

**Submission
No 31**

SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW

Organisation: Regional Development Australia Southern Inland

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Regional Development Australia Southern Inland (RDASI) would like to thank the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) for the opportunity to comment on speed limits and road safety in regional NSW.

RDASI is part of a national network of 52 Regional Development Australia Boards across Australia and one of 14 in NSW. RDASI is a federally funded, non-government body encompassing seven Local Government Areas – Wingecarribee, Goulburn Mulwaree, Yass Valley, Snowy Monaro, Hilltops, Queanbeyan-Palerang and Upper Lachlan.

Our role is to promote economic development in the region by identifying opportunities for business development and linking businesses and community organisations with government grants, programs and infrastructure investments, creating jobs and encouraging prosperity for the region's population.

RDASI welcomes recognition of the impact of speed limits and travel times on driver behaviour and safety, the impact of improved vehicle technology and road infrastructure and the use of variable speed limits

As an organisation whose NSW Southern Inland geographical footprint covers 44,000 square kilometres, RDASI is aware of the distances that many people have to travel in order to conduct their business and connect with other communities.

After seeking feedback from local stakeholders, feedback has, as expected, been varied.

Q - As someone who regularly travel long distances on rural and regional roads, what do you think of the current speed limits, including your experience of variable speed limits?

The current speed limits on rural and regional roads are generally considered to be satisfactory and in line with the requirements of the road and provide ample opportunity for residents and visitors to travel across the region in a timely manner.

Most of the roads outside of townships are set at 100-110 km/h and those that are not have generally had reviews done in the past showing the necessity for a lowered speed limit, such as 80 km/h.

At the lower speed limit range, some feedback states that the 40km limit on roads under repair is unnecessarily slow and often the distance from the reduced speed sign to the impact site (where people are working) is way too long.

Frustration has also been expressed at when the 40km limit is observed, only to find no work in progress at that time and where the normal speed limit would have been safe to travel at and where the contractors haven't removed signage after the road repairs have been completed. The suggestion has been made that a 60km limit may be adequate from a worker safety point of view.

It was also suggested that there should be greater consistency of speed limits, by having them standardised, e.g. 60, 80, 100, 110 and 130km/hr, particularly in the main streets of towns, with some being 50 km/h and others being 60 km/h, with the latter being considered as being more suitable and still safe.

However, there should not be too many speed limit variances across relatively short distances, e.g. between 100 km/h and 110 km/h. Where there appears to be no logical reason for a reduced speed zone, drivers tend to maintain their speed or accelerate anyway and too frequent speed limit changes may also lead to driver confusion or frustration on better sections of road.

Signage for variable speed limits is considered to be a good idea, as this provides the opportunity for vehicle speeds to be reduced in case of an incident or potential danger, such as ice on the roads in the Snowy Monaro Region.

Q - Do you think the current speed limits are still suitable?

Mention was made of the present state of many regional roads, in particular the number of potholes and crumbling road edges, meaning that the current speed limits may be higher than the road conditions may necessitate, for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, some roads may be suitable in design but they have not received the required maintenance over recent years, resulting in road edge damage and other forms of dilapidation which narrow the roadway and lead to slower vehicle movements. Secondly, some older roads have been designed to previous standards and traffic load requirements, resulting in sharper bends and poorer sight distance than typically seen on more recently developed highways.

In such cases, speed limits should be reduced where road damage is particularly bad. In other cases, it is believed that signage should simply be put in place to advise caution, for example, when overtaking. Overall, though, these issues are not going to be addressed by speed reductions but rather with improved maintenance and road safety behavioural measures (warning signage, etc).

Q - What impact do you think the current speed limits have on drivers, as they travel and go about their daily business?

Anecdotally, a number of highways appear to have drivers travelling at a higher average speed than the speed limit and, in such cases, these may be roads where a speed limit higher than 110 km/h could be considered, particularly given the distances that are involved in regional travel. Some respondents would advocate for shortening the travel time, by increasing speed limits, in order to reduce driver fatigue.

For its part, RDASI is committed to advocating for infrastructure enhancements to ensure the safety of regional roads.

Yours sincerely,



Carisa Wells

CEO and Director of Regional Development

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