

For immediate release - June 07

PR1-0607 Failed road safety policy.

The road toll in Australia is worsening in spite of the most massive road safety campaign in history, the speed kills campaign supported by extensive media coverage, lower limits, tougher penalties and stringent law enforcement using automated devices.

It is worsening against a steady improvement over the previous sixteen year period which ended in 2004. [1] It is also worsening against improvements overseas where wet and icy roads are more prevalent than Australia. In 2004/05 there was a 7% fall in the OECD median road death rate per 100,000 population. [2] Australia's rate however rose by 2% - a 9% discrepancy. Germany's 2006 data shows a continued 7% improvement attributed largely to strict lane discipline. [3]

Our roads are safer, vehicles are safer, paramedics more skilled, drought affected roads are dry, the public have never been more aware of speed limit enforcement, penalties have never been tougher. These factors should have driven the road toll lower than before. They have not, it is rising. Clearly more of the same is not only not working, it is killing people.

In 1999 the NRSS (National Road Safety Strategy) targeted a 40% reduction in road deaths by 2010 but has admitted a substantial gap exists between actual and required outcomes. Tragically we are over 200 lives lost per year behind projected outcomes. [4]

The major cause of the increasing toll is blamed on speeding while the studies used to justify the use of speed cameras are disturbingly misleading. They claim that nearly 40% of road fatalities are caused by speeding [5] yet fail to identify that not even 2% (two percent) are caused through travel above set speed limits. [6] The majority of "speeding" fatalities are therefore caused through travel too fast for the conditions but below the speed limit where speed cameras are unable to function. The studies do not segment above and below the limit data whilst the measures they recommend only target the 2% above the limit fatalities, not the 98% below.

Below-the-limit fatalities comprise approximately 1600 lives lost each year yet with impossible to achieve national speed limit compliance the current policy can at best save around 32 lives per year. Additionally, rogue, tech savvy young drivers know where speed cameras are situated resulting in travel too fast for the conditions, especially on bends where there are no speed cameras.

A major reason for the failure of the policy is the extreme focus on the dangers of above the limit travel to the exclusion of nearly all other risk factors. This implies that travelling below the speed limit is safe, leading to complacency, inattention and increased fatalities. Additionally, the current policy of hidden speed cameras has actually impaired driver awareness through adding to an increasing list of dangerous distractions.

We have a system that has failed with tragic consequences. New thinking and urgent action is required in order to save lives on Australian roads, to bring us back into line with previous road crash fatality reductions and to bring us into line with other countries. We have fallen behind OECD standards and could soon be compared to developing nations where vehicle use is new and fatalities high.

Our message is simple, we want a common sense road safety policy that saves lives.

- 1) Target and raise awareness of the dangers of below-the-limit speeding.
- 2) Position highly visible speed cameras precisely at confirmed black spots.
- 3) Implement strict "Keep left unless overtaking" lane discipline and tailgating penalties.
- 4) Increased vehicle handling and skid control skills to be required of new licence applicants.
- 5) A more visible police presence required on our roads.

It is time to stop listening to those who orchestrated the failed road safety policy. It is time for new thinking, time for urgent action. Every day that we wait means more lives lost.

[1] <http://www.roadsense.com.au/facts.html> - Historic data.

[2] http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2007/Int_comp_05.aspx - ATSB International Comparisons

[3] <http://www.destatis.de/basis/e/verk/verktab6.htm> - German data.

[4] <http://www.atcouncil.gov.au/documents/atcnrss.aspx> - 2006 Progress Report, Page 2

[5] http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/speedprobl_dl1.html - 40% Speeding

[6] http://www.roadsense.com.au/misleading_data.html - Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee study no 15 - 1994

About RoadSense.

RoadSense is an initiative of businessman and road safety advocate Harry Brelsford, supported by the RoadSenseOZ forum members around Australia.

The initiative started with the RoadSense.com.au website in 2002 followed by thousands of hours of research including information provided by RoadSense members. An early conclusion was that the most massive road safety campaign in history, the speed kills campaign, is a tragic failure with the road toll rising when it was previously declining. With extreme emphasis on deterring above the speed limit travel it is below the limit where 98% of road fatalities occur. Studies justifying the failed policy claim that nearly 40% of fatalities are caused by speeding yet fail to address that the vast majority are caused by below-the-limit speeding.

In 2003 Harry Brelsford published a 270 page book called "Under The Radar" highlighting the inability of automated speed detection devices to reduce the road toll by any more than 2% whilst adding to a growing list of dangerous distractions.

The RoadSense website presents the most up to date data as to why the current road safety policy has failed, why the road toll is worsening and why we are falling behind other developed countries. More of the same is killing people, an urgent rethink and urgent action is required in order to save lives on Australian roads.

RoadSense does not advocate the abolishment of speed limits and is calling for increased and more visible police presence on our roads.

The initiative is funded by Harry Brelsford

Contact:

Harry Brelsford
RoadSense.com.au
PO Box 975 Broadbeach QLD 4227

Mob: 0403 910 866

Harry@RoadSense.com.au
<http://www.RoadSense.com.au>