

Submission on Setting Speed limits to the National Road Safety Inquiry of the House of Representatives Transport and Regional Services Committee from the National Motorists Association of Australia (NMAA)

The foundation stone for any speed limit policy is the requirement that speed limits must be set appropriately.

The stagnation of all three road fatality ratios since 1997 per ATSB data is the determining factor in support of our demand for a change of direction. Current methodology of deliberately setting low speed limits has failed to reduce road fatalities.

Our recommendation is to implement the 85th percentile method of setting speed limits. On the evidence, we believe it will assist greatly in reducing road fatalities and injuries in Australia.

Quote: "Statistics show that roadways with speed limits set at the 85th percentile speed have fewer accidents ..."



NATIONAL MOTORISTS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA .

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A SAFER SPEED LIMIT versus SPEEDS LIMIT SET FOR REVENUE

The internationally accepted method of setting speed limits is the 85th percentile method. State governments in Australia use the "Big Brother knows best" approach and often deliberately set speed limits too low.

A definition of the 85th percentile is the speed which 85 per cent of motorists consider to be the safe maximum in ideal conditions.

The U S Institute of Transportation Engineers recommends the 85th percentile method for setting speed limits. Source: http://www.ite.org/pdf/spd_limits.PDF

USA states typically have a clearly expressed speed limit policy. An example is the state of Washington. It explains the 85th percentile in its policy and provides these details:

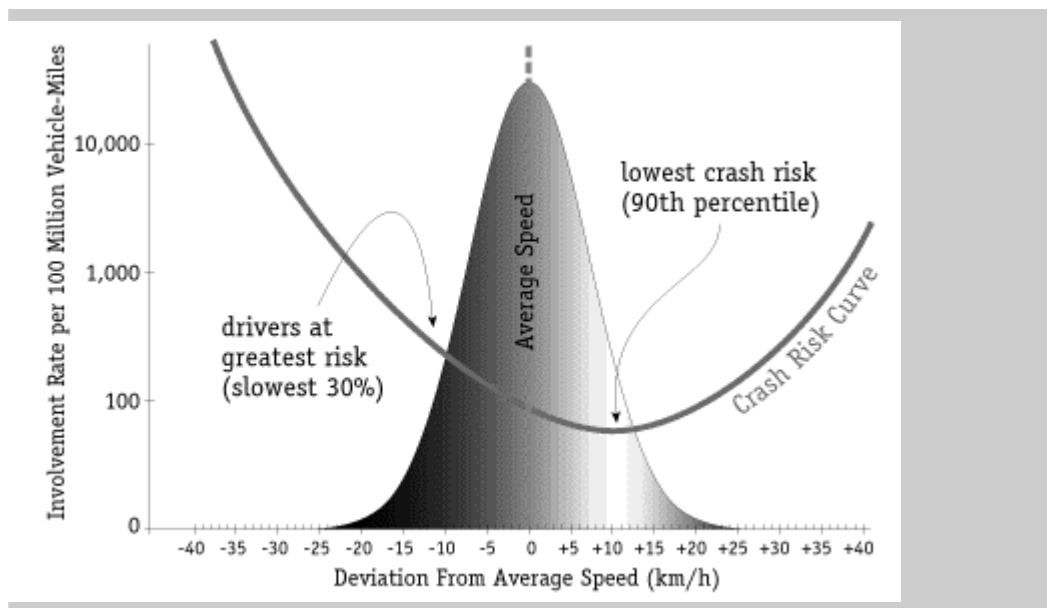
"Speed limits that reflect the behavior of the majority are determined by what engineers call the '85th percentile speed', or the speed that 85 out of 100 vehicles travel at or below. This method is based on the principle that reasonable drivers will consider road conditions when selecting their speed of travel. Studies have consistently demonstrated that there are no significant changes in

the 85th percentile speed following the posting of a revised speed limit. Statistics show that roadways with speed limits set at the 85th percentile speed have fewer accidents than roads where the posted speed limit is above or below the what the majority naturally travel."

Source: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/trafficoperations/traffic/limits.htm>

Many Australian motorists are not aware that there is a "U"-shaped curve depicting risk of accident versus vehicle speed. Such a graph is depicted on the Canadian (Road) Sense site.

The graph depicting risk of accident versus vehicle speed is a "U"-shaped curve:



Source: Canadian (Road) Sense at <http://www.sense.bc.ca/research.htm>

In summary, the 85th percentile method is used throughout the USA and Canada. The Final Report on "The Effects of Raising and Lowering Speed Limits" was issued by the USA Federal government in 1992 - over a decade ago!

The standard of road safety management in Australia is more than ten years out of kilter with internationally accepted practice. The state governments are aware of the 85th percentile. Tragically for road safety, instead of revising speed limits to this standard, state governments use it to determine which sites are the most lucrative locations for speed cameras.

The NMAA is in full support of Deputy P M John Anderson's attached statements about the over-emphasis on speed. Many motorists are concerned that state "road safety policy" is devoted to raising revenue. We deserve better government than this.

Our lives depend on it.

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Confirmation of road fatality statistics:

The Australian road fatalities graph per 1,000 registered vehicles was published originally in 1998 as Monograph 23 by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

Source: <http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/pdf/mgraph23.pdf>

It was updated with more recent data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its Transport Special Article – A history of road fatalities in Australia (Year Book Australia, 2001).

The plateauing or stagnation of the road fatalities graph over the last five years is provided by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. Source: <http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/stats/pdf/mrf112002.pdf>. The first graph shows the previous five years for Australia. Page 6 shows the graph for the previous five years in each state.

It is preferable to use a ratio such as deaths per 10,000 vehicle registrations for fair comparison over time and between states.

The following table of Australian Transport Safety Bureau statistics show that all three road fatality ratios have stagnated since 1997. Deaths per 10,000 registrations, deaths per 100,000 of population and deaths per 100 million kilometres travelled have stagnated since 1997.

This is a national disgrace.

The road crash fatality rates for the last few decades have been copied from the publication ATSB Road Crash Data and Rates Australian States and Territories 1925 to 2001 available at http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/stats/pdf/crash_rates.pdf

Table 1 Road fatalities, exposure data and road fatality rates, Australia, 1925 to 2

Year	Road fatalities	Registered vehicles ('000)	Fatalities per 10 000 registered vehicles	Population ('000)	Fatalities per 100 000 population	Vehicle kilometres travelled ('000 000)
1970	3798	4771.6	8.0	12507.3	30.4	-
1971	3590	5039.2	7.1	12937.2	27.7	81051
1972	3422	5317.1	6.4	13177.0	26.0	-
1973	3679	5613.1	6.6	13386.4	27.5	-
1974	3572	5952.7	6.0	13599.1	26.3	-
1975	3694	6276.4	5.9	13771.4	26.8	-
1976	3583	6580.9	5.4	13915.5	25.7	100919
1977	3578	6818.0	5.2	14074.1	25.4	-
1978	3705	7114.5	5.2	14359.3	25.8	-
1979	3508	7358.3	4.8	14515.7	24.2	111469
1980	3272	7573.6	4.3	14695.4	22.3	-
1981	3321	7917.6	4.2	14923.3	22.3	-
1982	3252	8346.0	3.9	15184.2	21.4	126866
1983	2755	8589.8	3.2	15393.5	17.9	-
1984	2822	8832.8	3.2	15579.4	18.1	-
1985	2941	9118.3	3.2	15788.3	18.6	140427
1986	2888	9290.5	3.1	16018.4	18.0	-
1987	2772	9373.7	3.0	16263.3	17.0	-
1988	2887	9544.4	3.0	16538.2	17.5	153915
1989	2801	9806.1	2.9	16833.1	16.6	-
1990	2331	10080.6	2.3	17065.1	13.7	-
1991	2113	9934.1	2.1	17284.0	12.2	150389
1992	1974	10246.9	1.9	17489.1	11.3	-
1993	1953	10431.5	1.9	17656.4	11.1	-
1994	1928	10699.2	1.8	17838.4	10.8	-
1995	2017	10935.4	1.8	18049.0	11.2	166514
1996	1970	11401.1	1.7	18310.7	10.8	-
1997	1768	11664.4	1.5	18524.2	9.5	-
1998	1755	12066.9	1.5	18751.0	9.4	173317
1999	1763	12268.6	1.4	18966.8	9.3	177635
2000	1822	12407.4	1.5	19157.1	9.5	180782
2001	1736	12476.8	1.4	19386.7	9.0	-

Notes to table

Northern Territory fatalities are excluded from the Australian fatalities count and fatality rates for 1925 to 1967. Queensland licence data is excluded from the national figures from 1954 to 1983 and in 1997 due to data being unavailable. Northern Territory licence data is excluded from the national figures from 1963 to 1967 due to data being unavailable. Western Australian licence data is excluded from the national figures from 1997 to 1999 due to data being unavailable.

Confirmation of John Anderson's statements about the over-emphasis on speed:

SMH quotes:

Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson has ordered an inquiry into the nation's road deaths **"amid concerns that safety experts might be focusing too heavily on speed"**. Mr Anderson said "[The road toll] has come down very well in the last decade or so, but is has plateaued in recent times". SMH, 7/1/03.

Source URL:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/01/06/1041566362718.html>

"Earlier this month, Mr Anderson criticised the emphasis on speed in road safety campaigns and expressed concern it "may blind us to other causes". SMH, 1/2/03.

Source URL:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/01/31/1043804519484.html>