

Economic Development Committee

Inquiry into the road safety benefits of fixed
speed cameras

Submission 27

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Speed enforcement:

1. There is no role for fixed speed cameras or any other speed/traffic cameras in Queensland. The Government is being lazy and adopting the tired speed kills approach which has never ever worked. Speed is but one factor in traffic accidents, when all the extraneous factors are examined and the political aspect of promoting speed as the main problem in road safety is put aside, analysis in both Europe and USA by independent bodies has consistently shown speed is a primary causative factor in approximately 10% of accidents yet Governments continue a disproportionate emphasis on speed as it is profitable, simplistic to target and appeals to the authoritarian mindset. Internationally in many provinces and states, speed and red light cameras have proven not to reduce accident or fatality rates, indeed in many cases they have led to an increase. Unfortunately the revenue and cheap policing appeal of these devices and the Government propaganda on road safety as opposed to open minded research means little impartial analysis has been done in Australia. Indeed Governments are so keen to point to speed as the route of all evil that an old Adelaide study from the 1990's declaring 5kph over doubled your crash risk is still routinely trotted out. Yet this assertion was predicated on "Hypothetical calculations on the effect of lowering free travelling speeds in both these studies indicated that significant reductions in casualty crashes could be expected from even small reductions in free travelling speeds." "Hypothetical" In other words it's made up! These researchers are so focused on the end result they are effectively using made up figures and then State Governments, already having their own agendas rather than a real desire to address road safety with anything other than cost effective politically motivated "solutions" cite these dubious "findings" as the basis for entire so called road safety strategies more than a decade after the research was first studied and rubbished in a peer review. 2. No. An increased presence of Marked Patrol Cars would be far more beneficial, especially if rather than targeting vehicle speed per se (having driven on European and US roads comparable to Queensland's at much higher legal speeds, roads that are safer, I can say with confidence that travelling at 140kph on the M1 in light traffic is safer than the idiot doing 80KPH and disrupting the traffic pattern) they targeted the broad range of bad driving behavior exhibited daily on our roads that is far more dangerous, Frankly I have driven for more than thirty years and all the 'incidents' I have witnessed have been due to something other than speed - failure to give way, inattention, fatigue, failure to signal, slow vehicle causing other drivers to take risks, distracted driver etc. Unfortunately motorists have essentially been given the message that if they don't speed they are not only safe but they are good drivers, a whole range of extremely dangerous driving goes undetected and unpunished because it's too hard to target as in too expensive and doesn't return a big profit as passive detection systems targeting vehicle speed irrelevant of circumstances do - frankly it's a bloody farce and the overemphasis on vehicle speeds has a negative impact on road safety. Every K over is a Killer exhorts the silly motorway signboard on a straight four lane wide stretch of the M1 that in Germany I could legally travel at 250KPH "how simplistic and stupid, every time I see that I speed up and to date have not been killed, however had I chosen not to pay attention, lane wander, slow down to 20KPH below the rest of the traffic, taken my eyes off the road to change a CD or admonish the kids, now that really could be a killer.

Fixed speed cameras:

3. If consistent with overseas findings, not at all, if anything they increase crash risks as even motorists doing the speed limit or less slam their brakes on or act indecisively when they see one of these revenue gathering devices. 4. Loaded question - the question should be do we need fixed cameras - the answer is no. It really begs the question why the Economic Development Committee is involved in this at all. I note the Police Unions far more sensible attitude - I suspect the average copper realizes how farcical the whole speed camera issue is as well - of course the Police Union doesn't stand to gain or lose one way or the other so they are free to comment impartially, and as it happens sensibly. 5. The only environment they could conceivably be justified is in an absolute black spot with a demonstrable fatality count. In this situation the stretch of road should be audited annually and accident statistics compared year by year. The cameras presence should be clearly marked by warning signs, the main objective being that Motorists are very much on their guard. Again a regular marked police presence in the area would be more likely to keep motorists alert.

New technology:

6. Absolutely. The fact is that speed limits are blanket devices. Modern cars are safer than ever and in many countries similar roads with higher speed limits have better safety records. There is no doubt whatsoever that excessive emphasis on so called speeding motorists means that many motorists are fined and handed demerit points when they have been driving perfectly safely. Even in built up areas the speed limits themselves are often inconsistent. Within a five minute drive from my house we have six different speed zones all on double lane dual carriage ways that bear no relation to the road, for example one stretch of residential housing with driveways every few meters, a school, traffic lights, no run off etc is 70kph, which is about right - yet on another stretch of rural dual carriageway with very little housing, lots of width/run off which could safely be 80kph it is 60kph and is regularly subject to revenue gathering exercises by the police at the bottom of one stretch of hill - yet I have followed patrol cars doing over 70KPH on this same road! Usually it will be the average motorist travelling perfectly safely down a main corridor route that will get a speed camera fine; the idiots

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who decide to practice demolition derby in my quite neighborhood at 1am in the morning do so with impunity. 7. As stated above excessive speed is the primary causative factor in only 10% of accidents at best (usually Government statistics are a lot higher but include 'miscellaneous' 'trucks jack knifing' etc to boost the figure to justify revenue driven speed detection policies) and technology to date has not been used altruistically and government policies have not been predicated on a neutral basis. Technology should not be used to monitor citizens using the highways or catch people out; it should be used for safety purposes only. The revenue and punitive capabilities of these systems are the main attraction to Governments. If this was not the case technology would be used to have truly effective variable speed limit signs, monitor average traffic speed for setting speed limits at the 80th percentile and other broader approaches to enhancing traffic flow and behavior. Policing would be left to visible patrol cars, which should be more numerous, indeed a separate dedicated road safety police force would be the ideal solution but of course it would also cost money not produce it like speed cameras do. The offset would be the reduced costs borne by the health system if traffic related injuries were reduced. Said patrol cars should be using cameras etc to record driver behavior and target a broad range of potentially dangerous driving. This would also change the current mindset that leads to so much poor driving and hence many accidents - the mindset that so called 'speeding' is the root of all motoring evil and the consequent dangerous complacency it engenders in all other driving behaviors - I don't speed so I am a 'good' driver. 8. State Governments have used massive propaganda to highlight one area of road safety - speed - due to its aforementioned simplistic and profitable appeal to politicians and bureaucrats. It has little to do with the real world issues of road safety. Anyone doing some simple research on the internet will find examples of where more free thinking states/provinces overseas have analyzed the effects of speed cameras and concluded they have done little to promote road safety or reduce accidents (EG one of the Canadian States). Unfortunately Queensland seems hell bent on following a State I avoid at all costs - the aptly named Victoria, which incidentally this year is experiencing an increase in road deaths. Queensland needs to think for itself. The UK and Victoria are two of the worse places in the world for over the top reliance on speed cameras, and since the UK adopted them in proliferation it has gone from having one of the best driving records in Western Europe to one of the worst.

Comments:

It always amuses me when thousands of motorists are ticketed on a particular day and great political fanfare results, yet of those thousands of ticketed citizens, how many were driving dangerously? How many started to question the logic of being given a ticket for driving a few K over a blanket 100kph speed limit used on every other open highway in the State? How long before people get sick of hearing that the already punitive system needs to be more so because the road toll has increased â€” effectively â€”hey our current approach isnâ€”t working but we are going to give you more of the same only twice as intolerant?â€”T. You would think that with the reputation (overseas anyway) Australians have for being independent and laid back that our Governments and Bureaucrats would be more enlightened than they are in reality. Maybe itâ€”s an atavistic anachronism rooted in the convict past of the country where it was us and them between â€”prisonersâ€”T and â€”guardsâ€”T, but rather than the freedom and free thinking of that similarly colonial borne society, the Western USA, Australia seems to try to out English the English with its laws and bureaucratic desire to watch and punish its 'inmates'. An authoritarian strain overrides any political motivation or desire to seek the truth or encourage the concept of free thinking and thus it is with the whole issue of Roads and Road Safety. It is a wholly authoritarian 'we know what is best' predetermined policy making mindset where contradictory evidence and independent research or thought is discouraged and only so called â€”evidenceâ€”T that best suit the â€”authoritiesâ€”T viewpoint are tailored to current policy and to hell with the consequences, even if it means turning Queensland into a surveillance state. I mention this to illustrate that thinking outside the box may present better solutions and make Queensland a better place to be, certainly better than adopting ideas from that tired and stuffy police state of Victoria. Take for example the Dutch Traffic engineer, Hans Moderman who in the late 1970's concluded that the answer to safety lay less in the structure and layout of the roads than the minds of the drivers and pedestrians who used them. He decided that the biggest impact on reducing accidents and speeding in built up areas would be best achieved not from adding new safety features but by taking every one of them away. This meant taking out all the signs, barriers, separation between road and pedestrians etc and therefore pedestrians and drivers would have to take responsibility for their own safety. He was given a limited trial in a small Dutch village. Within two weeks speeds on the road had dropped by more than half and village residents were delighted. In 2003 they did the same thing in the city of Drachten, all traffic lights, signs were removed. Until that time the city center had an average eight accidents a year. Since the system was introduced there have been NONE. Also traffic jams were reduced (much as happened in London one day when a series of traffic lights failed). In Australia such a trial never would have been allowed. Indeed the solution would have been speed cameras, red light cameras and so forth - the old punitive thinking. Iâ€”m not saying we adopt all these things ad hoc, but we do need to get away from the current pre determinism and punitive thinking if there is to be a real impact. However as the EDC is responsible for this questionnaire it would seem the financial aspects are of greatest concern and therefore the policies and outcomes are already decided and this is just part of a by the numbers exercise.