

Motor trikes (aka 'trikes') are a popular choice for those who prefer the style and comfort of three-wheels over that of a motorcycle. They also still provide the feeling of being connected to the environment around them in a similar vein to riding a motorcycle. Trikes are also popular with individuals who have limited physical mobility which prevents them from riding a motorcycle.



Source: VisitVictoria

To ride a trike in Australia riders are required to obtain a motorcycle licence. Most states do not have a licence pathway for people who want to ride a trike and expect them to undergo training and testing on a motorcycle. For many people learning on a motorcycle is not an option as they may not have the physical ability to balance and control a two-wheeled vehicle but would be able to handle a three-wheeled machine. Furthermore, most states limit novice riders to Learner Approved Motorcycles (LAMs) which have a maximum engine capacity of 660cc. This presents a problem as there are no trikes currently imported into Australia that meet the LAM requirements. So even if an applicant manages to get a motorcycle licence it may be 3 years before they can legally ride a trike.

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Some attempts to provide trike training using the motorcycle course have been made. However, this poses several issues:

Trikes handle differently to motorcycles



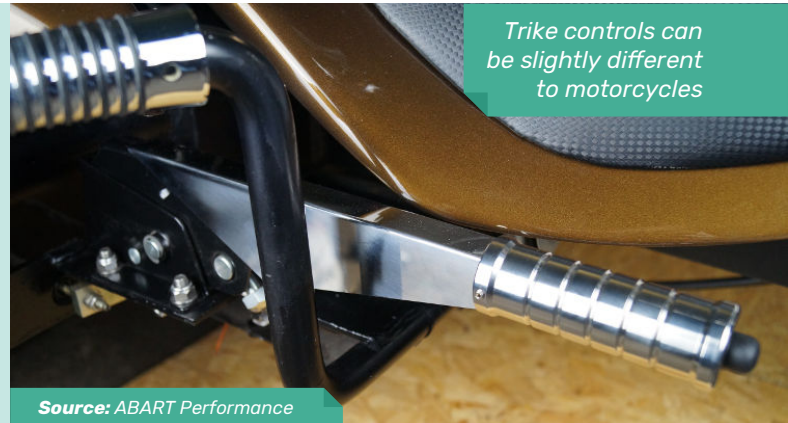
Source: AMCN

1. Trikes handle very differently to motorcycles.
2. Motorcycle instructors are not always familiar with the operation of a trike.
3. Trikes are not always able to perform the same manoeuvres as motorbikes thus their riders will not pass some licensing assessments.
4. Trike controls may be similar to that of motorcycles but there are some key differences (e.g. the presence of handbrakes).
5. The manual manoeuvring of a trike is different to that of a motorcycle due to the additional wheel.

Some questions that need to be answered in Australia:

- Do trikes require their own unique training course and licensing pathway?
- Do instructors need trike-specific training?
- Do trikes require their own unique set of manoeuvring assessments?

Trike controls can be slightly different to motorcycles



Source: ABART Performance



An operator's lower limbs can engage with a trike's wheels

More unique trike issues also need to be considered:

1. The location of a trike's wheels can result in an operator's lower limbs inadvertently engaging with the wheels resulting in injury. Trikes have unique safety requirements which need to be understood and evaluated.
2. The current LAM restrictions are applicable to trikes but the rationale behind this has not been established.
3. Trikes can come with either a solid axle or a differential. The efficacy of a differential on a trike to improve safety is not well understood.
4. Trike kits can be purchased from overseas by individuals to convert motorcycles into motor trikes. These kits do not always result in a conversion that is ADR compliant (e.g. Some trikes have a handbrake that applies braking to only 1 wheel and not all wheels).

Safe System Solutions Pty Ltd has undertaken an evaluation of selected overseas jurisdictions' trike policies/practices. We found that very few jurisdictions have trike specific training and licensing requirements. Some jurisdictions allow trikes to be operated by an individual with a driver licence while most require the individual to have a motorcycle license. Further, it has also been found that trike training and licensing requirements are often ambiguous thus causing unnecessary confusion to those who want to obtain a licence to operate a trike.

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