

## **SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW**

**Organisation:** Leeton Shire Council

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For the attention of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe)

**SUBMISSION BY LEETON SHIRE COUNCIL TO THE NSW GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional NSW.

Leeton Shire Council would like to applaud the initiative that has been taken to commence the inquiry after campaigning for this for many years. We are committed to road safety and have always been advocates for appropriate and common-sense improvements.

There is no argument that the effective use of speed limits has and will continue to contribute significantly to road and pedestrian safety, helping reduce the risk of serious injury and death.

However, we believe speed limits must be fit for purpose. As a Council we find ourselves disappointed by TfNSW's lack of genuine consultation and due process. Fundamentally, we consider that Councils should always be fully consulted when setting or revising speed limits in and near their local government areas.

Recent blanket approaches to speed zones and other traffic control devices at specific types of locations, without full regard to the local context, serves to confuse or entrap motorists and, ironically, drives complacency instead of alertness as drivers find these speed limits nonsensical.

Examples include speed zones of 50km/h commencing way outside town area boundaries, unnecessarily hindering traffic flow and confusing and frustrating motorists. There is no point to speed limits that don't support responsible driving at a safe natural speed under free-flowing conditions that match the surrounding environment.

Speed zones of 50km/h should signal imminent entry into an urban zone and the immediate risk of potential conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, as well as vehicles that may be turning or maneuvering more frequently than on an open road. A 50km speed limit should signal to a driver to be immediately alert for specific risks associated with urban areas. This alertness is lost when drivers are forced to unnecessarily travel several kilometers on the outskirts of a town at 50km / hour.

Our Council's position is that all speed zones should be set in response to the unique set of circumstances in locations that are deemed to carry risk, backed up by crash statistics and specific place-based risk management plans. We utterly reject the implementation of blanket rules with no regard to local circumstances.

Our community is increasingly observing speed zone and traffic control device changes that it considers to be revenue raising above road safety. A one-size fits all application of new limits that ignore the real road safety risks in the area is not the solution.

A case in point is the recently imposed speed zone on MacKellar Road, Leeton, a local road. This speed zone is set to 60km/h for a total length of 1km, approximately 500 meters either side of a railway crossing, despite a large portion of that distance being 90 degrees from the road that the rail crossing is on, and a T-junction. Not only is the crossing already made safe by warning signs, flashing lights and boom gates, but being very close to the T-junction with Regulator Road, traffic turning onto MacKellar Road from Regulator Road will have slowed down to a stop or almost a stop. Council believes the extension of the 60km zone on Regulator Rd as a railway safety strategy is unnecessary and unwarranted and serves no road safety purpose whatsoever but to entrap drivers who are driving safely in free-flowing conditions on a rural road that is not crossed by a railway line.

Regulator Road's 100km speed limit has been used safely for many years and the T-junction naturally slows down the traffic. Why an unnecessary 60km/h zone has been introduced for a section of road that has a sealed surface, is straight and has good sight distance is baffling.

These low-speed limits outside built up areas risk undermining their significance and importance in genuinely built-up areas where different types of interaction with people and other vehicles should be expected and anticipated by drivers.

For your reference the image below indicates the 60km/h speed zone (green highlighted) that was installed. The red line indicates the rail crossing.



Council has also observed the introduction of new speed zones on State roads within the Leeton Local Government Area without genuine consultation with the Council beyond pre-determined advice about what is going to occur. Well-marked, well-signed and well-lit rail crossings, where there have been no incidents and no locally identified risk / crash history to support the need for such action, have had blanket treatments applied that are, in places, entirely over the top. Across NSW these will serve only to frustrate local motorists and contribute to increased potential for entrapment of drivers who have been navigating these crossings at a safe speed for many years without incident.

It is important that drivers should be able to drive at a safe, natural speed under free flow conditions, not to artificial limits imposed to meet some arbitrary rule. Blanket actions applied without consideration of the local context certainly do not deliver on the aspirations of the NSW Speed Zone Guidelines to genuinely “reflect the safety risk” or “facilitate mobility”.

Council is of the view that it is time TfNSW takes a place-based, risk-based approach to road safety instead of applying one size fits all rules that fail to deal with the real safety priorities in each local area. TfNSW and various road ministers have previously made the commitment to include Councils in all decisions in our local government area in relation to roads for which we are responsible. Sadly, this commitment has not been sustained and we wish to call it out by way of this submission to the Inquiry as we do not accept that speed zones should change without full consultation and understanding of local conditions and circumstances.

While recognizing local Councils are not authorized to make decisions on speed zones, we consider – at the very least – that all speed zones changes must be formally tabled and discussed at Local Traffic Committee meetings before being determined by TfNSW, and the discussion points should be recorded as evidence of that

consultation. Local Traffic Committee opinions need to be afforded genuine consideration when it comes to introducing or changing speed zones and traffic signage.

In regards national highways, such as the Newell or Sturt Highways, Council supports the maintenance of 110km speed zones. Many sections of road are long and straight. With improved car specifications and safety features it is considered efficient to support drivers to travel at 110km so that they can most efficiently reach their destination.

In closing, Council is and always has been committed to road safety and working collaboratively with TfNSW to achieve practical road safety outcomes. TfNSW needs to be more transparent about the criteria and consultation process with Councils when changing and or modifying speed limits across NSW. We recommend all consultation occurs formally via Local Traffic Committees and the local Council so that full regard is given to local knowledge of the safety conditions and risk levels.

If the Staysafe Inquiry is to hold hearings, Leeton Shire Council would appreciate the opportunity to attend and present. For further information, please contact General Manager Jackie Kruger on [REDACTED] mobile phone [REDACTED].

Your faithfully



**Cr Tony Reneker**  
**MAYOR**