

# Smarter BY DESIGN

**Ben Whittacker-Cook** talks to a charity focused on improving driver skills.

**I**AM RoadSmart has been promoting better driving and riding standards in New Zealand since 1959. With six regional branches across the North and South Islands, it is New Zealand's longest running and largest independent 'hands-on' road safety charity.

Starting out as the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), the charity began life in the UK in 1956. Today, its aims are still the same - to reduce the number of avoidable traffic collisions on our roads and improve the nation's overall driving and riding standard.

It does this through volunteer observers, each mentoring road users through to higher skill levels while bringing greater overall enjoyment to the driving and riding experience. Coaching skills and disciplines are based on, among other influences, the Roadcraft system - the UK's Police handbook.

The concept centres on how drivers and riders approach situations and negotiate hazards in a flexible and methodical way that leaves nothing to chance. It uses the acronym IPSGA - Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration.

"I believe we are the country's best kept secret," IAM President Colin Gates says. "Our goal is for members to come out with us, enjoy the experience and benefit from one-on-one coaching, learning by example and discussion. The result? To significantly increase the probability of getting home safely and without incident."

Observers, examiners, mentors, advocates, emergency services, professional drivers and professional instructors have all taken IAM RoadSmart's Advanced courses. Many become volunteers themselves.

While closely aligned to the UK model, the New Zealand organisation is quintessentially Kiwi, and mindful of New Zealand's variable conditions and Road Code. The Roadcraft system forms the basis of ACC's Ride Forever programme for motorcyclists and in advanced form for the IAM Roadcraft mentoring programme for both car drivers and motorcyclists.

"New Zealand offers such a diverse range of vehicle types, road surfaces and shifting weather conditions, which can alter the situation more rapidly than in many other countries," Colin says. "This is a particular concern for motorcycle riders, as any road you used last week may be different this week. We've all experienced roadworks, rainfall, wind, landslips, tar bleed, lack of road chippings, grip and potholes. Each contributes to a potential problem if not approached correctly. We heighten the 'what if?'"

"Everyone at IAM RoadSmart is a volunteer, giving up their time and sharing their expertise to help make our roads safer. The more people we can reach, the more people we can help, and the safer everyone will be.


"We want more drivers and riders, and we're always looking for capable and enthusiastic volunteers, whether they are new

to IAM RoadSmart NZ, or people who have been with us in the past and can renew their interest."

With a new board in place since April 2023, IAM RoadSmart now welcomes members on restricted licences (subject to a competency assessment) - a key initiative in raising the general standards of driving and riding in New Zealand and encouraging younger membership.

"For younger drivers and riders, we are one of the very good organisations out there to work with because we look at road safety in a very practical way. We are not professional trainers, and we don't teach those who can't drive. We take those who can drive and assist them to develop their skills and hazard awareness to expedite their safety.

"There are many distractions on the roads today, so we've got to have our eyes wide open and, to quote Roadcraft, 'be aware of what can be seen, what can't be seen and what can reasonably be expected.' Developing better habits today and setting a great example will pay dividends, as every parent is already influencing the next generation of drivers," Colin says.

IAM RoadSmart offers a no-obligation taster session. For information, see [iamroadsmart.org.nz](http://iamroadsmart.org.nz) 

## Riding with insight



"I wanted to improve my riding and make myself safer because I want to ride my motorbike for as long as possible. IAM RoadSmart works through a process, connecting you with very experienced mentors and observers and bringing it all together in a rounded way through one-on-one training, which makes it so much easier when applying it on the road.

"In a short space of time, I found myself appreciating that there's a different way to approach my riding. IAMRS showed me valuable insights around better road positioning and heightened awareness of what's going on around me and this allowed me to make better decisions. It really lifted my game."

**Martin Rushton**

*Full Motorcycle Member, IAM RoadSmart*