

**Submission
No 10**

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

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From: Gary Paul Russell [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 28 January 2014 11:43 PM
To: Parliamentary Committees
Subject: Road Safety

Dear Sirs,

I read in my local newspaper, Express Advocate (Gosford edition), that you were interested in submissions to aid road safety.

I am not going to format a worked out paper on various issues as I just do not have the time nor resources but I want to bring the following issues to your attention.

Background: I have been driving for 27 years in both Australia and United Kingdom. I learnt to drive in Australia. I have seen quite a number of accidents and horrors over these years and am interested in driver safety.

Not all safety issues are caused by: speed, alcohol, or drugs.

Here are my thoughts on the issues:

Traffic Signs:

(a) A number of traffic signs are illogical and cause confusion at first glance. A classic is one in West Gosford on Brisbane Waters Drive which reads in two parts: No Right Turn, followed on a separate sign below it whom it applies to (this sign is particularly bad now as someone has removed the second portion of the sign, so now the sign just reads 'No Right Turn' in a traffic light controlled right hand turning lane). This should be one sign reading: No Right turn for, or Right Turn permitted except for

Another example is on the Pacific Highway between Gosford and Kariong, which states: no pedestrians or horses beyond this point; and then underneath on a separate sign 'end'. These type of signs need to be revised.

(b) Electronic overhead signs. Only display traffic or emergency information on these signs. Once general safety information is displayed as routine, the signs will be ignored as drivers will get used to not needing to be concerned about its contents.

(c) all school zones should have a sign to clearly indicate when the school zone special restrictions are in operation. There are many people whom do not have school age children and hence become unaware when schools are gazetted to be open or closed for holidays. Also checking the time when going through a zone is problematic when one is meant to be watching the road in front.

(d) the adoption of the: A, B, and M; road numbers is very good, but why are non-motorways denoted as an M road? e.g. Hume Highway, M31, between Liverpool and Goulburn; not all of this road is a motorway. Road labelling has to be consistent.

Driver Education:

(a) driver education should not stop with the receipt of the full drivers' license. In England, short driving advertisements were routinely broadcast on television during the evenings showing the correct way of using: junctions, changing lanes, parking, et cetera.

These advertisements were not hard hitting, but extremely effective. At the moment there is nothing that forces people to take notice. The current set of advertisements focusing on drink driving and speed do not actually educate the drivers on how to drive properly.

(b) The advertisements around using the little finger to denote that the driver is been childish/stupid was extremely insulting. The gesture picked actually means 'one has control over the other person', in a similar vain as the

expression: wrapped around my little finger. As a consequence, every time I saw the advertisement, it just made me angry.

(c) The standard of driving on Australian roads has deteriorated markedly since the 1980's. Understanding how to merge lanes, and junction use is particularly bad. It seems that drivers are just more lazy these days and take driving has their right rather than a privilege.

(d) test standards. I passed my driving test in Manly, N.S.W., back in 1987. I remember it been quite rigorous. I don't know how it compares today, but I do notice that most 'P' plate drivers tend to be the better drivers on the road.

Road Rules:

The road rules are quite standard, but I would change the following:

(a) turning right at a roundabout. On a single right hand turn lane on with multiple lanes off roundabout, the driver should be able to select which lane to end up in, instead of being forced to select the right hand exit lane. This would not only make the rule consistent with Europe, but would also make the rule consistent with turning right at a non-roundabout junction.

(b) maximum speed for 'P' plate holders. There is no logical reason to restrict 'P' plate holders to less than 110 km/hour on motorways. Safety is compromised by forcing 'P' plate holders to travel at a lower speed than permitted for other traffic.

(c) Learner drivers and motorways. If Learners are permitted to drive on the Motorways, then as they are under instruction by an experienced driver, they should be permitted to travel at up to 110km/hour. Similarly on 100km/hour stretches of single lane road; in these cases it will stop other drivers trying their best to get around the learner before the dual carriageway ends. My own son nearly was forced off the road in a situation similar to this while driving on 'L' plates.

Rules commonly ignored or bent:

Excluding speed, the following rules are often ignored. These cause a number of problems:

(a) keep left unless overtaking. It has got to the point now, that I can often drive at the speed limit in the left lane for the whole journey between Sydney and Gosford changing lanes only to overtake an occasional vehicle, while passing quite a number of vehicles sat in the middle lane. This feat could never be achieved in England. To aid traffic flow, and safety, drivers have to be compelled to keep left unless overtaking.

(b) turning right at a four way junction. I have noticed a lot of people will turn right when traffic on the opposing direction are turning to their left. I think this is an old New Zealand rule which has been unofficially imported. I have noticed a lot of near misses.

(c) white solid line markings are routinely ignored to shorten the drivers' path.

(d) drivers do not even attempt to slow down and stop when traffic lights turn amber.

(e) drivers do not drive into the intersection when preparing to turn right, instead they wait at the stop line until the opposing traffic is clear. This causes issues when not many cars can get to turn right at a busy junction.

(f) mobile telephones are still widely used by drivers while moving.

(g) very few drivers give way on the approach to a roundabout to other drivers already entering / on the roundabout. This is a big issue on the smaller roundabouts where traffic is trying to get out of a minor road onto the major road. Drivers on the main road often do not even slow down on the approach to the roundabout.

(h) parking in shopping centre car parks in areas not designated as parking spots, or using disabled / special spaces when not permitted to do so.

(i) travelling the wrong way around car parks. This is pretty bad in the Gosford commuter multi-storey car park. In this car park drivers often travel up/down the ramps in the wrong direction to make their trip shorter.

Road improvements:

(a) A crawler lane needs to be built between Mooney-Mooney and Jolls Bridge on the M1. The lorries slow right down in the left lane to less than 60km/hour as they climb the hill winding around the corners.

Traffic coming up behind them at 100 km/hour then discover them; often with dramatic results with sudden de-acceleration or sudden lane changes.

(b) In England, on major dual carriage ways and motorways, the approach of the next junction is accompanied by count down markers spaced out at

100 yard intervals. Having the last 300 yards / metres clearly marked on approach to a junction will help drivers to get into the correct lane before leaving the main road and reduce the last minute swing into the left lane.

Young Drivers and P Plates:

(a) The whole concept of 'P' plates is ludicrous. Even though the idea is to warn other drivers of an inexperienced driver, in reality is used as a tool to punish and victimise. With young drivers marking up between 50 and 100 hours before taking their driving test, they are often much better drivers than others on the road though less experienced.

'P' plates should be scrapped, though restrictions on alcohol limits should remain.

(b) The restrictions on 'P' plate holders from carrying other passengers in the late evening, while good in intentions, is causing dangerous situations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that 'P' plate holders are doing one of three things: (1) ignoring the restriction, (2) removing the 'P' plates from the car, or (3) putting some passengers in the boot of the car. I am aware that the youngsters, whom are out watching a film at the cinema will frequently hide the second and third passengers in the boot to get around the restrictions.

It would be better to change the restrictions so that no passenger can be over 0.05 alcohol limit for a novice driver rather than restrict the number of passengers in the car late at night.

(c) scrap the learner's log book, and instead change the test structure to prove how good the new driver is. The log books are never filled out properly, and in many cases are just fabricated.

Speed:

(a) while speed is a factor in many accidents, it appears that police will assume speed is the main factor before considering other issues.

This is causing warped statistics and a false sense of security to other drivers.

Many accidents are caused by bad driving, which may not have occurred though the driver was travelling above the speed limits.

(b) it is apparent that the mind set is that when the driver is travelling under the speed limit, no matter how bad the conditions, they are never speeding. Drivers need to be educated that travelling too fast for the conditions, even when below the speed limit, is still speeding.

(c) There are many 60 and 70 zones which really should be 80 zones.

(d) Time to start considering raising the maximum speed limit to 140 km/hour where the motorway conditions are good that have proper high speed junctions in place.

Restrictions:

(a) It has long been my thought that most drivers should be banned from dropping off / picking up children near schools. Many schools in England now ban vehicles within a certain distance of the school between set times unless: (1) the owner is a resident of the street, or (2) there is a special need. Many private schools have special pick up / drop off zones for drivers. While this may not be practical in state schools where space is at a premium, it should be considered in new schools by design.

(b) put restrictions on large off-road vehicles in city areas. These vehicles are a menace as they reduce visibility to other drivers.

I am aware that you will have submissions from various organisations that will have been: fully worked out, formatted, backed up with evidence et cetera. While I cannot do this myself, it should not reduce the validity of my submission.

yours,

Gary Paul Russell

