

SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW

Organisation: Motorcycle Council of NSW

Date Received: 5 July 2022

Staysafe Inquiry into Speed limits and road safety in regional NSW

July 2022



Established 1981

Submission to:-
Staysafe Committee
Parliament of New South Wales
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About the MCC of NSW

The Motorcycle Council of NSW Inc. (MCC) is an internationally recognised umbrella group for motorcycle clubs, associations, and ride groups in the state of New South Wales.

Established in 1981, the MCC is recognised as the peak motorcycle representative body in NSW and Subject Matter Experts on many complex issues dealing with motorcycling, including crash data and statistics, traffic data and congestion information.

The MCC has published documentation that has been referenced worldwide by overseas motorcycling and traffic bodies and has produced video training films that have been utilised and referred to by many overseas trainers, researchers and ride associations.

MCC is the peak representative body for motorcycling in the state of NSW representing over 60 motorcycle clubs, which have a total membership of over 41,000 motorcyclists.

We wish to thank Staysafe for the opportunity to present this submission and the views of our member clubs on the inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional NSW.

Should you require further information on the information contained within this submission, please contact the MCC.

Brian Wood

Secretary

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The Motorcycle Council of NSW wishes to make the following comments in relation to the Terms of Reference for the inquiry into speed limits and road safety in regional NSW

a/ The impact of speed limits and travel times on driver behaviour and safety

Drivers travel at a speed that they feel is appropriate for the road environment depending on comfort, their perceived risk of crashing and their knowledge of the road. This is generally at the 85th percentile speed, that is, the speed at which 85 percent of drivers travel at or below. Setting the speed limit below the 85th percentile results in a greater number of drivers exceeding the speed limit.

There will always be a percentage of drivers who will exceed the speed limit even when the speed limit is above the 85th percentile.

Setting the speed limit below the 85th percentile results in a greater speed differential between the slower and faster vehicles, resulting in more unsafe overtaking and other vehicle manoeuvres as drivers become frustrated as they are unable to travel at a speed they feel is appropriate for the road environment.

While in theory a change of speed limits makes little difference on travel times, drivers generally have a perception that they can make up time if running late for an appointment.

b/ The impact of improved vehicle technology and road infrastructure

Improvements in vehicle technology and road infrastructure have resulted in more comfortable ride that can result in drivers becoming speed desensitised, that is, they are less aware of the speed at which they are travelling particularly when having entered a lower speed limit zone after travelling for some distance in a higher speed limit zone.

Improved vehicle technology can also result in greater distraction from entertainment systems and internet conductivity particularly where travelling in regional areas where there is a dull and monotonous landscape.

The introduction of mandatory electronic stability control (ESC), means that drivers of vehicle so equipped are better able to recover control in the event of the vehicle deviating from the travel lane.

With the introduction of the Safe System approach to road safety, road infrastructure should be more forgiving when a driver makes a mistake. These driver mistakes shouldn't result in death or serious injury. Knowing that the road is supposedly designed to be 'safe' could result in drivers being less alert and crashing where the road infrastructure isn't in fact 'safe'.

c/ The use of variable speed limits

The use of variable speed limits would appear to have potential in reducing crashes in areas that are subject to fog, ice or other weather events. The speed limit could be reduced only during these weather events when the risk of crashing is increased.

The use of variable speed limits would also have benefit at worksites. A trial having already been conducted at a worksite on the Newell Highway.

<https://infrastructuremagazine.com.au/2020/05/25/variable-speed-limit-signs-trialled-on-nsw-highway> The speed could be adjusted depending on what activity was actually taking place at the time. If worksite is unattended, as it was on the Western Ring Road in Broadmeadows, Melbourne, then the speed limit could be set at a level consistent with the approach and departure limits.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10953455/Melbourne-speed-camera-raked-11million-fines-just-three-months.html>

However, there would need to be sufficient advance warning of the change in the speed limit so drivers can adapt to the lower speed limit. If it is required to bring drivers to a halt only at particular times, then the variable speed limit can be adjusted just for these events.

d/ Any other related matters

The MCC doesn't offer any comment on related matters.

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