

MINUTES – ORDINARY MEETING

10 DECEMBER 2012



349/12 ROAD SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL – REDUCTION IN RURAL ROAD DEFAULT SPEED LIMIT

Responsible Officer: Terry Eaton, Engineer

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is provided to inform Council of the proposal by the Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources, Road Safety Branch, to advance the proposal to reduce the rural road default speed limit from 100km/h to 90km/h.

2 BACKGROUND

This matter was discussed by Council at the 21 February 2011 Council meeting at which time the following was the decision of Council:

Cr Goninon/Deputy Mayor Downie

That Council advise the Road Safety Advisory Council that they do not support the proposal as:

- i) Insufficient information is available as to how the scheme will be implemented with regard to the sections of the road network which will be speed zoned above 90km/h;*
- ii) The research indicates the major benefits are by reducing the speed limit on the main arterial road network, it is understood that much of this network will be outside the proposal, i.e. no speed reduction proposed.*
- iii) No specific information has been provided in the reports on rural accident locations where the speed limit may be reduced and accordingly the expected benefits cannot be defined.*

Carried unanimously

Council's views were considered by the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources as part of the consultation process with no reply to the submission, indications at that time were that the Government were not supportive of the proposed reduction in the default rural speed limit. However, in September of this year, correspondence was received from the Minister for Infrastructure advising that he was supporting a speed reduction proposal and seeking Council's input by nominating Council's roads where it was considered a 100km/h speed limit should be retained.

3 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan 2007/2017 provides the guidelines within which Council operates. The goals identified in the strategic plan, "Volume 1 – Mapping Our Direction", 5.1 Transport Infrastructure Operations are applicable to this report.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is difficult to ascertain costs until such time as advice is received as to an acceptable

standard as the adopted standard, in particular road width, desirable 9.0 metre seal is substantially wider than Council normally installs, Council Link roads and Collector roads at desirable 6.2 metres.

Indicative costing to upgrade Councils Link roads (120km) and Collector roads (255km) is some \$10 million and \$20 million respectively.

Note, these roads are seen as the functionally important roads within the municipality where transport efficiency is an important parameter with maintenance of a 100km/h speed limit seen as desirable for these roads.

5 RISK ISSUES

No specific information has been provided as to a standardised crash rate for rural road within the state, so that this factor cannot be assessed.

6 CONSULTATION

It is considered there has been limited consultation with Council on this proposal; Council officers have attended two forums, an initial forum prior to the 21 February 2011 council meeting and a more recent forum on 10 October 2012. Councillor Knowles attended the 14 November 2012 forum for elected members, her notes on the meeting are attached.

Council has not been advised on details of the consultation submissions. However, it appears that a policy decision has been made without consideration of the likely implications with regard to cost of implementation.

7 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The basis of this initiative appears to be a "reactive" response to a raw statistic without understanding of the issue, i.e. not a risk management approach.

With due respect to the Road Safety Advisory committee's consultation process it is clear that the forums were to advise participants of how the proposal was to be implemented and not to seek input into the process. It appears that any attempt to seek responses to such issues as those proposed by Council at the 21 February Council meeting have been ignored.

The concerns that council raised in the decision on the agenda item on this matter at the 21 February 2011 Council Meeting have not been responded too. Indications are that this is a theoretical research based concept with little relevance to practical considerations, i.e. no actual assessment of Local Government managed roads with regard to the travel speed, specific accident locations and causes, except for Kingborough and Tasman municipalities. Indications are that the Northern Midlands Council road network may be relatively safe. However, no measure of the acceptable crash risk for rural roads in Tasmania has been provided.

The proposed arbitrary standard for rural roads to maintain a 100km/h default speed based

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on National Highway link requirements and in excess of the standard for most of the DIER road network, i.e. 3.5 metre lane width with 1.0 metre sealed shoulders.

It is interesting to note that DIER have not adopted the standard with recent advice that a section of Esk Main road is being upgraded to meet high productivity requirements, strengthening the road pavement to improve ride quality and safety with a standard of 3.0 metre lanes and 1 metre sealed shoulders is less than required for a 100 km/h default speed limit. Indications are a cost increase of at least 12.5% would be required for this section of road to meet the proposed 100 km/h default requirement.

My understanding is that the concept is to reduce travel speed on the total state wide road networks, both state and local government maintained roads by 5km/h. I have difficulty in appreciating how reducing the default limit and hopefully the travel speed for the 31% users of Council maintained roads will influence speed reduction for the 69% using the state road network?

The Tasmanian topography and economic considerations dictate a wide variation in road standards particularly for alignments with many roads straight and relatively flat, but connected by/ or including sections of curved and undulating road.

Negotiation of these roads does require due regard to the road standard and conditions with travel speeds at wide variance, reducing the maximum speed from 100km/h accordingly may not be in the interest of the users of these roads by increasing travel time and reducing concentration levels on the driving task with likely increased inattention.

The writer's view is that the research on this issue is not robust with the policy decision theoretically based with minimal input from road engineering/ traffic engineering disciplines and with implementation as at present proposed likely to increase driver confusion.

It can be noted that the Legislative Council's Member for Western Tiers has expressed concern with the concept. A Legislative Council Committee has been established on the proposal.

This is considered as a matter which impacts on Local Government statewide and as such a uniform Local Government view would be desirable. An attempt was made to have this matter discussed at the Northern Regions Infrastructure Managers forum, unfortunately councils in the region have treated the matter unilaterally:

Launceston City Council	Support concept, but list roads to stay at 100km/h.
Meander Valley Council	Support concept in principle.
Georgetown Council	Do not support, suggest maintain default at 100km/h.
Break O'Day Council	Do not support, suggest maintain default at 100km/h.
Dorset Council	Supports concept.
West Tamar Council	Limit support, recommend Collector road links stay at 100km/h.

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Note: Indications are that the Council support relates to the lack of roads within the municipality meeting the proposed 100km/h required standard.

8 ATTACHMENTS

- 8.1 Letter to DIER dated 25 February 2011
- 8.2 Letter from Road Safety Advisory Council dated 1 April 2011
- 8.3 Letter from Minister for Infrastructure dated 5 September 2012
- 8.4 Non-Urban road Network Strategy – September 2012
- 8.5 Council Minute 053/11 – 21 February 2011
- 8.6 Councillor Knowles' notes from the 14 November 2012 forum
- 8.7 Email to DIER dated 20 November 2012
- 8.8 Notice of Select Committee – Examiner 24 November 2012
- 8.9 Article from RACT December/January, Issue of Journeys

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the matter be discussed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That Council

- i) advise DIER of support for the proposed reduction in the default speed limits with no roads nominated to maintain the 100km/h default limit, as all roads are constructed to a standard below the recommended requirement;

OR

- ii)
 - a) considers insufficient analysis has been undertaken on the assessment of crashes on Council maintained rural roads, with no alternative options such as traffic management and local improvements costed, and accordingly does not wish to participate in the proposed changes until further information is available.
 - b) advise "that it is not considered appropriate to nominate roads to maintain the 100km/h default limit until further consideration is given to the proposed standard necessary for such a limit";
 - c) support the retention of a 100km/h default speed limit on the state maintained roads within the municipality;
 - d) approves of the provision of a submission to the Legislative Council's Select Committee on this matter.

DECISION

Cr Goss/Cr Brooks

That Council discuss the matter.

Carried unanimously

Deputy Mayor Downie/Cr Goninon

That Council

- ii) a) considers insufficient analysis has been undertaken on the assessment of crashes on Council maintained rural roads, with no alternative options such as

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traffic management and local improvements costed, and accordingly does not wish to participate in the proposed changes until further information is available.

- c) support the retention of a 100km/h default speed limit on the state maintained roads within the municipality.

AMENDMENT

Cr Carins/Cr Calvert

That Council

- ii) a) considers insufficient analysis has been undertaken on the assessment of crashes on Council maintained rural roads, with no alternative options such as traffic management and local improvements costed, and accordingly does not wish to participate in the proposed changes until further information is available.
- b) advise “that it is not considered appropriate to nominate roads to maintain the 100km/h default limit until further consideration is given to the proposed standard necessary for such a limit”;
- c) support the retention of a 100km/h default speed limit on the state maintained roads within the municipality;
- d) approves of the provision of a submission to the Legislative Council’s Select Committee on this matter.

Carried unanimously

The Amendment became the motion and was put and

Carried unanimously