

**Submission
No 1486**

MOBILE SPEED CAMERA ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS IN NSW

Organisation: Transport Workers' Union of New South Wales

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**Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety
Inquiry into Mobile Speed Camera Enforcement Programs in NSW**

Submission – Transport Workers' Union of New South Wales

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Summary of Recommendations | 2 |
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 2. Existing Speed Enforcement Measures | 3 |
| 3. Effect of November 2020 Mobile Speed Camera Changes | 4 |
| <i>Figure 3.1 – Number of fines from mobile speed cameras</i> | 4 |
| <i>Figure 3.2 – Revenue from Mobile Speed Camera Fines</i> | 5 |
| 4. Further Changes to Mobile Speed Camera Changes | 6 |
| 5. Factors Contributing to Heavy Vehicle Speeding | 7 |
| 6. Conclusion | 9 |

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation One: The NSW Government should publicly provide more detailed data about mobile speed camera fines, including the number of fines issued to heavy vehicles.

Recommendation Two: The NSW Government should consider factors such as population distribution, traffic volumes, the mix of vehicle types and historical road safety data at particular locations when apportioning additional operation hours for mobile speed cameras. Such factors should also be considered when considering new locations for mobile speed cameras to operate in.

Recommendation Three: The NSW Government should introduce permanent mobile speed camera warning signs in both directions of travel at every approved mobile speed camera location, including installing signage at any new locations added to the list of approved locations in the future.

1. Introduction

The Transport Workers' Union of New South Wales (TWU) represents tens of thousands of men and women in Australia's road transport, aviation, oil, waste management, gas, passenger vehicle and freight logistics industries.

With over one hundred years' experience representing the workers who conduct Australia's crucial passenger and freight transport, the TWU has been proactive in advocating for the establishment and improvement of industry standards which advance the lives and safety of transport workers, their families and the community at large.

The TWU welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into Mobile Speed Camera Enforcement Programs in NSW being conducted by the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (the Inquiry).

As an industrial organisation representing members who use NSW roads every day to earn a living, including both employees and owner-drivers, the TWU is uniquely positioned to comment on the impact of mobile speed cameras, and recent policy changes relating to their use, on our members and the transport industry generally.

This submission will primarily address item (c) in the Inquiry's terms of reference: "*the views of key road user groups, including the community views towards these changes*".

2. Existing Speeding Enforcement Measures

Speeding remains the single biggest factor contributing to death and injury on NSW roads, contributing to 43 per cent of road fatalities¹. In NSW there are currently four main methods of enforcement for speed limits:

- Police-issued speeding infringements
- Fixed location speed cameras (including red light speed cameras)
- Average speed cameras (heavy vehicles only)
- Mobile speed cameras

Of the different enforcement measures identified above, there have been significant policy changes since 2018 in relation to average speed cameras and mobile speed cameras.

In February 2018, the NSW Government released the *Road Safety Plan 2021* which, among other measures, included plans to install average speed cameras on some metropolitan roads². Prior to that, the scheme had only been in operation in regional and rural areas. In February 2021, the NSW Government identified twelve roads in the Greater Sydney area that would be the first to have average speed cameras installed³. As at the time of this submission, four of those twelve cameras are active⁴.

Additionally, in November 2020, the NSW Government announced a raft of changes to the Mobile Speed Camera program⁵, including:

¹ <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/speeding/index.html>

² <https://towardszero.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/road-safety-plan.pdf>

³ <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/downloads/average-speed-map.pdf>

⁴ <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/downloads/average-speed-map.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/media-releases/major-changes-to-road-safety-laws>

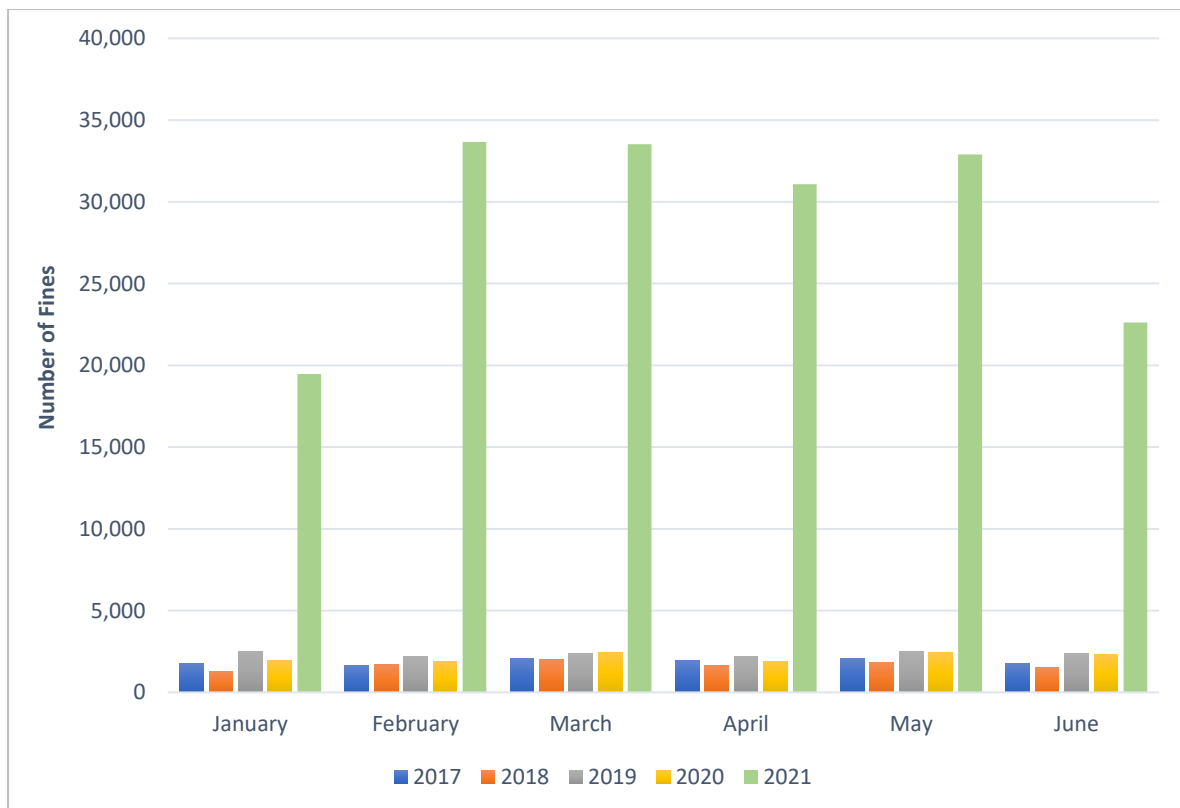
- Removal of high-visibility livery on mobile speed camera vehicles
- Enforcement in both directions of travel
- Removal of warning signs where mobile speed cameras were operating
- Increased hours of operation from 7,000 to 21,000 per month

3. **Effect of November 2020 Mobile Speed Camera Changes**

Since the implementation of the changes to the mobile speed camera program outlined above, there has been a significant increase in the number of infringements issued by mobile speed cameras. Figure 3.1 below shows the number of infringements issued by mobile speed cameras each month from January to June 2021, and compares this to the same months in the previous 4 years. Figure 3.2 shows the total revenue collected from infringements issued by mobile speed cameras over the same periods.

Figure 3.1 – Number of Fines from Mobile Speed Cameras⁶

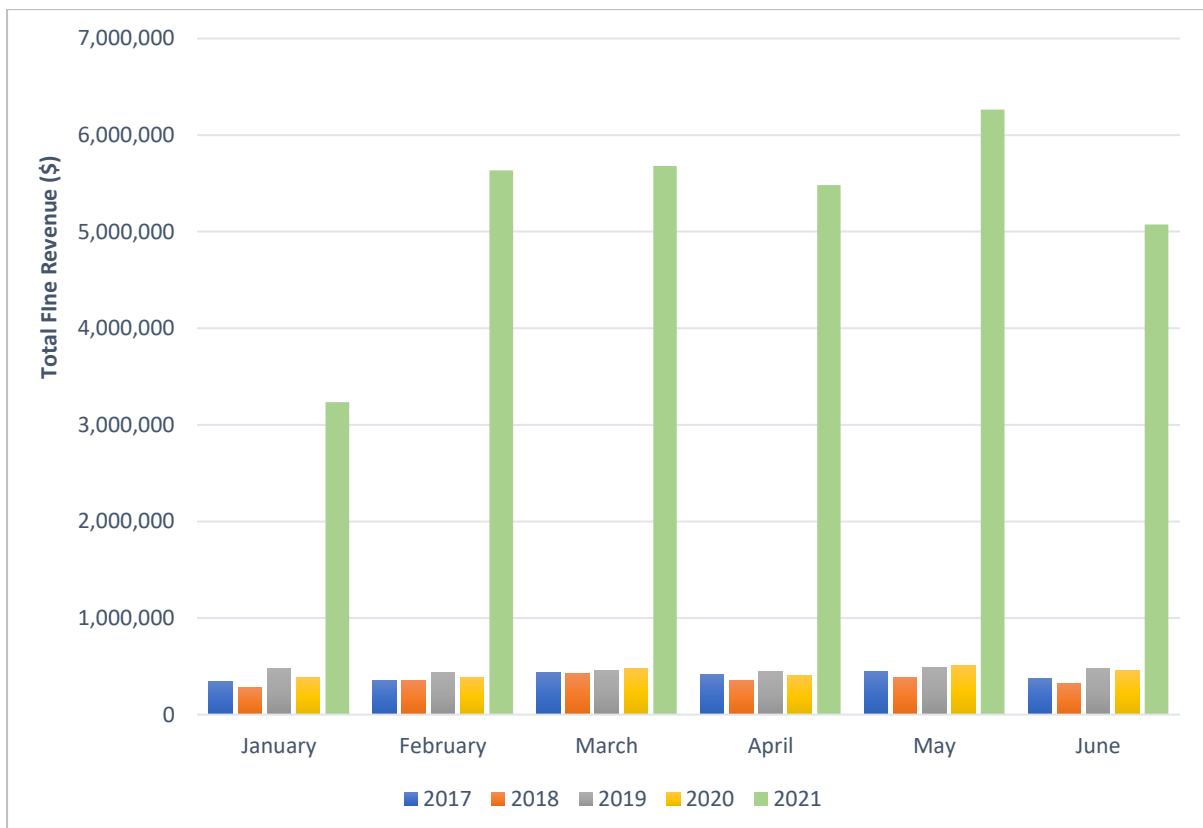
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| January | 1,752 | 1,268 | 2,519 | 1,956 | 19,465 |
| February | 1,648 | 1,712 | 2,204 | 1,859 | 33,659 |
| March | 2,076 | 1,993 | 2,360 | 2,455 | 33,528 |
| April | 1,947 | 1,625 | 2,177 | 1,917 | 31,082 |
| May | 2,090 | 1,847 | 2,490 | 2,411 | 32,900 |
| June | 1,764 | 1,550 | 2,354 | 2,310 | 22,616 |



⁶ <https://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/help-centre/resources-library/statistics/penalty-notice-dashboard>

Figure 3.2 – Revenue from Mobile Speed Camera Fines (\$)

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| January | 341,683 | 276,404 | 478,273 | 381,754 | 3,233,967 |
| February | 357,316 | 356,301 | 440,753 | 386,787 | 5,634,355 |
| March | 436,345 | 423,216 | 456,544 | 478,580 | 5,681,678 |
| April | 417,270 | 351,459 | 445,865 | 407,962 | 5,480,823 |
| May | 444,384 | 385,955 | 492,928 | 507,666 | 6,264,903 |
| June | 375,441 | 319,099 | 473,578 | 453,185 | 5,073,241 |



As can be seen from the data above, the changes to the mobile speed camera program have resulted in major increases in the number of fines being issued and subsequent revenue for the NSW Government.

The NSW Government does not readily provide public data about the number of offences issued to drivers of heavy vehicles. This is particularly disappointing as it does not allow industry participants and other stakeholders to fully appreciate the extent of speeding in the industry, or the impact of enforcement measures such as mobile speed cameras.

Recommendation One: The NSW Government should publicly provide more detailed data about mobile speed camera fines, including the number of fines issued to heavy vehicles.

The NSW Government's rationale for making these changes, particularly in relation to the removal of warning signs and high-visibility livery on the mobile speed camera vehicles, was that it would "generate an anywhere-anytime expectation of detection" and "prevent drivers from being able to choose to comply with speed limits only at camera locations, while

*speeding across the rest of the network.*⁷ While this rationale may seem logical, it is not borne out by the evidence. A more than ten-fold increase in the number of fines being issued by mobile speed cameras plainly demonstrates that drivers have not adopted an “anywhere-anytime expectation” of being fined, but instead are not changing their driving behaviours and receiving fines in the mail several weeks after the fact.

The NSW Government has not yet publicly provided any evidence demonstrating how a ten-fold increase in the number of infringements issued by mobile speed cameras has delivered any improvements in road safety. In addition to the clear lack of effectiveness of these changes in reducing rates of speeding, the changes also created a number of (presumably) unanticipated consequences which pose road safety concerns in their own right.

The TWU has heard countless anecdotal reports from truck drivers and other transport workers about instances of cars in front of them rapidly applying their brakes after noticing a mobile speed camera on the side of the road. This behaviour isn’t limited to drivers who are speeding, as drivers that are unsure of the speed limit and/or driving on unfamiliar roads may also have this panicked response to seeing a mobile speed camera.

This particular issue was not nearly as common when warning signs were used, for two reasons. Firstly, the warning sign was located 250 metres ahead of the camera, meaning any slow-down from the driver was more gradual and less sudden. Secondly, the warning signs included the speed limit, which meant there was no panicked response from drivers who were unsure of the speed limit and/or driving on unfamiliar roads.

While much public attention and media discussion has been dedicated to the policy changes regarding the removal of signage and livery, there are also concerns about the increase in operation hours from 7,000 to 21,000 per month. Any increase in the number of hours that mobile speed cameras will be in operation must be accompanied by measures to ensure that the additional operation hours will not disproportionately target particular geographic regions and/or categories of road users.

Factors such as an even geographic distribution on the basis of population, road traffic volumes, historical road safety data and the mix of vehicle types on at particular locations should all be considered when apportioning the additional operation hours for mobile speed cameras.

Recommendation Two: The NSW Government should consider factors such as population distribution, traffic volumes, the mix of vehicle types and historical road safety data at particular locations when apportioning additional operation hours for mobile speed cameras. Such factors should also be considered when considering new locations for mobile speed cameras to operate in.

4. Further Changes to Mobile Speed Camera Program

In August 2021, the NSW Government announced further changes to the mobile speed camera program, with the introduction of 1,000 permanent static signs warning drivers about the operation of mobile speed cameras⁸.

⁷ <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/speeding/speedcameras/mobile-speed-cameras.html#faq4>

⁸ <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/news-and-events/media-releases/new-speed-camera-warning-signs-introduced>

While the TWU welcomes the introduction of this signage as a step in the right direction, there remain several unanswered questions about its implementation:

- Will the new permanent signs only be installed at approved mobile speed camera locations, or across the road network generally?
- Will the new permanent signs be installed at every approved mobile speed camera location, or just some?
- If additional locations are added to the list of approved mobile speed camera locations in the future, will signage then be installed at those locations as well?

In order to have the greatest road safety benefit, the new permanent mobile speed camera warning signs must be installed at every approved mobile speed camera location. The evidence presented earlier in this submission clearly demonstrates that warning signs are effective in slowing drivers down, and that cameras operating without warning signs are not.

Recommendation Three: The NSW Government should introduce permanent mobile speed camera warning signs in both directions of travel at every approved mobile speed camera location, including installing signage at any new locations added to the list of approved locations in the future.

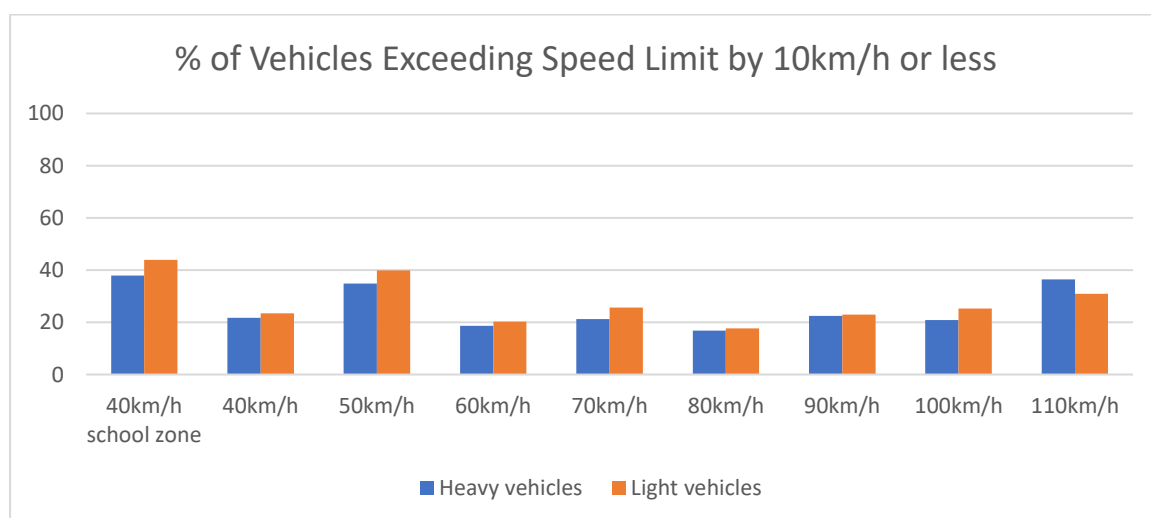
5. Factors Contributing to Heavy Vehicle Speeding

Having covered recent changes to the mobile speed camera program in the sections above, this section of the submission will focus more broadly on the factors contributing to speeding by heavy vehicle drivers.

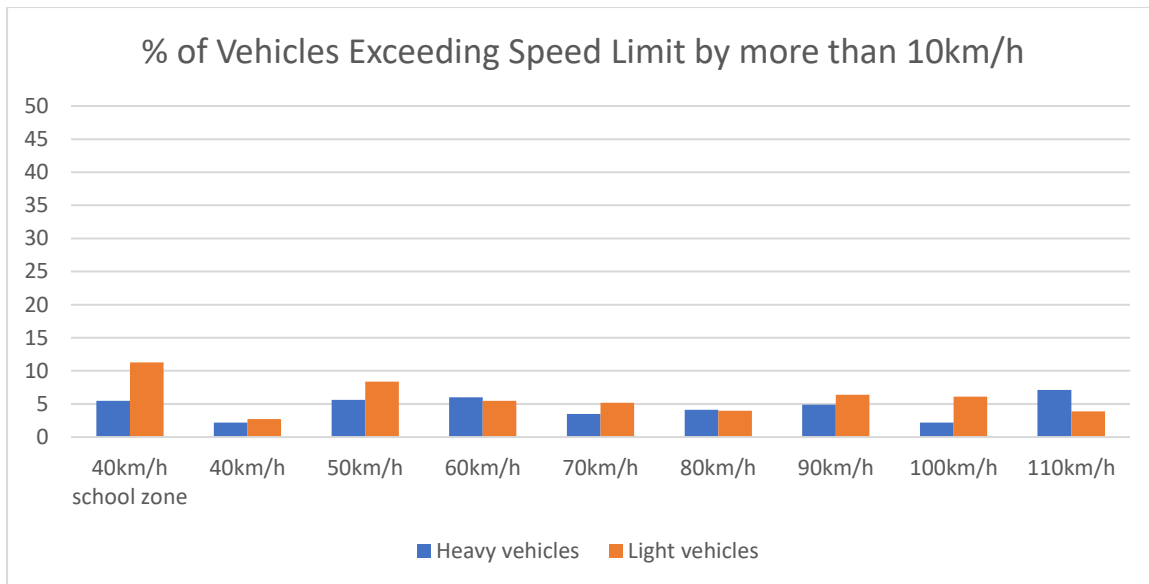
The annual speed survey is conducted by the NSW Government Centre for Road Safety at a range of roads across NSW, and among other things assesses the differences in speeding rates between light vehicles and heavy vehicles.

The most recent survey was conducted in 2018, and found the percentage of heavy vehicles exceeding the speed limit to be generally comparable to speeding rates in light vehicles across most speed limit categories⁹. The results of that survey are included in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 5.1 – Comparison of Speeding Rates for Light Vehicles and Heavy Vehicles



⁹ <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/downloads/2019-speed-camera-review-appendices.pdf>



While the rates of speeding among light and heavy vehicle drivers are generally comparable, the factors contributing to heavy vehicle speeding differ greatly.

The transport industry is one of the most cost-competitive industries in the country. Throughout the entire supply chain there are significant pressures on all industry participants, which generally fall into two categories: rising costs of operation, and the race-to-the-bottom fuelled by major retail companies at the top of the supply chain.

Truck drivers and other transport workers continue to face significant increases in many of their key costs of operation, including fuel, road tolls, registration and associated taxes, insurance. Several of these costs of operation are under the direct control of NSW Government decisions – particularly road tolls and registration/taxes.

The TWU has made a separate submission to the *Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Inquiry into Road tolling regimes*, which addresses in detail the pressure imposed on transport workers, particularly owner-drivers, as a consequence of the significant increase in the number of toll roads in recent years.

While all these costs have all steadily increased over recent years, the remuneration of transport workers has not kept pace. For example, the hourly rate for owner-drivers of vehicles weighing two tonnes or less was set at approximately \$27 in 2006¹⁰. Fifteen years later, this rate remains unchanged.

In addition to these cost pressures, transport workers are increasingly feeling the squeeze of extreme pressure from major retailers at the top of the supply chains. Major multinationals such as Amazon, as well as significant domestic retailers and supermarkets, are waging a race-to-the-bottom in terms of pay and conditions in the transport industry. This trend is set to accelerate with the encroachment of the gig economy into more traditional transport and freight industries, through platforms such as Amazon Flex and Uber Freight.

When viewed in totality, one can see how these pressures lead some transport workers and industry participants to break the rules in order to gain a competitive advantage, including

¹⁰ https://www.irc.nsw.gov.au/irc/industrial-instruments/awards/IRC_procedures_legislation_awards_index_T.html#203

the use of stimulants, logbook non-compliance and speeding, although such behaviours are not condoned by the TWU.

While it is important for action to be taken to alleviate the cost pressures on the transport industry outlined above, such as reigning in out of control toll costs, this alone will not be enough. Just as in a medical context it is vital to address the root cause of the problem, not the symptoms at the surface, the same is true for the transport industry. Concerningly, the only significant Government action taken in recent years in relation to cost pressures in the transport industry was the Federal Government's decision to abolish the Road Safety and Remuneration Tribunal in 2016.

Until governments at all levels take constructive action to address cost pressures in the transport industry, the major retailers at the top of the supply chain will continue to apply pressure throughout the entire transport supply chain, which will in turn have implications for road safety.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the evidence available from the first 6 months of 2021 clearly demonstrates that the changes to the mobile speed camera program announced in November 2020 have not had a significant effect in terms of reducing rates of speeding, but have resulted in a major increase in the number of infringements issued and revenue collected.

As such, the TWU welcomes the recent measures announced by the NSW Government to install 1,000 permanent warning signs for mobile speed cameras, however there remain unanswered questions about how and where these signs will be installed.

The TWU thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make this submission, and hope the Committee finds it to be of use in their deliberations. The TWU would welcome the opportunity to provide further evidence to the Committee during the hearing stage of the Inquiry if the Committee feels this will be of use.