

**Submission  
No 51**

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

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**Date Received:** 5 July 2022

## Submission to the terms of reference for the Staysafe “Speed limits and road safety in regional NSW”

This is a personal submission. I live in Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands and regularly travel to a “bush block” in Tomboye, 2622. Recently we went on a road trip to Bourke/Brewarrina/Lighting Ridge/Coonabarran and Parkes travelling on primary and secondary roads.

For several years I have been (so far without success) lobbying our local Council (Wingecarribee) to install speed advisory signs (see appendix one) suggesting 70km/h dusk to dawn on the roads into and out of Bundanoon.

Due to the amount of road trauma to native animals in our area I regularly stop and check animals and move dead animals from regional roadways.

My submission is framed on these experiences.

- a) The impact of speed limits and travel times on driver behaviour and safety
  - a. Speed limits in my regional area are inconsistent. Outside of the 50km built up areas they may be 70km/h, 80km/h or 100km/h.
  - b. The larger the distance travelled, generally the higher the desired speed to reduce travel time. On regional roads with closely connected towns, the speed limits should be lower with 80km/h on all regional roads except for designated highways 100km/h, or in special cases such as “out west” 110km/h due to distance
  - c. The road I often travel (Jerrara Road/Oallen Ford Road) that provides a secondary road between Marulan and Nerriga is 80km/h. Most of the other connecting roads are 100km/h and many have tighter curves and poorer sight lines. 80km/h feels safe and allows better reaction time for the stock and wildlife hazards that are encountered.
  - d. On Jerrara/Oallen Ford roads, the end-to-end distance is 72.8 km. At the posted speed limit of 80km/h it takes 54 minutes. At 100km/h it takes 47 minutes. The seven minutes difference is well worth the lower speed.
- b) The impact of improved vehicle technology and road infrastructure
  - a. Improved vehicle technology is excellent on high-speed highways but has issues on regional roads. Cruise control is not suited to windy roads. Lane assist will continuously alert on roads with poor centre markings and edges.
  - b. Satellite Navigation systems in cars and smartphones (SatNav) is not well updated in regional/country areas and the speed limits are often conflicting. A suggestion is for a mechanism to have Councils and Road Authorities pass these through a central clearing house to ensure the providers can update their systems.
  - c. Improved road infrastructure can bring higher speeds as drivers travel to the road rather than to the posted limit. We regularly experience drivers overtaking on Jerrara Road while travelling at 80km/h.
  - d. The unprecedented recent wet weather has created its own speed limits. Motorists are forced to travel slowly to ensure they do not damage their vehicles. Ironically this has created somewhat safer roads.
- c) The use of variable speed limits
  - a. Trentham in Victoria connects to Daylesford via a 100km/h road (Regional Road C317). The road passes through the aptly named Wombat State Forest and road accidents are caused by motorists hitting wombats especially at night. While often fatal for wombats, they are very damaging to cars and potentially life-threatening to vehicle occupants. In

response, VicRoads and the local Council have installed wildlife advisory signs recommending 70km/h dusk to dawn. The signs (three-in-one) are a wombat image, the words **70km/h** and **Dusk to Dawn**. See appendix two for the sign.

- b. I would like advisory signs installed on regional roads with speed advisories such as used by VicRoads at Trentham especially where the regional roads have a boundary with a National Park. As VicRoads observed in their forward-looking *Fauna Sensitive Road Design Guidelines* "Warning signs are probably best suited for use of tourist roads where protection of fauna is valued and expected". See appendix three for the relevant page.
  - c. Variable speed limits and high visibility hazard notification are extremely valuable for visitors to the areas. They will have limited effectiveness on "locals". In our area locals adjust their speed to the conditions based on experience and a small minority ignore advisories and are only affected by punitive compliance measures. It is tourists who are unaware of the 30kg+ mobile speed barriers (aka wombats) who need to know to drive more slowly and with more awareness. We want them to come back and spend their tourist dollars with us and not have their holiday and car ruined because they were not aware of wombats (or kangaroos).
- d) Any other related matters.
- a. Hi-vis vests as a mandatory item in cars. I always carry a hi-vis vest in my car and suggest all registered vehicles should be required to carry a vest as part of registration. A day/night vest that is Standard Approved costs less than \$10 and dramatically improves visibility of the wearer in daytime and especially between dusk and dawn. Breakdowns, accidents, stopping to assist – all of these activities on roads are hazardous and people should protect themselves. Good Samaritan tragedies may have been avoided by a \$10 vest.
    - i. The NSW Centre for Road Safety brochure *Animals on country roads*<sup>1</sup> should be amended to include "always have a day/night hi-vis in your car. Always put it on if you stop for an injured animal or any other reason."
    - ii. The Centre for Road Safety brochure *Breakdown Safety*<sup>2</sup> should include a statement "always have a day/night hi-vis in your car. Always put it on if you have to step out of your car for a breakdown or to assist."
    - iii. All the brochures should be reviewed to insert carrying and wearing a hi-vis vest
  - b. The email updates notifying changes to speed limits in NSW are most welcome and good communication
  - c. The Facebook campaigns by the Office of Road Safety are excellent and most welcome
  - d. A particularly Bundanoon campaign in 2021 sought to rename the Wombat to Burrowing Koala in an attempt to raise awareness and care for this wonderful and generally well-loved inhabitant of our region. Perhaps the Office of Road Safety and Environment and Heritage could combine to support this light-hearted initiative. See "Bundanoon's remarkable burrowing koala" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcDbZUyOhPk>

Submission end. Appendixes follow.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/drivers/animalsoncountryroads/index.html> retrieved 5/7/2022

<sup>2</sup> <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/drivers/breakdownsafety/index.html> retrieved 5/7/2022

Appendix One – proposed signage for Bundanoon based on VicRoads Trentham signs





Appendix Two – signs on road to Daylesford through Wombat State Forest Victoria (image from Google Maps)



*WESTBOUND: 1251, c317, Lyonville Victoria, Google Maps Street View retrieved 11 May 2021*

## Appendix 3 – Extract from VicRoads document citing value of wildlife signage

### 6.4.3 Traffic management

Traffic management is one of the cheapest forms of fauna mitigation on roads. Numerous methods can be incorporated to change local driver behaviour including road signage, reflector lights, rumble strips and road closures.

Traffic management is suitable for all animals where traffic volumes and speed contribute to high levels of roadkill. In Victoria, warning signage is the most common method used to reduce fauna mortality on roads.

The effectiveness of traffic management is dependent on a number of factors including:

- Adjusting driver speed by installing temporary or permanent reduce speed signs.
- Speeds may be signed or advisory.
- Warning signs are most suitable for roads with low traffic volumes.
- Speed reductions are best achieved when used with other devices such as rumble strips or speed humps that force drivers to slow down.
- Warning signs are probably most suited for use on tourist roads where protection of fauna is valued and expected.

VicRoads has a set of standard drawings for animal warning signs available on Exchange > Road Management and Design.

#### Maintenance

- Signage should be kept clear of overgrown vegetation.
- Can become damaged and will need replacing.

#### Limitations

- Reduces but does not eliminate risks of roadkill.
- Not likely to be practical on highest speed roads or roads with high traffic volumes.
- Success of permanent signage in reducing roadkill and public awareness diminishes over time, particularly with local residents familiar with the signs.



Kangaroo warning sign Mickleham Road (Source: VicRoads)

From VICROADS\_n1571864\_VicRoads\_Fauna\_Sensitive\_Road\_Deisgn\_Guidelines\_Final.pdf retrieved 12/7/2019.