

INQUIRY INTO SPEED ZONING AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEMERIT POINTS SCHEME

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Submission by the City of Sydney

Staysafe Committee

**Inquiry into Speed Zoning and its impact on the Demerit
Points Scheme**

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Introduction

The City of Sydney (the City) welcomes the current *Inquiry into Speed Zoning and its impact on the Demerit Points Scheme*. This inquiry will complement previous inquiries and provide valuable information and feedback that will help reduce trauma related to transport and movement.

Speed and speed limits have been discussed in all of the City's submissions to Staysafe, including:

- Inquiry into Non-registered Motorised Vehicles – April 2014
- Inquiry into Road User Distraction – May 2012
- Inquiry into NSW School Zones – September 2011
- Inquiry into Vulnerable Road User Safety – August 2010
- Inquiry into Pedestrian Safety – June 2009
- Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs – November 2007

Many comments made in the above submissions are relevant for this inquiry. For the purpose of this submission, the related comments will be reiterated for clarity and ease.

The City's *Sustainable Sydney 2030* vision has key objectives that relate to road safety, including giving greater priority to and improving amenity for walking and cycling. Some specific actions include:

- Creating a city for walking and cycling;
- Integrating walking and cycling into transport planning;
- Managing the road space to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport;
- Giving pedestrians more priority;
- Reducing speed limits in central Sydney and the neighbourhoods to improve safety and amenity for all road users;
- Developing a Liveable Green Network (the City's walking and cycling routes), which safely links activity hubs, key destinations and local services through the City's streets, parks and open spaces; and
- Designing low speed environments that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport.

A key element in achieving the City's *Sustainable Sydney 2030* vision is to have clear and safe speed zones that relate to the road environment.

Background

In dense urban areas, such as city centres, transport modes converge and contribute to congestion. It is therefore critical for areas that have medium to high density to manage the demand for space efficiently. This requires all levels of government to manage transport modes in the most economical and safe manner. Walking, cycling and public transport are space efficient and sustainable modes of transport. Pedestrians and cyclists are also the most vulnerable road users. The management of vehicle speeds is important to maximise safety. For Sydney to remain globally competitive and continue to grow, we must provide a safe environment in which all people can move in.

NSW State Government support of lower speed limits

The NSW State Government has shown support for reducing speed limits in city and urban residential areas. This has been documented clearly in recent publications. The *Sydney City Centre Access Strategy* (SCCAS), December 2013, indicates that Transport NSW will oversee the introduction of 40 km/h speed limits in areas with high pedestrian activity:

“Walking is the dominant way of travelling within the city centre, and a program of initiatives will improve the safety, amenity and capacity for pedestrians in the city centre. We will create a safer environment with 40 km/h speed limits in parts of the city centre. Forty per cent of George Street will be pedestrianised; footpaths will be de-cluttered and there will be reduced waiting times for pedestrians at traffic lights.”

*Lowering the speed limit to 40 km/h in parts of the city centre will also help to improve road safety for pedestrians in the city centre.
40 km/h speed limits in parts of the city centre to improve safety for pedestrians.”*

The City of Sydney supports the reduction in speeds limits in the city centre, however has some concerns regarding the limited extent of a proposed reduced speed limit and the implementation.

The *Long Term Transport Master Plan* (Transport NSW, December 2012) refers to the *NSW Road Safety Strategy for NSW 2012-2021* with respect to speed limits. The *NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-2012* states:

“There is a strong desire for pedestrian safety across the road network. This includes the provision of 40 km/h High Pedestrian Activity Areas which are being progressively rolled out at identified locations and 10 km/h Shared Zones”.

A key element of the Strategy is to improve the safety of pedestrians and bicycle riders through the utilisation of lower speed limit schemes, including 40 km/h high pedestrian activity areas and shared zones.

Safe System

At national and state level, roads authorities have adopted the *Safe System* approach to road safety. *Safe System* seeks to minimise the risk of harm to people

through the reduced severity of a crash using three principles; safer people, safer roads and safer vehicles.

The City of Sydney to reduce pedestrian road trauma within the City of Sydney and particularly central Sydney by:

- Reducing the number of unnecessary vehicles in the City,
- Reducing vehicle speeds and
- Improving pedestrian movement through better crossing opportunities at traffic lights, including the length of the green walk time.

The City's aim is to create a people friendly environment which encourages walking, cycling and the use of public transport. This is predominately achieved through the prioritisation of walking and cycling. The City also believes that reduced speed limits in urban areas are one of the most effective ways to provide a safer environment for all road users.

City of Sydney also aims to be a Global City and looks to adopt successful practices from other cities around the world. As their contribution to *Safe System* many countries, including the UK, Norway, Netherlands and Denmark, have adopted 30 km/h as the standard for residential and city areas. The City strongly believes that the adoption of 30km/h in high volume areas will become necessary as the City becomes busier.

Liveable Green Network

The *Liveable Green Network (LGN)* is a part of the City's plan to make the local government area as green, global and connected as possible. It aims to create a pedestrian and cycling network that connects people to the city and village centres, major transport and entertainment hubs, cultural precincts, parks and open spaces.

Road safety is considered as an important factor in the implementation of the LGN. A key component of this is to have appropriate speed limits wherever the activity around the road environment and road related areas include potential conflict between road users. For more information on the LGN, please see - <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/vision/towards-2030/public-domain-improvements/liveable-green-network>

Submission addressing the Terms of Reference

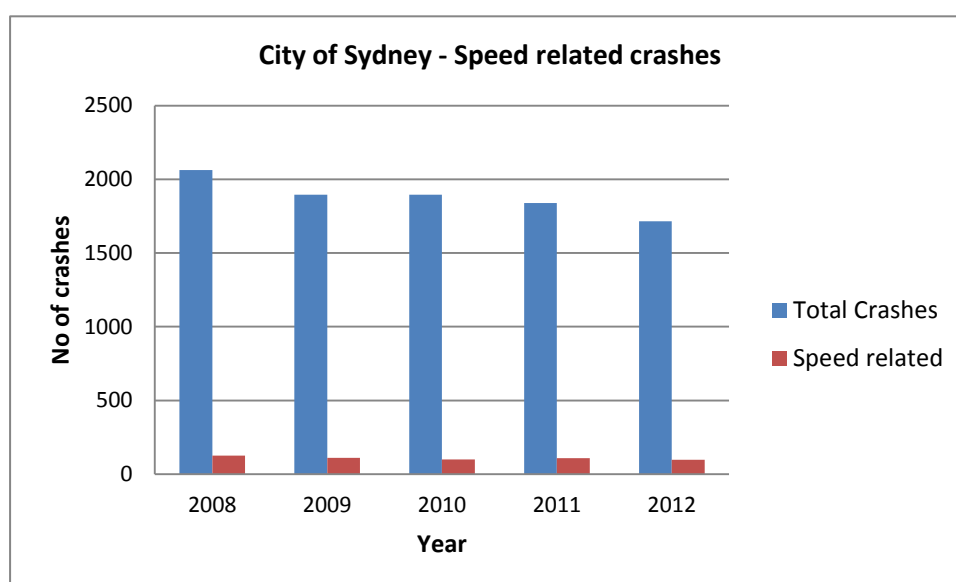
The City of Sydney has reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

Submissions made by the NSW State Government have detailed the content of the *NSW Speed Zoning Guidelines* and the *NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-2021* as well as the *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020*. They have also covered the impact of speed on crash risk and outcomes in general.

The following are the City's comments on the specific items identified in the Terms of Reference that relate to the City's concerns.

The contribution of speed to crash rates on City of Sydney (NSW) roads

Reported speed related crashes represent around six per cent of the total crashes on the City's roads (*CRS CrashLink Data*).



It is difficult to determine accurately what the contribution of speed has on crashes within the City of Sydney. Many crashes occur below the current speed limit and are not reported as speed related. This is even though the speed the vehicle was being driven meant that a crash could not be avoided. Put simply, a driver/rider who is unable to stop safely within the road space available is not driving/riding to the conditions/environment. All crashes include excessive speed for the conditions as a contributing factor.

The City Centre of Sydney has a high concentration of people walking and riding, comparatively to other parts of NSW, which means that a low speed environment within this area is critical to reducing fatalities and injuries.

The rationale for and current operation of speed zones on NSW roads

In terms of the City of Sydney, safe speed zones should be applied so that there is a low speed environment, clearly identified, in all areas where there is high pedestrian and cycling activity.

Where facilities for walking are restricted and/or there is a high concentration of people walking, Shared Zones (10 km/h) should provide additional legal advantages for people walking who are given right of way.

Key factors governing the establishment of speed limits

Currently the Roads and Maritime Services hold full authority to determine speed limits and where they are located. The key factors are identified in the NSW Speed Zoning Guidelines produced by the RMS and include:

- Improving road safety;
- Engineering measures available;
- Economic development;
- Type and length of roads;
- Road surfaces;
- Road characteristics and use; and
- 85th percentile speed of vehicles.

The City of Sydney considers that the key factors in determining speed limit zones should include:

- Road safety for all users;
- The efficiency of moving people in a space and priority mode in this context;
- The level of pedestrian and cycling activity relative to vehicle activity;
- Mode split actuals and targets for walking, cycling and public transport use;
- Land use and density;
- The availability of controlled crossing facilities – people walking may cross roads if they are not within 20 metres of a controlled crossing;
- Residential streets;
- Location of schools, many of whom have narrow footpaths and,
- Availability of separated cycleways.

Mechanisms for reviewing the appropriateness of maximum speed limits

The City of Sydney and all other local government authorities are required to seek approval for any speed limit change within its area.

The City bases its requests on community engagement, either by responding to requests or proposing changes and seeking feedback.

The City presents any proposals to change speed limits to the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee (LPCTCC)¹ for their comment and support after submitting to the RMS.

This process is quite lengthy and there is no guarantee that the RMS will approve a submission. This is despite the advantages that local government have in understanding local environments, context, history and community needs.

The operation of speed limits in other jurisdictions

The City of Sydney has been monitoring the approach to speed limits in other cities and countries.

Many international capital and major cities, including Amsterdam (Netherlands), and Copenhagen (Denmark) are embracing the concept that towns are for people and

¹ Formerly the Sydney Traffic Committee

that motor vehicles should only be driven if necessary and with responsibility for low-risk movement. Greater freedom of movement should be expected by people walking.

An important factor in many other countries is that local government has the authority to implement speed zones. Of most interest is the adoption of 30 km/h limited streets in European cities to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.

In the United Kingdom there is widespread introduction of 20 mph (32 km/h) speed limits in towns and cities. The concept is highly promoted by organisations such as “20’s Plenty for Us” - <http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk/>

The UK’s Dept. for Transport Circular 01/2006 *Setting Local Speed Limits* states;

“The Department encourages and supports 20 mph limits and zones in situations where there is a particular risk to vulnerable road users.”

This was expanded in the revised Circular 01/2013 and stated:

“Speed limits in urban areas affect everyone, not only as motorists, but as pedestrians, cyclists and residents. As well as influencing safety they can influence quality of life, the environment and the local economy.

Traffic authorities are encouraged to adopt the Institution of Highways and Transportation’s urban safety management guidelines (see IHT, 2003), in which road hierarchies are adopted that reflect a road’s function and the mix of traffic that it carries.

The national speed limit on roads with street lighting is 30 mph (48.3 km/h).

Traffic authorities can, over time, introduce 20mph (32.2 km/h) speed limits or zones on:

- Major streets where there are – or could be - significant numbers of journeys on foot, and/or where pedal cycle movements are an important consideration, and this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic.*

This is in addition to:

- Residential streets in cities, towns and villages, particularly where the streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles, there is community support and the characteristics of the street are suitable.”*

In Finland, Helsinki reduced the speed limit in many of their urban and residential areas to 30 km/h from 40 km/h. Their research showed:

A 30 km/h speed limit, without any physical countermeasures or extended enforcement, compared with a traditional 50 km/h limit, may reduce pedestrian accident costs (risk of death) by one third.

Traffic calming means streets, where the maximum speed of cars is limited to about 30 km/h with physical design countermeasures, including constrained street design for a low speed environment. Traffic calming may reduce serious pedestrian accidents by as much as 70 per cent. Traffic calming usually takes place on residential streets with a rather small number of accidents even before traffic calming measures. In Helsinki, it would be expensive but possible to build humps and other speed reducing measures in all those streets, which now have a 30 km/h speed limit. At present, a 30 km/h speed limit covers 160 kilometres of Helsinki's streets that previously accounted for 7 per cent of pedestrian accident locations.

The City understands that 40 km/h is a limit that has been applied in many areas across Australia and that it is considered the 'normal' speed limit for high pedestrian activity areas. However the introduction of 30 km/h speed limits in European urban areas should be reviewed for consideration.

The appropriateness of current thresholds in the Demerit Points Scheme for speeding offences

The City does not have access to information that can determine the appropriateness of the current thresholds in the Demerit Points Scheme.

Recommendations

The City's recommendations for consideration by the Staysafe Committee are consistent with those made to previous inquiries, including the *Inquiry into Pedestrian Safety 2009*. This includes:

- Approval of lower speed limits, on Local Roads, including 10 km/h Shared Zones, to be delegated to the local Council, approved by the relevant Traffic Committee.
- The introduction of a consistent regime of 40km/h speed limit for High Pedestrian Activity Areas, such as Central Sydney and activity streets. In the medium term 30 km/h should be considered as the preferred speed limit in such areas, adopting international best practice.
- The introduction of a consistent regime of 40km/h speed limits, or lower, for Local Traffic Areas, particularly those where Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Plans indicate that lower speeds are desirable.
- Criteria for 10 km/h Shared Zones and other walking related facilities (e.g. footpath continuations and marked foot crossings) should be revised to include consideration the specific needs of any particular Local Government Area. Pedestrian volumes should be included and considered more important than vehicle movements.
- Suitable educational programs to be introduced for all road users on appropriate driver interaction with pedestrians and cyclists.

Conclusion

The City of Sydney will continue to implement the programs for *Sustainable Sydney 2030*, concentrating on improving amenity and safety for people walking and people who choose to ride a bike. These represent travel modes that have no or extremely little negative effect on the environment and have a positive effect on the economy, health and social cohesiveness, through basic exercise and interaction with other people.

The City does acknowledge that there is, and will continue to be, a need for motor vehicles of one type or another to accommodate the needs of people living and working in the City. These necessary vehicles will still need to be driven safely in an environment where there are high numbers of people choosing active transport. As a result the City recommends a low speed environment that supports sustainable transport modes as a priority, which is in line with other global cities that lead in road safety.