks good. This has only happened through the dedication and hard work of volunteers.

To everyone who has put time and effort, and often cash, into the MRAA, my sincere thanks.

**Damien Codognotto - President.**





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12/6/96

\*\*\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\*

Australia's representatives to the International Coalition of Motorcyclists convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico have returned home armed with a greatly enhanced understanding of the issues worldwide that will affect our lifestyle in the run up to the next century and beyond.

Dave Humphries of MRAA, along with wife Alison and Greg Hirst of the NSW Motorcycle Council spent three days conversing with lobbyists from America and Europe. Hirst's presentation to the conference was, by all accounts one of the more passionate and hard hitting.

NCOM is the Los Angeles based National Coalition of Motorcyclists primarily funded and instigated by motorcycling Attorney Richard M Lester. ICOM is a spin off of NCOM. The convention is held each year in the U.S, Jim Cutts of MRAA attended on Australia's behalf in 1995.

Dave said on his return, "who would have thought a few years ago that you would see reps from all the riders rights organisations and patch clubs worldwide come together to fight for a common cause; freedom to ride and not be discriminated against. Without the sheer numbers that NCOM and similar coalitions can muster, the battle will always be uphill. What you have when we all work together is enough people to really make a difference".

Neil Liversidge of Motorcycle Action Group (UK) echoed this sentiment. "Through this coalition the Biker voice is getting stronger, and our anger is being channeled into ways to beat them at their own game".

Most of the issues covered will be familiar to Australian bikers, Helmet law repeal and discrimination dominates the American agenda while the Europeans reported on such frightening developments as the deadly and discredited leg protectors and more recently the development of a motorcycle airbag meant to reduce some of the horrific upper body and head injuries that would be caused by them. Power limits, roads banned to motorcycles, crippling noise limit proposals that the human ear cannot even detect and a nightmarish new licensing system in England. The list went on and on.

Stressing the importance of Australia and Europe to them, a spokesman for the American Confederation of Outlaw Clubs, Bandido George said, "By communicating with Motorcyclists from overseas we have been given a window through which to see the future and it might not be so rosy".

Greg Hirst said "Yes we are important! Lessons learnt in Australia will no doubt help them fight the 'bastards' in the States. And yes, we can learn from them and especially the co-operation demonstrated by the Confederation of clubs".

**Jim Cutts**

Accompanying photo's

*Greg Hirst delivers Australia's presentation to the convention, held at the Old Town Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

*Australia's representatives, Greg Hirst of the NSW Motorcycle Council at left with Dave Humphries of MRAA at right.*