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RE: Speed Limits

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14/01/13

To Legislative Council Select Committee Rural Roads Speed Limits

It is hard to make a case for a speed limit in excess of 80km per hour on any gravel road in Tasmania. Likewise, there are many non highway sealed roads that are quite safe at speeds above 90km. eg the road from Devonport to Exeter. Less adequate roads need only to be suitably signed.

However to make a blanket reduction on sealed, main highway roads makes no sense. Because our highways, although basically adequate if properly maintained, are not freeways, speed control should be adapted to the safest options for road users. I suggest a good place to begin would be to reduce the speed limit for heavy vehicles, towing vehicle, campervan and mobile homes etc on all rural roads, to 10km less than that allowed for normal vehicles whatever the prevailing maximum). This was once the case in Tasmania .It allows overtaking, when safe, without exceeding the limit, thus reducing the frustrations of motorists trapped behind vehicles that push the limit on easy sections of road and hold up others on the inevitable slower sections. This would make a real contribution to the system, say, on the east coast Tasman Highway. At the same time less confident drivers do not feel obliged to overtake as they can, if they choose, sit behind the bus knowing they are not impeding those who wish to legally travel a little more quickly.

Likewise, dangerous sections, for example, the section known as Paradise, south of Orford should be signed at not more than 90km per hour as the road is narrow, windy and the surface poor. While speed limit signs in urban areas have become a ridiculous problem for motorists there seems a general reluctance to identify sections of road where 100 km is inappropriate. If this was done there would be no case for an overall reduction.

These two measures coupled with proper maintenance of road surfaces generally and the provision of more overtaking lanes would make a significant difference to speed related problems on rural roads. Tasmanian roads are basically OK for the demand placed on them but the surfaces have been wrecked by years of heavy traffic for which they were never designed. Less waste on expensive, vote catching, projects and better maintenance would be a better option. Finally, the educating of drivers at all ages to drive to the conditions, to constantly be aware and considerate of the other driver and generally merge with the flow, is critical. Tasmanians are next to Queenslanders in their "don't give an inch "mentality and in the confines of our road system this is the worst possible attitude for safe motoring.

My observations are based on experience over many years all over Tasmania, but especially the last 10 years travelling the Tasman Highway from Swansea to Hobart at least twice weekly. This is an excellent sample as it involves long straight sections and hilly windy climbs and passes. The points I have made, and other relative items can be clearly illustrated by a drive over this section with experienced commentary and I would gladly provide this in site to any member of your committee who is interested.

Yours sincerely

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