



tasmanian conservation trust inc

roadkilltas.com

Mr Tom Wise  
Clerk of Committees  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Hobart 7000

18 January 2013

### **Legislative Council Select Committee Rural Road Speed Limits**

The TCT and Roadkilltas.com wish to thank the Legislative Council Select Committee for Rural Road Speed Limits for the opportunity to provide a submission on the issue of proposed rural road speed limit reductions from 100km/h to 90km/h on sealed roads. We believe that speed reductions on rural roads will result in a number of co-benefits for both the community and native wildlife.

#### **The Effects of Wildlife Collisions**

Roadkill of native wildlife is a serious issue in Tasmania. Research has shown that at least 293,000 animals are killed on Tasmania's roads every year.<sup>1</sup>

In 2010 (last available numbers) 15 deaths or serious injuries of drivers or passengers in vehicles were due to animals on the road.<sup>2</sup>

The RACT receives about 500 insurance claims relating to wildlife collisions every year, costing around \$5 million.<sup>3</sup>

2008 research estimated that around 3000 Tasmanian Devils were being killed on our roads each year – approx 5.7% of the entire population.<sup>4</sup> Devils are scavengers and are drawn to roads by other carcasses. Roadkill is an additional threat to the survival of the species already significantly depleted by facial tumour disease. The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program's Roadkill Project found that of 100 roadkill reports for devils in which the speed limit was provided, 91 involved stretches of

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<sup>1</sup> A. Hobday and M. Minstrell, 2008, Distribution and abundance of roadkill on Tasmanian Highways: human management options, *Wildlife Research* 35, 712-726

<sup>2</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, 2011, Annual Report

<sup>3</sup> C Dolan, 22 Jan 2012, *The Mercury*: Speed trial aims to reduce roadkill.

<sup>4</sup> Hobday and Minstrell 2008, as above.

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road with speed limits greater than 80 km/h.<sup>5</sup> However, there is evidence that reducing speed limits can lead to improvements in population numbers. Research in Cradle Mountain has shown that mortality and decline of eastern quolls and Tasmanian Devils was related to increased vehicle speed, and a subsequent reduction in speed led to population recovery.<sup>6</sup>

While there are road management measures which can reduce the incidence of roadkill through reducing animal access and use of roads, these measures are often prohibitively expensive. Reducing driver speed is the single most effective measure for reducing roadkill.

Tourists visiting Tasmania to see its pristine environment and world-famous wildlife are shocked by the amount of animal bodies on the road. With an average of one carcass every 2.7km, Tasmania is an unenviable leader in roadkill compared to the rest of Australia.<sup>7</sup> Community reaction to media reports on roadkill (letters and online comments to newspapers) suggest that this also rates as an important problem with Tasmanians.

### **Potential impact of speed limit reduction**

Hobday and Minstrell showed that most roadkill occurs at higher speeds – 50% of roadkill was likely to have been hit at speeds of 80km/h or above.

Their research suggests that **reducing speed limits on sealed rural roads to 90km/h should reduce roadkill by around 30%, equivalent to 87,900 animals.** A proportional reduction in costs to human lives and property could also be expected. A simplistic calculation shows that a reduction of speed from 100 km/hr to 90km/hr will add just 13 minutes to a 2 hour journey – in reality this impact will be less, as maintaining speeds above 90 km/hr for long journeys in Tasmania is unrealistic.

Research on night-time driver wildlife detection distances shows that on high beam, safe speeds to be able to bring the vehicle to an abrupt but safe stop on seeing an animal on the road range from 83km/h for species with light-coloured fur, down to 60km/h for the dark-coloured Tasmanian Devil.<sup>8</sup>

Importantly, a shift to a lower speed limit should enable better compliance with local speed limit reductions including those being trialled at roadkill hotspots around Tasmania.

We recommend that the benefit from lower speed limits in relation to reduced wildlife roadkill should be considered in addition to human safety. Reducing wildlife roadkill will also have benefits for tourist and the tourism industry.

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<sup>5</sup> C. Lawrence and C. Donnelly, 2011, Save the Tasmanian Devil Program Roadkill Technical Report: initial results and recommendations.

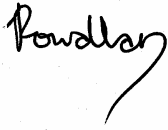
<sup>6</sup> M. Jones, 2000, Road upgrade, road mortality and remedial measures: impacts on a population of eastern quolls and Tasmanian devils, *Wildlife Research*, 27, 289-296.

<sup>7</sup> Hobday and Minstrell, 2008, as above.

<sup>8</sup> A. Hobday, 2010, Nighttime driver detection distances for Tasmanian fauna: informing speed limits to reduce roadkill, *Wildlife Research* 37, 265-272.

Please find attached a copy of the key research paper by Hobday and Minstrell, for your information, with additional information available at [roadkilltas.com](http://roadkilltas.com).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rowallan". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Jennifer Rowallan  
Biodiversity Campaigner  
Tasmanian Conservation Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chloe Lucas". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Chloe Lucas  
[Roadkilltas.com](http://Roadkilltas.com)

