

PRO RIDER

# RULES ARE RULES

Words: Pro Rider/Mark Jones



**"Remember, that white arrow on the road sign pointing toward the one-lane bridge tells us we have the right of way, but to proceed with caution..."**



In his narration of a really useful series of 'Rider Risk' videos produced by the Motorcycle Council of New South Wales (funded by the NSW Government and all free to view on YouTube), adventure rider Steve Crombie comes out with some memorable 'one-liners' concerning safe riding. A fave of mine is, 'It's no use being righteous from a wheelchair!' If that's hard to work out, I'll offer you my more extreme version of, 'Do you really want I had the right of way on your headstone!'

What we are trying to get over here is that there will be many a time out there on the road when you do indeed have the right of way, with other road users being legally obliged by the rules of the road (derived from the Land Transport Act and its ready reference interpretation in the Road Code). But holding onto that maxim at all costs will have you in that wheelchair if you are lucky, and 6 feet under if not so fortunate.

### RULES ARE RULES, SOMETIMES

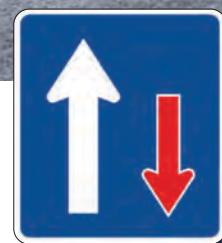
Motivation to write on this subject comes from recently observing an escalating number of road users – including bikes – blasting across a series of one-lane bridges on one of my fave riding routes close to home. Heading into the leafy charms of Coatesville riding along a reasonably twisty piece of road (now supposedly calmed to 60km/h by Auckland Transport), you come across the warning sign of a narrowing road (due to the first bridge), and the two arrowed light blue-backed sign with the red one pointing toward you. Courtesy of the other arrow – white facing away – we know without a doubt that the rules being the

rules we should have the right of way. BUT (yes, a BIG but) does everyone know the rule and the approach to said bridge offers bugger all view of oncoming traffic until you are actually halfway over the bridge. And lo and behold, there is another one-lane bridge immediately after the one you are now blitting across. For good measure, there is a side road on the right chucked in between the bridges that you can't really see until at that halfway point either. But it's OK as there is a stop sign ensuring nobody will pop out in front of you – the rules are the rules remember!

The potential horror of this location was revealed to me in dramatic fashion when riding with a group through there a couple of years back. Being aware of the risk, another local up front slowed right down as we approached only to be met by a truck and trailer combo blasting across at a full-on 80ks (the speed limit back then) against the Give Way sign. It was pouring with rain and goodness knows what the driver was thinking (very little it would seem), and if the rider hadn't been so prudent, she would have been creamed for sure.

This is perhaps an extreme example in a particularly dodgy location, but there are heaps more I could give from all around the motu where the headstone option could so easily come into play.

The fundamental message here is that whilst you know the rules of the road convey you the right to proceed unmolested, in reality, someone is going to run a red light, ignore a Give Way or other sign conferring your priority, tailgate, fail to indicate, turn into a one-way street, head the wrong way down the motorway, or just simply



pull out in front of you from a side road as you go on your merry way – though hopefully not all on one day. These folks may or may not know the road code and if they do, choose to ignore it. They may be generally inattentive, under the influence, or just not give a shit when it comes down to their ownership of the road.

### VULNERABLE ONES

The bottom line here is that the majority of other road users are encased in metal boxes, sometimes very big ones, and even if they walk away from smashing into us, we are indeed likely to be looking at wheelchair time at best. Remember, that white arrow on the road sign pointing toward the one-lane bridge tells us we have the right of way, but to proceed with caution, just as the green traffic light tells us we can go, as long as it's safe to do so. Whatever the reason for the way some other road users behave, we are the vulnerable ones, and it simply isn't good enough to rely on a literal acceptance and adherence to a road rule by everyone. Don't get paranoid as you ride, but think twice about the epitaph you really want when the time comes – hopefully in the distant future not on next weekend's ride around the northern countryside of Auckland – or anywhere else for that matter.

