

Rider safety »



SOS – save our scones

CRAIG DUFF

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AN Australian physicist is overseeing a huge shift in helmet design. The Kali Naza helmet looks like a conventional lid with a carbon-fibre, Kevlar or fibreglass outer — but it is what's on the inside that inventor Don Morgan believes will help save lives.

The expanded polystyrene foam inner is made of conical shapes of varying density that disperse energy on impact.

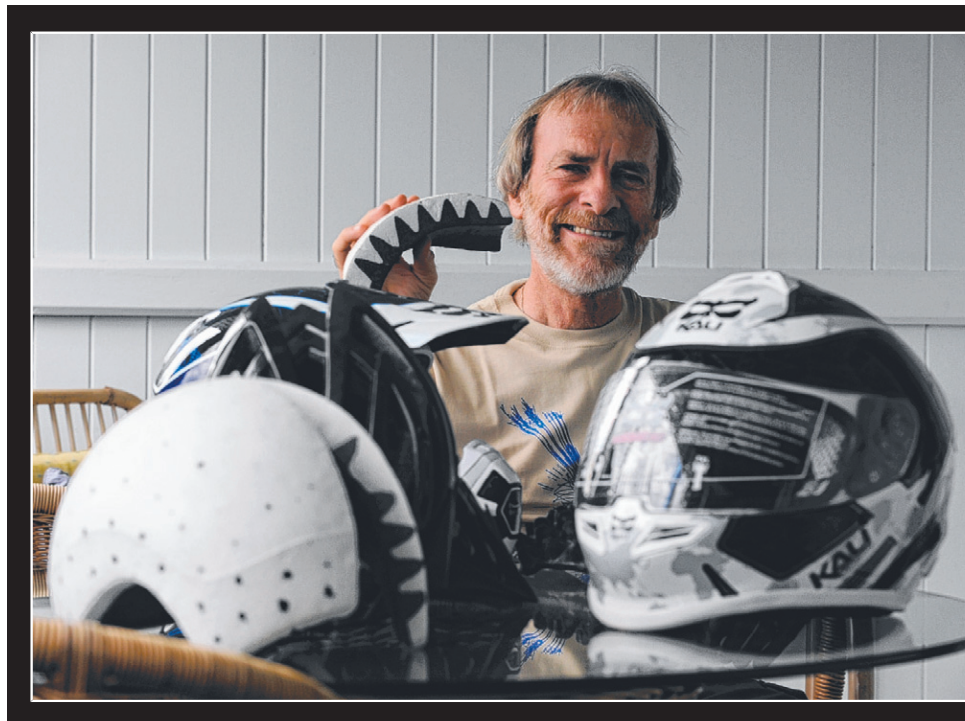
No one wants to put their helmet to the ultimate test but Morgan says simulations and lab tests show his design reduces “energy transfer” to the rider's head — the cause of brain damage or fatal injuries.

“Even the best current helmet design transfers forces (in a linear fashion) in a crash,” Morgan says.

In other words, the force of the impact goes directly on to the rider's skull.

“With the cones, that impact force dissipates much faster and is spread over a greater area.”

Morgan's design has earned



him a string of awards, including the ABC's *The New Inventors* title in 2007 but it's been a long road to get the helmet into production.

Motorbike versions, for road and off-road use, are now being

sold under the Kali brand. A trial of the Kali Naza shows it is one of the lightest lids on the market, making it ideal for extended use.

It comes with varying shaped cheek pads to ensure a

snug fit and the aero profile means it doesn't catch the wind at any angle.

Nothing's perfect and the minor chink in Kali's armour is wind noise at higher-than-legal speeds. It's far from the noisiest



Safe and not sorry: Don Morgan's helmets give greater protection; Valentino Rossi smacks the track at Phillip Island Pictures: Glen Male, AP

Clear as a Bell

US helmet maker Bell has launched another potential lifesaver in the form of its Transitions visor, which changes shade depending on light intensity. The company is best known for its race helmets but Monza

Imports signed up to bring in its motorbike helmets late last year. Most bike riders opt for some form of smoked visor to cut sun glare but then have to carry a clear visor for night riding or cope with reduced vision.

helmet on the market and can be eliminated by wearing earbuds — but I don't, at least not on the road when hearing approaching cars can be potentially as lifesaving as the helmet itself.

It's a minor trade-off for its protective value and modest \$369 price.

Meanwhile, it's a lid I'm happy to wear. I'll take a faint whistle over brain injury any day of the week.

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