



Economic Development Committee

Inquiry into the road safety benefits of fixed speed cameras

Executive Summary

Report No. 4, October 2010

The Economic Development Committee

The Economic Development Committee is a select committee of the 53rd Queensland Parliament established by motion of the House on 23 April 2009. The role of this committee is to monitor and report on issues in the policy areas of employment, infrastructure, transport, trade, industry development, agriculture and tourism.

Inquiry terms of reference

The Economic Development Committee examined the road safety benefits of fixed speed cameras in Queensland. As part of this inquiry, the committee considered:

- the effectiveness of fixed speed cameras in reducing speeding and road trauma
- the criteria used to select sites for fixed speed cameras
- the most efficient use of resources to maximise the road safety benefits of fixed speed cameras
- the impact of new technologies on fixed speed cameras
- the appropriate role of fixed speed cameras in the overall speed enforcement regime.

Speeding and speed enforcement (pages 3 – 18)

Excessive speed is a significant factor in road safety, as it not only increases the likelihood of a crash occurring but also contributes to the severity of injuries sustained in a crash. Speeding is recognised as a major cause of death and serious injury on Queensland roads and in other Australian states.

Significant numbers of Queensland motorists are driving above the posted speed limits. Figures from Department of Transport and Main Roads indicated that between 20 and 50 per cent of motorists are not complying with posted speed limits.

There is a need to utilise a variety of speed enforcement methods that are tailored to specific situations as a single approach is unlikely to be fully effective. However, using only police enforcement to manage the speed at which people drive ignores the benefits of changing the social acceptability of speeding.

There may be value in rewarding drivers that are not caught driving above the posted speed limit by offering them a discount off their car registration. This may help create a more positive social environment that discourages speeding. Other strategies, such as ecodriving, which occurs when drivers save petrol and reduce vehicle emissions by changing their driving behaviour, for instance by travelling at slower speeds, could be used to help change community perceptions regarding speeding.

Vast differences between speed camera programs exist regarding issues, such as the amount of penalty, where the fine money is allocated, whether cameras are hidden or visible, presence of warning signs and how far above the speed limit a vehicle may travel before a penalty is imposed.

Speed cameras appear to reduce vehicle speeds and crash risk. Mobile speed cameras were introduced into Queensland prior to fixed speed cameras. An evaluation of Queensland's mobile speed camera program found evidence that this type of enforcement reduced crashes in Queensland.

Fixed speed cameras (pages 19 to 26)

Fixed speed cameras operate remotely from a permanent, single location at the roadside. They can operate 24 hours a day, all year round. They are considered effective at reducing speed at or near the enforcement location and are therefore generally used in areas with a high intensity of speed-related problems.

Fixed speed cameras are one tool used by Queensland Police Service to manage speed and enforce limits. They were introduced in Queensland in 2007. The introduction of digital technology on a trial basis in 2010 has resulted in the possibility of using a wider range of fixed speed cameras, including 'spot' speed, combined red light and speed, as well as point-to-point camera systems.

While most research studies to date have focused on mobile speed camera programs, evaluations do suggest that fixed speed cameras reduce vehicle speeds, crashes and fatalities. While there are limited benefit cost assessments of existing fixed speed camera programs, the committee concludes that it would be reasonable to assume that an evaluation of fixed camera sites in Queensland would result in a positive economic benefit. The committee supports the continued use of fixed speed cameras in Queensland when this use is based on research evidence and best practice policy.

Elements of a fixed speed camera program (pages 27 to 34)

The approaches to a fixed camera program can be signed. In Queensland, drivers should pass two signs with at least one of these signs alerting them to the presence of fixed speed cameras. The Queensland Government also places general signage, particularly at state borders, to alert motorists that speed and red light cameras operate in Queensland. The committee supports the use of signs to advise motorists of the presence of fixed speed cameras.

There are a number of different types of cameras that can be used to detect speed at a particular location. Queensland is currently trialling a number of camera types for different situations. The committee believes it is important to consider a range of factors when selecting the most appropriate fixed speed camera, including initial purchase cost, costs associated with altering the road environment to ensure the most effective operation of the camera, recurring maintenance costs, ease of transmission of data to Queensland Police Service, reliability of the camera and the way that the data from the camera fits with the Queensland Government processing systems.

In Queensland, the penalty for being detected speeding by a camera varies by the amount over the speed limit that the driver is detected. The monetary penalty for an organisation is significantly higher than that for individuals. This provides an incentive for organisations to identify the driver of the vehicle.

It is important, when introducing speed camera programs, that governments communicate the dangers of high speeds in terms of increased injury risk and increased crash risk, articulate the rationale for speed cameras, advise how they are being used, as well as the likelihood of detection and associated penalties. The committee believes that one way to achieve this is to establish a website.

Local government-controlled roads (pages 35 – 40)

Road safety is an important issue for local governments as they control a significant proportion of Queensland's road network. Fixed speed cameras are installed on both local government- and state-controlled roads.

The committee notes the concerns from a number of groups regarding the level of consultation on the selection of camera sites for fixed speed cameras. The committee concludes that the Queensland Government needs to provide clearer information to local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland and local road safety advisory committees regarding the criteria for selecting fixed speed camera sites and undertake more consultation during the site selection process to ensure local knowledge, as well as evidence-based data, is used to inform decisions on site selection.

Currently, fixed speed cameras are only deployed on roads with speed limits of 60 km/hr or more. However, an evaluation of 10 fixed digital speed cameras in 40 km/hr speed zones in New South Wales indicated that the cameras had an immediate and sustained impact on reducing speeds in school zones. Given the significant risk of injury to vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists and school children in a road crash, the committee considers the use of fixed speed cameras on roads with speed limits of less than 60 km/hr is appropriate, particularly outside schools and kindergartens.

Revenue and processing of infringement notices (pages 41 – 52)

The current processing time for infringement notices varies between seven and ten days from the time of detection to when the notice is sent. Queensland Police Service is currently considering ways to improve processing times.

As part of the inquiry, the committee considered the benefits and costs of outsourcing the Camera Detected Offence Program. Evidence presented to the committee suggested that it should continue to be conducted exclusively by appropriately trained Queensland Police Service officers. Although the committee noted the differing requirements regarding the staffing of fixed and mobile speed cameras, the committee concluded that the public perception of speed camera enforcement could be improved if non-sworn officers were to

operate speed cameras, allowing police officers to undertake other policing activities in the community.

As part of the inquiry, the committee considered privacy issues with some submitters raising concerns about the recording of information through speed cameras. The committee concludes that the public is entitled to know how data from the speed camera program is collected, for what purposes, for whom and for how long the information is held. This information could be made public on a website regarding Queensland's speed camera program.

Traffic cameras, including fixed speed cameras, generate significant amounts of revenue. This can lead to claims of revenue raising by governments. In Queensland, the revenue from speed cameras, in excess of administrative costs, must be used for road safety education and awareness programs, road accident injury rehabilitation programs and road funding to improve the safety of state-controlled roads. However, local governments are well placed to contribute to local road safety programs as they understand local issues and are often well connected to the particular groups most affected by road trauma.

The committee concludes that it is appropriate to limit the expenditure of revenue collected as a result of fixed speed camera offence detections, in excess of the administrative costs of detection. However, the committee believes that, in addition to the existing purposes that the revenue can be used for, this revenue could also be used to improve local government-controlled roads and conduct research that will improve road safety and improve road injury rehabilitation. Additionally, a proportion of the revenue should be placed into a Road Safety Fund. The fund will be accessible to local governments in partnership with community groups and other non-government organisations, through the Queensland Government on a grant basis to address local road safety issues. All revenue should be provided to individual, one-off projects and not used for recurrent funding.

The committee concludes that there is a low level of public awareness of the restrictions placed upon monies collected from camera detected offences and the road safety benefits of speed cameras. The committee has recommended that a Queensland Government website be established informing motorists of how speed camera revenue is spent, the evaluation of speed camera effectiveness and how speed camera sites are chosen.

New technology (pages 53 – 62)

The Queensland Government is in the process of upgrading its traditional wet-film camera technology to digital camera technology. Digital technology will allow the Queensland Police Service to install and trial a wider range of fixed speed cameras including 'spot' speed, combined red light and speed, as well as point-to-point camera systems.

Combined red light and speed cameras are capable of detecting both red light and speed violations simultaneously at signalised intersections. The purpose of these cameras is to improve speed and red light compliance at intersections in order to reduce the number and severity of crashes.

The purpose of point-to-point speed cameras is to reduce speed and road trauma over a longer stretch of road. This type of system uses a number of cameras that monitor and calculate average traffic speeds over a length of road to detect if speed infringements have occurred. The Queensland Government is currently trialling its point-to-point speed camera over a 13 kilometre stretch of the Bruce Highway from Caloundra Road to Wild Horse Mountain at Beerburrum.

Intelligence Speed Adaptation systems aim to manage speed through modifying driver behaviour and managing vehicle speeds, rather than enforcing speed limits by punishment. The level of intervention provided by the Intelligence Speed Adaptation system varies by system. The benefits of this technology include the ability to decrease the occurrences of speeding, particularly 'low range' speeding of up to 10 km/hr over the speed limit.

Vehicle Activated Signs or Speed Activated Signs are electronic signs that are used to display changeable and dynamic messages to drivers. The potential for these systems to be effective results from their novelty, ability to catch the driver's attention and the immediacy of the feedback provided by the message. In Queensland, 18 Speed Activated Signs have been installed as a trial on state-controlled roads.

The committee notes that there is a limited amount of evaluation information regarding the use of new speed enforcement technologies, such as point-to-point and combined red light and speed camera systems, as well as vehicle activated signs. Therefore, the committee believes that the Queensland Government should undertake a comprehensive evaluation of all new speed enforcement technologies that they are trialling.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (page 12): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government investigates the benefits of a reward program for speed compliant drivers.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 2 (page 25): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of the fixed speed camera program.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport and Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 3 (page 30): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government, when selecting a fixed speed camera model for use in Queensland, considers the initial purchase cost, costs associated with altering the road environment to ensure the camera's optimal operation, recurring maintenance costs, ease of transmission of data to the Traffic Camera Office, reliability of the camera and the way that the camera data fits with the Queensland Government processing systems for offences.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 4 (page 32): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government creates and maintains a website that contains the location of each fixed speed camera, including combined red light and speed cameras, as well as the reasons for placing cameras at each of these locations, such as the crash history or potential to develop a crash history on each site. The website should also contain more general information regarding speeding.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 5 (page 33): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government provides a link to the proposed fixed speed camera website on all speed camera infringement notices.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 6 (page 38): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government provides clearer information to local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland and local road safety advisory committees on the criteria for selecting fixed speed camera sites and undertakes more consultation during the site selection process to ensure local knowledge, as well as evidence-based data, is used to inform decisions on site selection and promote greater public acceptance and understanding of fixed speed cameras.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport and Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 7 (page 39): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government places fixed speed cameras on roads with speed limits of less than 60 km/hr, particularly outside schools and kindergartens that present with crash potential or crash history and where other speed enforcement measures are inappropriate.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 8 (page 44): The committee recommends that the Queensland Police Service investigates whether the use of non-sworn officers in the mobile speed camera program would allow a greater number of policing hours to be used more effectively in other community safety activities.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 9 (page 44): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government provides information to the public on a website on how data from the speed camera program is collected, for what purposes, for whom and for how long.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport and Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 10 (page 48): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government uses the revenue generated by the Camera Detected Offence Program, with the exception of the administration costs of the program, to fund one-off projects and that this revenue not be used as a source of recurrent funding.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 11 (page 50): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government amends the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995* to allow, in addition to the existing purposes for which camera detected revenue can be used, the use of camera detected revenue to improve the safety of local government-controlled roads and to conduct research for the purposes of improving road safety and road injury rehabilitation.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 12 (page 51): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government sets aside a proportion of revenue from the Camera Detected Offence Program into a Road Safety Fund. The fund will be accessible to local councils in partnership with community groups or other non-government organisations, through the Queensland Government on a grant basis for programs that address local road safety issues and the evaluation of these programs.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 13 (page 57): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government ensures that the criteria used for selecting sites for combined red light and speed cameras meet the requirements for both red light and speed cameras, rather than one or the other.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport

Recommendation 14 (page 61): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government undertakes a process and outcome evaluation of all new speed enforcement technologies that they trial.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport and Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

Recommendation 15 (page 61): The committee recommends that the Queensland Government tables in Queensland Parliament all evaluations recommended in this report within 12 months of the evaluation's completion date.

Ministerial Responsibility: Minister for Transport and Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services

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