

**Submission
No 251**

MOBILE SPEED CAMERA ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS IN NSW

Organisation: Bega Valley Shire Council

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5 July 2021

The Chair
Staysafe Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: staysafe@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir

Submission: Inquiry into mobile speed camera enforcement programs in NSW.

a) The nature and timing of those changes;

Bega Valley Shire Council supports any implementation of road safety initiatives. The timing of the recent changes is always difficult given the perceived lack of support from the community on mobile speed cameras, whom appear to see it as an income stream for the state government to spend in other areas outside road safety. A campaign by the state government is needed to indicate to the motoring public the percentage of revenue raised from mobile speed cameras that is expended on road safety programs and network improvements.

b) Research, modelling, and the evidence base of fatality and serious injury reduction;

As is always the case, issues in regional and rural areas differ dramatically than those in the metropolitan areas. The research and modelling need to be equally focussed on roads outside these metropolitan areas which have lower traffic volumes, but also suffer from inferior road networks, interfacing with rural primary activities. The recent advertising campaign on deaths on rural roads has been a great incentive, however the concentration on funding in these areas, although increased, is not sufficient to mitigate the dangerous driving environment faced by the regional population.

Reports, since 2014 in the Bega Valley LGA, indicate there have been 23 fatalities, almost an average of 3 per year. Of these 23 fatalities, 19 were on the Council road network, equalling 82.65% of fatalities. This indicates the local government road networks are seriously lacking funding for road safety improvements. Although there is a number of Grant funding opportunities provided by both the State and Federal Governments, these are in an openly competitive market against both regional and metropolitan councils.

c) The views of key road user groups, including the community views towards these changes;

All communities have concerns with road deaths, however this is not always associated with the implementation of mobile speed cameras. The general community sees these as purely revenue raising and see little to no connection to the road improvement programs being introduced by the state government. A more transparent system of income disbursement needs to be forthcoming from the state government, along with an advertising campaign which highlights the expenditures in these key areas

d) The nature and oversight of compliance or enforcement contracts with government and private companies;

Since the recent relaxation of the requirements for the visibility of the mobile speed camera units, it has been evidenced these units are disproportionately located on the state road network, with minimal surveillance on the local road network. As indicated earlier, since 2014 there have been 23 fatalities, almost an average of 3 per year. Of these 23 fatalities, 19 were on the Council road network, equalling 82.65% of fatalities. This indicates the local government road networks are seriously lacking funding for road safety improvements. Enforcement contracts need to be more proportionally focussed on the local road network, to increase the chances of these roads being fatality free.

e) The projected impact on revenue generated by these changes;

Revenue from compliance should be directly linked to road safety improvement programs. Unfortunately, due to the limited population outside the metropolitan areas, lower income streams, directly associated with mobile speed camera fines is disproportionate. Due to the current constraints from rate pegging, local government is generally reliant on grant funding opportunities for road safety upgrades. Although, these grants are made available state-wide, there is a very competitive market to secure the available funding. Quite often the most affected Councils are unable to access these funding streams due to lack of associated professional staff or competing priorities given the application window time frame.

Bega Valley Shire Council were involved in a road safety star assessment pilot project with Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) that assessed much of Bega Valley Shire's road network as 1 and 2 star. Significant investment would be required to raise the standard towards a desired 3-star overall rating over time. Of the almost 434 kilometres of road network investigated as part of the research, 63.6% were a 1-star rating with 22.2% being a 2 star rate. This indicates that almost 86% of the investigated roads were 2 star or less. These roads were generally in areas where speed zones were either indicated to be 100km/h or default to this speed. It should be noted the roads within the Shire not assessed are likely to be of a low rating with only higher classes of roads assessed. With the increased amount of road based tourism, both pre and post Covid 19, this has led to more drivers being introduced onto unfamiliar road networks with the expectation of being able to travel consistently at the nominated speed.

f) The ongoing funding of road safety and the Community Road Safety Fund, both through fines and enforcement activities, and future government contributions;

The state government needs to continue its increased efforts to make funds available to regional Councils. However, government needs to bring the communities along the journey with them on the Road Safety Programs through better public campaigns, with a community desired balance between advertising campaigns and physical road safety improvements. Regional councils possess the largest proportion of rural road network with posted speed limits of 100km/h and roadside environments often with compromised clear zones with obstacles or lack of guarding that can contribute to incidents. The road death statistics on regional roads demonstrate a disproportionality between the motoring public population versus regional road deaths.

g) Enforcement activities, including the balance between direct police enforcement and camera enforcement;

As has been observed locally, the Police enforcement seems to be focussed on high speed/high volume roads rather than high speed/low volume roads that exist in the regional areas. Although the current focus may appear to be based on income generation, there now avails an opportunity to convey otherwise to the community. A more balanced approach may be that each highway patrol unit needs a defined percentage of their surveillance and compliance being reassigned to regional roads with significant "black spot" areas. The mobile speed cameras give a real opportunity for these black spot locations to be continually under surveillance, without the requirement of a fee based return. Compliance and enforcement are just one element of the overall mix of measures to change driver behaviour in the safe system methodology. Compliance is not the only element and should not be solely

relied on as the safe system framework has 4 key elements to be addressed; safer vehicles, safer speeds, safer roads and safer road users.

h) The impact to people living in regional and rural areas;

Regional and rural populations are heavily reliant on the motor vehicle as their only source of travel due to the lack of public transport being available. The remoteness of these locations also has the adverse effect of the reliance on increased freight transport for the delivery of goods. There is a desire to open up more areas for freight transport, however without an increase in freight network funding. This places the low order rural roads in jeopardy of earlier failure and competition of motor vehicle versus heavy vehicle on this narrower pavements and generally inferior sight lines.

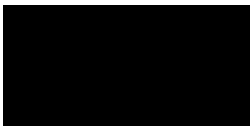
i) Those of low socio-economic backgrounds and Indigenous people;

As indicated, regional and rural populations are heavily reliant on the motor vehicle as their only source of travel due to the lack of public transport being available. Increased subsidies need to be considered along similar lines of the refund on registration for high toll use in the Sydney metropolitan areas. This could be based on similar refunds on vehicle registration, however with the emphasis on kilometres travelled, which could be checked through pink slip inspections or through fuel cards/credit cards with speedometer readings input.

j) The impact on P plate drivers

Regional and rural P plate drivers are potentially the highest impacted drivers through a combination of lowest level of driving experience versus number of demerit points available. A significant proportion of P plate drivers in the regional and rural areas are reliant on their licence to get to and from education establishments along with employment opportunities and social interaction. A more just system may need to be considered in these areas, especially where public transport is less available, for example a regional/rural work-related licence other than what is currently available through the courts system.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Anthony McMahon.

Anthony McMahon
Acting Chief Executive Officer