

**Submission
No 65**

SPEED LIMITS AND ROAD SAFETY IN REGIONAL NSW

Organisation: Orange City and Cabonne Shire Councils

Date Received: 11 July 2022

Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety

Inquiry into Speed Limits and Road Safety in Regional NSW

This submission is a call to action to implement safer speeds on local roads.

Speed is a significant contributor to fatalities on local regional roads. These roads have limited safety features but have the default speed limit set for all roads in a non-urban environment.

Local roads are the poor relation to regional and state roads in regional areas. Factors such as funding at a Local Government level and the number of roads applicable at a state level make the issue the Achilles heel in the quest towards zero fatalities.

A safe systems approach for all road users be they urban, or regional, is a necessity not a luxury and a considerable investment in infrastructure. Such levels of investment may not be practical at this time and this submission does not address that issue.

Safer roads can be complimented and enhanced within the safe system framework, with safer speeds resulting in safer people on our roads.

Safer speed is not new concept and the safe systems approach identifies lower speed limits as a key tool in the fight against road trauma. This strategy is based on research that identifies the fatality threshold of human body is 70 km/h, therefore lower speeds on local roads would save lives and reduce serious injuries.

Research from the Road Accident Research Unit of the University of Adelaide has shown:

- the risk of involvement in a casualty doubles with each 5km/hr increase in free travelling speed above 60km/hr and
- a 5km/hr reduction in speed can lead to at least 15% decrease in crashes.

From 2016 -2020 there were 1,753 people killed and 25,638 seriously injured in NSW. A total of 563 people (32%) were killed on local roads, with a further 9,058 people seriously injured, compared to 292 (17%) and a further 4,792 (19%) people seriously injured on regional roads. Significantly more people impacted on local roads.

Further analysis of Transport for NSW crash data on local roads identifies 154 (27%) people were killed in 100 km/h and 985 (11%) people seriously injured. However, in an 80 km/h speed zone that 79 were killed (14%) and 827 (9%) were injured.

The reduction of speed limits as a method to reduce road incidents is not new but underutilized on local regional roads. Where a speed reduction strategy has been implemented it has produced road safety benefits by saving lives and reducing serious injury crashes. The reduction of the speed limit on Cargo Road, Cabonne, is a success story with less serious crashes. Significant improvements to crash rates were evident since the 100km/h limit on this road was reduced to 80km/h and 90km/h in 2010. Crash data indicates since the implementation of the reduced speed limits, there has been a nine per cent reduction in crashes in the 80km/h zone and a 68 per cent reduction in the 90km/h zone.

The road safety message, “the faster you go, the harder you hit”, is generally understood by the public but what is not understood that a drop in the speed limit has little impact on travel times.

This submission outlines the benefits to reduce speeds on local roads without impact on local road users but identifies the improved safety benefits to save lives on country roads.

Contact: Andrea Hamilton-Vaughan

Road Safety Officer

Orange City and Cabonne Shire Councils

Phone: [REDACTED]

