

Submission

No 13

DRIVER AND ROAD USER DISTRACTION

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Submission: Driver and Road User Distraction

SUMMARY:

Any distraction has an impact on the attention of the driver with the level of distraction varying. Some distractions cannot be avoided, checking street names, direction signs, speed limits, children in the vehicle, road markings. Some occur frequently while others are sporadic. The objective should be to remove most distractions and lessen the significance of those remaining with an emphasis on those specifically and inherently associated with the actual driving task. Future developments in all areas of driving should be subjected to a comprehensive analysis and research for their distraction potential.

ISSUES:

Despite what motorists may claim, the evidence indicates that talking, listening to a radio, changing a setting, music, GPS usage, etc does require a positive response on the part of the individual. The significance of the response may vary up and down but is always present. Custom would now make it difficult to prohibit such activities. Therefore, no new distracting technology should be permitted and the use of a mobile phone of **any and every nature** prohibited.

Road signs concerning speed limits, schools, turns, prohibitions, should be placed on both sides of the road so that the oncoming traffic on a multi lane road sees them even if travelling in the far centre lane. If a B-Double is beside you, there is no opportunity to see a sign.

Signs need to be placed well in advance of the point where a change of direction/destination is possible.

Sign locations need to be regularly checked to ensure they are not being obscured by tree growth or damaged by graffiti.

Remove the unjust penalty for drivers who have a passenger not wearing a seat belt since it is not possible for the driver to ensure this while driving and cannot physically remove a person who refuses to wear one - turning around to check someone in the back seat is a dangerous distraction.

Similarly, a driver should not be held responsible for a passenger having part of their body protruding from the vehicle since they are seriously distracted if they attempt to deal with this situation.

The multiplicity of signs in close proximity is a problem especially when some contain details of a time constraint or other conditions and all must be read almost simultaneously in a short distance.

The grey traffic lights signal boxes frequently have their identification number only on one side so that it is a distraction to try to turn to see it so that a malfunctioning light can be accurately reported (the driver may not be familiar with the names of the streets in the area).

Constant changes in speed zones is very distracting since the driver must continually look down to check rather than watch the road ahead. Greater use of the current signs giving a preliminary warning that the speed zone will be changing ahead is highly desirable.

So many drivers still believe (and act) on the basis of giving way to the right on roundabouts so an increase in the sign "Give way to vehicles already in the roundabout" is of benefit, particularly where those on the major road tend to swamp those on a minor road on the left.