

Economic Development Committee

Inquiry into the road safety benefits of fixed  
speed cameras

Submission 36

**Alistair MacLennan**

---

**From:** Nick Wall [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 30 April 2010 2:36 PM  
**To:** Economic Development Committee  
**Subject:** Submission to Inquiry into the road safety benefits of fixed speed cameras  
**Attachments:** Fixed Speed Camera Consultation\_Final.pdf

Good Afternoon,

Please find attached a submission to the above mentioned inquiry.

The submission has been prepared as an individual.

My contact details are listed below:

Name: Nick Wall  
Company : N/A  
Email – [REDACTED]  
Address: [REDACTED], Greenslopes  
Post Code: 4120  
Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Although it is not requested, if the information is relevant you may also note that I fit into the Under 25 age group category.

30.04.2010

This submission has been prepared in my capacity as an individual and as I am not a road safety expert is largely comprised of my opinions as a motorist on Queensland Roads.

In preparing this submission I have perused relevant areas of the Queensland Transport website and have read both the current Road Safety Action Plan and Road Sense reports. As a motorist I'd agree there is a place for speed enforcement although feel that speed enforcement is beginning to become excessive at the expense of other enforcement measures that address other unsafe behaviours. My initial view is that speed cameras are like any other tool in that they have their place and will provide a benefit. I am doubtful however that the continued expansion and growth in the use of the tool will see the gains initially achieved when they were first introduced replicated. The apparent marked increase of speed monitoring on our roads is taking place in an environment of limited transparency, this despite a Right to Information platform that at the time of its introduction was hailed as a marked shift to a culture where governments operated on a 'push' model of information flow to the public.

I find it disappointing that more and more of our road safety initiatives, of which fixed speed cameras are no exception, are enforcement based. Indeed, on many occasions it would appear that the centre of the road safety program is enforcement, with other aspects playing a supporting role. It seems to be a rather 'big stick' approach. On this basis alone given I'm not really surprised road safety indicators seemingly aren't improving as those powers that be who oversee these programs expect. Ultimately we all require a situation where everybody is an engaged stakeholder with respect to road safety. Given the limited scope of road safety education, communication and road user engagement that exists I fail to understand how the mass issuing of infringement notices by automated enforcement tools is going to garnish this required support amongst the community.

Specific comments on the questions raised in the discussion paper are provided on the following pages.

### **1. What is the appropriate role for fixed speed cameras in enforcing speed limits in Queensland?**

It is my view that only in extreme circumstances should fixed speed cameras be considered a permanent solution to safety issues on a particular stretch of road. If a section of road has an unacceptable road safety record then a view should be taken towards identifying what is causing this unacceptable safety history and devising a solution that removes the identified causes from the road environment. A fixed speed camera should provide a mechanism to help achieve a safe road environment until such a time a solution can be implemented.

### **2. Does prominent speed camera signage promote a safer road speed environment?**

No Comment on this question.

### **3. How effective are the existing fixed speed cameras in decreasing crash risks and changing driver behaviour in Queensland?**

As I am not a road safety expert it is difficult to comment here. I would note however that there is very little information and data in the public domain that allows an average member of the public to look into this question to draw their own insights and conclusions.

Despite the Right to Information platform that is supposed to oversee a cultural change towards an information "push" model, very little data is available regarding road safety, including fixed speed cameras. This lack of forthcoming data is very disappointing. A review of the Queensland Transport and Queensland Police Service websites as at the 27/04/2010 does not reveal anything beyond fact sheets with regard to information available on the fixed speed camera program.

A number of governments in the United States have seemingly led the way with regard to the publishing of datasets, that is, machine interpretable raw data.<sup>1</sup> An example of a jurisdiction that has released road safety data, although not necessarily specifically related to fixed speed cameras, would be California. California has published a significant collection of statistics in machine interpretable format.<sup>2</sup> Generally it would seem the Queensland Government doesn't publish data period and in line with this there appears to be no published datasets relating to fixed speed cameras, or road safety generally in Queensland. Further to this it would appear that the last Road Crash Traffic Report available on the Queensland Transport Road Safety website is an analysis from 2004. Since this time a number of reports have been published, although, these seemingly have a much narrower scope in only analysing the Road Toll as opposed to all Traffic Incidents.

As an individual I see no reason why comprehensive road safety data sets should not be released for public scrutiny. With respect to the scope of this topic, I'd suggest I don't see it as unreasonable to release a dataset that lists the details of all detected speeding infringements with information such as the date, time, detected speed, speed limit, driver age, driver gender, location and method of detection. An individual should be able to, if they so desire, access data on a roads traffic volumes, traffic crash history, enforcement history etc. and analyse this data in context to form an opinion on any number of road safety issues. Such data also offers an important lever for stakeholder engagement but would also allow for independent scrutiny of the road safety program, leading to a

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.data.gov>

<sup>2</sup> California Highway Patrol: <http://www.chp.ca.gov/switrs/>

better program. Numerous Government jurisdictions in the United States have taken to releasing quite specific data lists as described above, albeit not about road safety at this point in time. An example is provided in the footnote.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4. What criteria should be used to select fixed speed camera sites?**

Regardless of the criteria used the full and specific criteria should be published and made available for public scrutiny. I'd consider an example of full and specific to criteria to be more along the lines of '# number of crashes that have resulted in hospitalisation' as opposed to the current generalist statements such as 'locations that have a history of traffic crashes'

#### **5. Are fixed speed cameras more suited to specific road environments?**

No Comment on this question.

#### **6. Will the roll-out of new speed detection technology lead to excessive monitoring of Queensland drivers' speed?**

After having reviewed the list of 'speed related' plans in the current Road Safety Action Plan this question is of a significant concern and on the surface I'd believe the answer to be 'yes'. Seemingly under current plans there is a real risk of our roads turning into a quasi combination of a surveillance society and police state. Such moves should not be taken lightly yet it appears in recent years elements of our Road Safety policy are 'knee-jerk' reactions to particular road toll periods. Additionally I find it particularly unfortunate that this seemingly 'enforcement heavy' approach to road safety is being pursued at the expense of a strategy along the lines of the successful approach utilised by the Queensland Water Commission which saw Queenslanders quite dramatically reduce their water usage. That particular strategy, which was ultimately very successful, seemingly invested heavily in public education and offered incentives thereby engaging the community. Enforcement was a lower key activity that seemingly took on a supporting role.

From personal experience I'd question the proportion of speed monitoring in relation to other road safety dangers. During a recent trip between Brisbane and the town of Dalby, a distance of 208km according to Google maps, I noted my speed was monitored on four occasions. Once on the Ipswich motorway via a mobile speed camera van, once on the Warrego Highway around Haigslea by a hand held radar, once on the ascent of the Toowoomba Range via a fixed speed camera and once via a mobile speed camera van within the town of Dalby. With this degree of enforcement a minor speedometer error has the potential to generate fines of a very significant amount, and, in conjunction with Queensland's 'Double Demerit Points' scheme that has never formally been communicated to licence holders, which I therefore do not know the finer details of, the possible loss of a driver licence.

Drink Driving is responsible for a large number of injuries and fatalities on Queensland Roads each year. I have been driving in Queensland since 2003 and has been approximately two years since I was last stopped for a Random Breath Test. In fact over the last eight years of driving on Queensland roads I have only been breath tested on three occasions. Two of these RBTs were on separate

---

<sup>3</sup> District of Columbia: <http://data.octo.dc.gov/>

occasions within close vicinity of each other on a country road that has a very low traffic volume with the third at an RBT station in the township of Warra during an Easter period. Despite regularly driving on Brisbane roads since 2007 I to date have not been directed to pull into a Random Breath Test site. Given both speeding and drink driving are responsible for such high numbers of incidents on our roads each year, it is questionable if the current enforcement balance is correct.

I believe steps need to be taken to ensure motorists speeds are not excessively monitored, or more to the point, motorists are not excessively penalised for minor mistakes that ultimately are going to occur from time to time. Automated enforcement seemingly has a certain 'convenience factor' attached to it for governments – it's quick, easy, cheaper than alternatives, non labour intensive and quite possibly generates fewer complaints etc., and in line with that very stringent measures need to be taken to ensure this technology does not become over represented in the broader road safety program. A number of out 'left of field' approaches should be considered here, examples could include:

- Questioning if Fixed Speed Cameras should issue infringements for the lowest level of speeding infringement during conditions that are found to be 'low risk' or if the fixed speed camera program is expanded generally if fixed speed cameras should only be utilised to detect 'excessive' speeding.
- Questioning if Fixed Speed Cameras need to be active 24/7 or if they can be signed as such but their usage staggered between sites or perhaps they could only be active during statistical risk periods.
- Questioning if fixed speed cameras need to issue demerit point and monetary penalties in all circumstances or if other avenues of communication and education initiatives are an option in certain circumstances (i.e. 'Low Risk') when a vehicle has been detected travelling over the posted speed limit or the driver has an otherwise good record.

Other approaches should be considered to ensure speed enforcement remains a moderated part of a broader road safety program. This could take the form a recognised way of ensuring the amount of time spent on speed enforcement, taking into account the hours accumulated by automated devices, remains proportionate to other road dangers and public expectations.

Finally on this point, I believe it is important a solid research program be established to ensure the levels of speed monitoring are not creating detrimental views toward road safety and indeed to confirm that all these devices are making a difference. The results of such research should of course be publically available in full.

#### **7. Are there other technologies that would be more appropriate for reducing crash risk associated with excessive speed?**

I'd note the question refers to 'excessive speed' although more generally I believe it would be preferential if we took an innovative approach to assisting drivers with speed management as opposed to just continually expanding the enforcement program. An example of this, for instance, most modern vehicles have an over speed alert function that can be set. Why not investigate ways to have the vehicles over speed alert function automatically adjust to the speed limit while driving?

## **8. Are there other issues regarding the use of fixed speed cameras to reduce road related risks in Queensland?**

### **Fairness**

A significant concern I hold regarding the current speed camera program is that by its very nature it stands to have a disproportionate impact on those from lower income groups. On one hand the argument no doubt exists that this is just an incentive to 'not speed.' It is seemingly unfair however, that the same value infringement notice can have a substantially different impact on two different people and potentially stand to inflict hardship in certain circumstances. To date it seems this has not been a significant concern for the government.

### **Privacy**

It is disappointing that privacy seemingly has been given limited consideration amongst the raft of speed camera initiatives detailed to date. Very little details are given on how Queensland's point to point speed cameras will actually work are available although it would seem that all vehicles are photographed as they enter and exit the speed camera zone to allow for the relevant calculations. In effect, the government potentially has data on the movements of citizens yet has seemingly not answered basic questions about this, such as:

- Is the data retained even if an offence is not detected?
- If the data is retained, for how long?
- If the data is retained are steps taken to make the data anonymous?
- If the data is retained who has access to the data and under what circumstances?

### **Correct Speed Limits**

Finally with regard to fixed speed cameras and speed cameras in general, I find it somewhat bewildering that a large amount of time and money is being invested into ever more complicated speed enforcement technology but similar investments are not being made to confirm the speed limits are correct in the first place. It is rather difficult to believe that a sign placed on the side of the road that never changes, the number on which has been selected by a process that the average person can only assume is thorough, complete and rigorous is a continuous and accurate reflection of the speed at which it is safe to drive.

Essentially it is seemingly ridiculous that in 2010 the vast majority of speed signs in Queensland are static signs. Many factors affect the speed at which it is actually safe to drive although seemingly the only thing that doesn't adjust in the whole equation is the actual speed limit itself. While electronic speed signs have begun appearing in one or two places, again without formal communication to road users explaining this change, it seems to me to be unacceptable that every major arterial and highway in Queensland is not being progressively fitted with these signs.

In short I believe electronic speed signs should be used extensively to reflect the actual speed at which it is safe to drive at any given time. I particularly find this pressing for our highways, where at times there is a good case to be made for slowing down, and at times particularly on newer roads in the appropriate conditions it is questionable if the speed limit could not possibly be raised slightly.

Oftentimes it is claimed that going faster doesn't get you to your destination any faster, which in Urban areas is probably indeed quite accurate. Although very little of this commentary seem to take into account that Queensland is a big place and once out of urban areas the distance between destinations can be as such that being able to travel at an extra 10km/h, if safe to do so, can lead to moderate time gains being made. Given the focus being placed on speed enforcement it is not unreasonable to expect a focus on ensuring correct 'point in time' speed limits. Further, given the increasingly fast pace of society and the lack of other high speed transit options in Queensland it is not unreasonable to expect a road environment where, if safe to do so, speed limits are temporarily raised to enable faster travelling. It would also seemingly be advantageous to ensure that when necessary we have the infrastructure in place to lower speed limits temporarily as required and then enforce this. In my view, a comprehensive speed camera program be they fixed, mobile, hand held or otherwise that enforces speed limits that take into account the speed it is safe to travel at a given point in time is more credible then a program that enforces static numbers that do not change.

Thank you for considering the content of this submission.

Nick Wall

30.04.2010