

**Submission
No 12**

SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW

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In the Far West region of New South Wales, there are vast distances with very few built up areas. Take, for example, the sealed road to Sydney. Once the Broken Hill municipal boundary has been crossed, the next build up area is about 200 kilometres at Wilcannia, then another 260 kilometres to Cobar with just one roadhouse in between. At Cobar, there is still another 300 kilometres to Dubbo with four small townships through which the highway travels. It means there are about 760 kilometres of wide, fairly flat and straight road, with very light traffic. On an average day a motorist would be lucky to see one other motorist for every ten kilometres travelled. Conditions would be very similar to those stretches of the the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory which currently have 130 km/h speed limits.

On such long and un-interesting roads, there is a greater risk of falling asleep behind the wheel due to boredom when travelling at the mandatory 110 km/h. A higher speed limit would reduce the effect of fatigue through reduced transit times. For example, the aforementioned journey from Broken Hill to Dubbo would be over an hour less if 130 km/h were permitted. Instead of being just over 7 hours, it could be done in 6 hours.

I had the good fortune to meet a former manager of the Department of Main Roads (DMR) about a decade ago. This spritely gentlemen (then in his 90's) was on a nostalgic visit to Broken Hill with his family. He was the manager in charge of the DMR in the West Darling region when the main roads were bitumenised in the 1960's and 70's. Having just driven out to Broken Hill, his comment was that the roads still reflected the good engineering undertaken at that time. He said, "The people of the West Darling were known to have lead feet, so we ensured that each road we sealed was an 85 mph road."

So in this modern era, with roads engineered for 136 km/h and modern motor cars that have much better safety systems, lights and brakes, it seems unnecessarily restrictive to limit speeds to 110 km/h. I submit that speed limits on many roads in the Far West of the state should be raised to 130 km/h.