

The Chairman of the Legislative Council Select Committee on Rural Road Speed Limits.

Dear Sir,

It is with concern I view the State Governments proposal to implement a 90kph default speed limit on country roads as ill considered, lacking and ignoring appropriate community input, and placing local councils in a catch 22 situation by imposing road design specifications that allow little if any discretion on their part.

Placing the final decision in Local Council hands, whilst at the same time dictating by specifications, could reasonably be described as a conspiracy to achieve the proposed default -90kph limit. At best I view it as an underhanded attempt to place the Minister at arms-length from the issue.

In fact the final decision must be seen to be that of the Minister for Infrastructure David O'Byrne as that is where the buck should stop, right on the top of his desk as with the current speed zone signage confusion, and the cost of reversing it.

If those recommending to the Minister are the same persons or committee as behind the much maligned "end of speed limit" signs then one need to question their professional expertise in matters relating to road safety, are we heading for a repeat with their current proposal?

The necessary need now to replace discredited signage is going to be very costly indeed and had the motoring public been consulted initially on this it may never have been implemented. The idea was always a dumb one, and that is how the proposed default 90kph is now being described publicly by some.

It is obvious to me with forty years - experience as a commercial traveller that a 90kph limit on our long haul (distance) country roads will significantly lift the inattention span of drivers, this factor is now being reported as a major factor in crashes.

I have recently experimented driving on roads at 90kph and not only is it boring and fatiguing, it is a go to sleep speed and in my view only those looking at data behind a computer within the comfort of a city office would be proposing such changes.

I refer you to trips, say from Burnie to Queenstown, Hobart to Queenstown, Launceston to St. Helens and like.

With respect, your committee needs to research as to how many crashes on roads presently posted at 100kph are actually related to that maximum speed rather than to excessive speed, incorrect driver manoeuvre, inattention, fatigue, lack of precautionary signage, vehicle mechanical fault, alcohol or legal/illegal drug effects or just sheer anti-social behaviour.

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For instance I have noticed some call for a 90kph limit of the Scottsdale sidling and I question what sort of impact this would have when the average speed over that section of road from my experience would be around 60kph with many corners that have to be negotiated at speed less than 30kph and very few sections if any over it's length that one could safely drive at 90kph, yet on several straights prior to the winding section are suited to passing slower vehicles can be driven safely at 100kph.

It seems what is being proposed is introducing a limit that imposes mediocrity and penalty on drivers. In fact a 90kph limited is effectively going to reduce experienced and sensible drivers to provisional driver status.

I have spoken to many in country areas about the Governments proposal and found that all have not been aware of such but on being alerted are very critical of the idea. There will obviously be a large reaction from the motoring public if this proposal is implemented and my suggestion is that it could result in the Government having to reverse such at great cost likened to the "end of speed signage reversal"

A matter that concerns me is the manner in which the Road Safety Advisory Council consulted with the public. It seems that they have been over zealous in trying to implement this 90kph default speed limit proposal and I refer you to the following:

1. Limited community access to their public consultative process
2. Ignoring invited written submission against their proposal which were 80% against
3. Continually using inflated data on potential crash savings to advance their argument.

Phone surveys to research city or drivers who in the main only commute to the local supermarkets or office holds very little credibility in trying to influence on country maximum speed limits.

Those influencing the Minster to implement these changes should be directed to get out of the comfort office for a couple of months and gain some experience driving long distance on our major country arterial highways. That may result in getting some common-sense into their thinking.

I do have some suggestions that would have some impact on driver awareness which have the potential to reduce crashes and to that end I have included several pictures taken last March in New Zealand, showing the advantage of using yellow road markings where single and double unbroken lines are required. Also, included a town identification sign which includes the posted speed. These signs are larger, very visible and more likely to alert drivers of a speed change coming up.

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Furthermore, the increased use of cautionary signs on corners and black spots would increase driver awareness. It is noticeable that this has been undertaken on the sidling including East Coast roads and for that I compliment the authorities.

Finally, I have always believed that our laws should be framed and legislated by wise people and policed accordingly. I view very little if any wisdom in the proposal to implement by stealth a 90kph default speed limit.

Your Faithfully

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