

TRAFFIC FILTERING WORKSHOP

DEFINITION

Motorcycle & scooter riders traffic filter when they move between stationary or slow moving lanes of traffic travelling in the same direction.

BACKGROUND

Traffic filtering has existed as long as there has been traffic. It is done safely everyday in Australia and around the world. There is no evidence to suggest that filtering increases risk. Traffic congestion increases pollution and it is estimated will cost Australia some \$15 billion a year in lost productivity by 2030.

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into motorcycle & scooter safety (PIMS) reported in 2012. Recommendation 59 said a review committee, including motorcycle community stakeholders, be set up "within 12 months of the tabling of this report" to review the benefits and risks of filtering in this state. This has not been done.

ROAD SAFETY

Experienced/expert road riders told PIMS that the safest way to ride in heavy traffic was to filter. A Swann Insurance national survey C2006 found that in 40% of claims, the bike was hit from behind. With many more in-car distractions, sitting in a lane approaching an intersection in heavy traffic increases the risk to riders. California is considering a traffic filtering law. They call it lane splitting and road/traffic conditions there may differ from Victoria but the University of California recently did a study and found lane splitting to be safe.

Since filtering is considered to be safe by stakeholder experts and some researchers, and since it is done safely around Melbourne daily, and since there is no evidence to say that is not the case, there is really no need for specific filtering rules for riders. Currently permitted actions should NOT be made illegal.

INTERSTATE

SA and the ACT are trialling or have introduced new filtering laws. NSW and QLD introduced filtering laws with new offences and harsh penalties.

NEW STOP LINES

If motorcycle & scooter filtering is to be encouraged, as it is for bicyclists, new stop lines to separate pedestrians from two-wheelers and two-wheelers from cars are needed. *Without new stop lines at suitable intersections motorcycle & scooter riders will be forced into pedestrian crossings and bicycle lanes for their own safety.* The safest place to be on a bike when the lights go green is NOT in a line of stationary bikes between two lines of cars, it's in front of the cars. Bicycle stop boxes work. The logic is obvious. Two-wheeler stop lines are being introduced in Spain and other places in Europe.

The IRG has talked to pedestrian and bicycle organisations about the need for new stop lines. None objected to it, some favoured it. Bicycle Network had not made a decision on stop lines yet.

Enforcement of very restrictive filtering rules will be difficult. It will require more manpower. This may mean less policing of other offences for NO ROAD SAFETY BENEFIT. Existing laws cover dangerous riding/driving. Blitzes on riders filtering safely will not be good PR for police.

1. Fines and loss of points hurt those who can least afford it for NO road safety benefit – students, job seekers and families with mortgages/rents and children at school.
2. Fines and loss of points will push some commuters back into older cars. This will reduce benefits to car drivers from improved traffic flow and more car parking. In the medium term harsh penalties for new filtering offences will increase both traffic congestion and crash risk.

POLICY

The IRG strongly supports:

- Minimum restrictions on traffic filtering because it the safest way to ride in heavy traffic and it benefits all road users.
- New stop lines at suitable intersections to separate pedestrians from two-wheelers and two-wheelers from cars.
- A positive education campaign for car drivers to show them the benefits to all road users of sharing the road in general and traffic filtering in particular.

The IRG strongly opposes:

- Bans on filtering in speed zones of 40 kph or less (school zones excepted).
- Bans on filtering near slow moving or stopped large vehicles like trucks and buses.
- Bans on filtering between slow moving or stopped traffic and parked cars.
- Bans on L & P plate riders filtering.
- Harsh penalties under new filtering rules.