

Economic Development Committee

Inquiry into the road safety benefits of fixed  
speed cameras

Submission 1

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**From:** webmaster@parliament.qld.gov.au  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 March 2010 10:07 AM  
**To:** Economic Development Committee  
**Subject:** ONLINE SUBMISSION - Road safety benefits

**ONLINE SUBMISSION - Road safety benefits****Name:** Lionell Pack**Email:** [REDACTED]**Address:** [REDACTED]**City:** Logan**State:** QLD**Postcode:** 4127**Phone Number:** [REDACTED]**Speed enforcement:**

The appropriate role for fixed speed cameras is to improve safety on specific stretches of road which have a high speed-related accident rate. It should include signage encouraging motorists to watch their speed, and indicating the dangerous nature of the stretch of road. I do not believe it is necessary to specifically sign the presence of a speed camera: indicating to a road user that the road is dangerous and that speed limits should be observed promotes the safety objective (while signing that a speed camera is placed nearby does not necessarily), while camera enforcement drives home the message to motorists who ignore it.

**Fixed speed cameras:**

My experience with current placement of fixed speed cameras, on the M1 at Tarragindi and on the Storey Bridge, has been mixed. I recall the Storey Bridge area being a problem zone for accidents, as traffic needs to merge from several sources with poor visibility of the other traffic flows. Controlling the speed of the free-flowing traffic lanes is important for the safety of merging traffic, and this goal seems to have been achieved. At Tarragindi, my experience has been less positive. There is good visibility for traffic merging onto the M1, and so the safety problem is less pronounced than that of the Storey Bridge site. I find that while the camera placement does reduce the speed of traffic, the reduction is often excessive (otherwise unimpeded lanes slow to as much as 15km/h below the speed limit, from my observations.) This excessive slowing leads to impatient motorists changing lanes suddenly in order to maintain their speed, and to inattentive drivers slowing suddenly due to cars in front reducing their speed. Overall, while this camera placement has (to my feeling) reduced the average speed in the area, I feel it has reduced safety and increased congestion. The appropriate criteria for selecting a fixed speed camera site are: 1. Speed-related accident rate for the site. 2. Projected impact of varied braking behaviours approaching the site (I suspect there is not good data to support a model for this; anecdotally, the Storey Bridge is a good site, and Tarragindi is a bad site.) 3. Current signage (poor signage suggests that the problem could be dealt with by improving signs, and a fixed camera site might be unnecessary.)

**New technology:**

Point-to-point cameras are not suitable for monitoring the speed of the general population; while using technology which, by design, creates a record of every targeted vehicle traveling through an area (whether speeding or not) might be appropriate for policing commercial road use, I believe it is an inappropriate and unnecessary invasion of privacy when directed at private travel. The goal of point-to-point cameras is to prevent speeding by attentive road users who are alert to the locations of speed cameras and slow to below the limit only while passing them. Unfortunately, point-to-point zones will just be a longer stretch of road for habitual speeders to slow for. Covert cameras attempt enforcement against the same behaviour, but they suffer from additional problems, such as technological means of notifying road users of their locations, drivers alerting others by dipping their headlights, and traffic perturbation (leading to dangerous situations) as drivers notice the covert camera and slow rapidly. I believe these problem road users are best dealt with by an increased police presence on the roads (using both marked and unmarked vehicles.) Police vehicles tend to promote safer behaviour (as opposed to the riskier behaviour some drivers display when noticing speed cameras,) and are able to enforce a much broader range of traffic law, rather than being targeted at a single offence. In the face of a proliferation of speed cameras, problem road users are likely to simply pay more attention, thinking they will spot the cameras, or avoid the fines by driving a company car. Faced with an increased marked and unmarked police presence, problem road users are less likely to believe they can spot the patrols (particularly given the wide range of vehicles employed recently by the Queensland Police Force), and more likely to curb a range of bad behaviours, rather than simply intending to slow for any cameras they see. It also becomes impossible to 'dodge' the fine by driving a company car and claiming to have no record of who was using it at the time. It is my unsubstantiated belief that Queensland would also enjoy benefits related to traffic congestion by employing an increased police presence: fewer high-risk maneuvers and a safer attitude to other road users would see a reduction in both crash and non-crash incidents which lead to traffic congestion. Another crash risk which I believe needs further attention is the problem of 'casual tailgating': observable in numerous high-traffic free-flowing roads around Brisbane, many road users do not appropriately adjust following distances as traffic speed increases. It is not unusual to see high speed traffic on the M1 maintaining following distances of between a half and one second. My feeling is that these following distances are generally felt to be 'acceptable', despite being significantly shorter than the legal requirement, and contribute significantly to high-speed crash risk. An increased police presence (accompanied by enforcement of tailgating laws) would help to reduce this problem. Given the potential severity of accidents caused by heavy vehicles not maintaining appropriate following distances, I believe they should be particularly targeted.

**Comments:**

In general, it seems that community sentiment is that speed cameras are driven by revenue generation (and the public will feel vindicated in holding this belief due to recent statements by the Queensland Police Union.) I do not share this general belief: it is my opinion that speed camera usage has been driven, to date, by a desire to enforce speed limits

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across the board. While, in the pure context of the enforcement device, this seems reasonable, it has two problems: it doesn't directly address crash risk (and the associated costs to the community); and it tends to lead to the observed public appearance of revenue-raising. While the revenue realised by the use of speed cameras in lower-risk areas may seem significant, other benefits would be created by a singular focus on reducing crash-risk: an improved public perception and cost-savings to the community of reduced accident rates and (potentially) less congestion. A focus on a police presence, rather than automated enforcement devices, would mean fines are issued in context, focused on high-risk behaviour to the exclusion of low-risk offences. This is in contrast to the current situation, which I (and, I believe, the community) feel is focused on targeting offences irrespective of the safety benefit of the enforcement being carried out. While I do not believe in allowing people to 'get away with' minor offences, I do believe there is no case for targeting low-risk offences in any situation when a high-risk offence could be targeted instead. This risk consideration should be weighted towards reducing risk to the public, rather than to the offending driver: risky behaviour in high-traffic or dense residential areas is likely to generate higher costs to the community than risky behaviour in secluded areas, and this needs to be considered when prioritising enforcement activities. I believe that the driving goal of all road enforcement programs should be to provide cost-effective reductions in crash risk. Placing an enforcement device in an area simply because the median speed is high will not necessarily reduce the crash risk: if the stretch of road is relatively crash-free, that device would be better placed in a higher-risk area. If the higher-risk area cannot be dealt with by the use of a camera, then the cost of the camera would be better spent on an increased police presence. And finally, a more effective police force (with a public perception of improving safety, rather than revenue-raising) will enjoy public support and be more likely to attract both increased funding and better community cooperation. I feel that this conclusion reflects public sentiment, and also suggests a sensible policy which would generate better crash risk reductions, and ultimately, community benefit, than the current observable policy.