

WHEN IT'S BOTH BUT NEITHER

A break-down, depending on where it happens and what happens, can result in a crash. We all know that, right? But when it does, is it a breakdown? Or a crash? Well, when it comes to insurance companies and road-side assistance, they – of course! – they don't know; and just assume it is the one they are not responsible for assisting with! Dave tells us the story of one such incident.

I had a wild experience on my 1974 BMW R90/6 recently. Rode it to Melbourne, and on my way home (I live near Byron Bay) had a sudden and catastrophic front tyre failure whilst on the freeway. I was in the left lane and a B-double was about to overtake me when the tyre went. The bike jinked left, then suddenly right – straight across the path of the semi. I heard the screech of brakes and thought, “This is it Dave!” But in a clear example of my enduring good luck, the bike continued to the right and dumped me in a very muddy patch of dirt in the centre reservation. Thank God there was no wire-rope barrier in this section! So, I picked the bike up and some passers-by helped me push it off the freeway. “No worries” I thought, “I'm a member of the Australian Motorcycle Alliance”. (This is similar to the NRMA).

So, I call them up and explain the situation. I told the lady what happened and she said, “Oh, that's a crash. We don't do crash recovery, you'll have to call your insurance company.” And hung up on me! So, I call the insurance company (Shannon's). Told the guy on the phone what happened and his reply was (you guessed it) “Oh, that's a breakdown, we don't cover breakdowns”. And then hung up on me!

Starting to get a bit depressed, I was wondering what to do. (By this stage I had left the bike and hitched into a village, Kew). I was in a mechanic's garage and he had overheard my conversation. He said, “Don't take that mate; ring the NRMA back and give 'em a serve”. So, that's what I did. Jumped up and down (metaphorically) and insisted that they help me. After all, the only reason I dumped the bike in the mud was because of the tyre failure. So a kind bike mechanic from Laurieton came out and rescued me.

At his workshop they discovered that the tube in the front tyre was the wrong size. It was too big and whoever put it in had simply folded it into place. This caused the tube to rotate inside the tyre and rip out the valve-stem, causing the rapid deflation. They had me on my way not long afterwards.

I got home in the dark and rain more than 12 hours after I had started that leg of the trip. (That's a whole 'nother adventure; riding a 46 year old bike with a 1/2 candlepower headlight!).