

TRAINING

# VICTIM MENTALITY

Words: **Howard Mansell**

What's the single greatest thing that a motorcyclist can do to improve their safety? Drop the "Victim mentality".

**N**ow, as a motorcyclist I can just imagine the gripping and ire that my first sentence has created in many rider's minds, but it's true.

We as riders, have all at times felt that other road users are out to get us. Generally, though, when thought about in a calm way we realise that is simply untrue.

Our drivers in NZ have the same issues we as riders have. We have been given a licence to drive, or ride, without being required to take any professional training worth mentioning and are now out there thinking we are doing well because we have a licence (or not??). In actual fact, what we are doing is that we are operating our machines abysmally badly, not understanding the physics, not realising how horribly dangerous we are being in our normal *modus operandi*. New Zealand is a country of DIY people, and most drivers here have been trained by their Mum or Dad, who was taught by their Mum or Dad, who drove for 40 years. The only problem is that there's a "badly" in each of those. They were trained badly by their parents who were also taught badly and drove badly for 40 years.

The thing is that this was probably acceptable 30 or 40 years ago when we had underpowered, out of date British machines and there were only two million

of us. Nowadays, we have much better and faster machines and traffic congestion, plus a bunch of immigrant drivers who may or may not have anything closer to a driving licence than a playing card. And we still think it's okay to have Mum or Dad train us. It just isn't, not anymore.

Unfortunately, NZTA hasn't really done much to change things, and part of any licence changes require legislative change, which is never popular. So, things become political very quickly which adds to the level of incompetence and inefficiency within this process. What we really need is a much more robust and comprehensive graduated licencing system before letting anyone invoke their privilege of taking a ton of steel out onto the road and driving it around at speed in our congestion, weather conditions, and incredibly poor road conditions.

Of course, changing the requirements now won't change hardly anything for the next 20 or 30 years. But, it would be nice to think that someone has got the gonads to do something to address our fundamental problems which point to being contributors of our poor driving standards and ever-increasing road toll.

To be fair, NZTA has brought in the new CBTA system for motorcycle licencing in 2014 which has a much higher skill and training

requirement, but guess what? They have kept the hopeless old system and left it as an alternative – a poor, unacceptably low skill requirement for a pass system that's let riders down for the last 50 or so years. This "old" system is cheaper and easier than doing the more comprehensive CBTA system, so there is a lack of consistency from NZTA to add to the issue.

And car driver licencing is still as woefully inadequate as it's always been.

What can we do? Simple, drop the victim mentality. Take the situation as it is – hopelessly unacceptable – but it is what it is. Take some training, change your headspace. I dearly wish that I could never hear again that it was the "driver's fault". This is 999 out of 1000 wrong. The truth is that it is virtually always a combination of the rider and the driver's fault. There are always things that we can do to improve our safety and awareness on the road, so do everything you can and take 100% responsibly for the outcomes. Attending a Ride Forever Bronze, Silver or Gold on road training course is a great way to start! Get over the victim mentality, take responsibility, and accept that if we motorcyclists learned to ride better with greater hazard awareness, we would be safer and happier riders. ■■■

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