

Legislative Council of Tasmania

Road Safety Inquiry submission

A View from the Roadside

This submission is written with respect to bi-weekly observations made on regular walks on the roadside and Huon Highway, in Port Huon between 2018 and 2021.

From observations on many other Tasmanian highways and roads, the author believes that the behaviours and events described below are unfortunately typical. On a positive note the recommendations listed, and the framework they lie within, would have application across the entire Tasmanian network, to the benefit of all road users.

Observations:

The traffic consists of passenger cars, some motorcycles, a range of heavy vehicles and on the sealed and unsealed verge, the occasional cyclist and walker.

It is the motorised traffic which presents a concern for residents, other commuters, cyclists, walkers and pedestrians, and regrettably it presents as poor behaviour throughout the day and particularly in the peak commute times.

This area has a speeding culture with a careless lack of respect to speed limits, particularly urban limits.

Speeding in one form or another occurs throughout the day or night. Some of the heavy vehicles transporting timber and other aquaculture products at very early or late hours of the night also fail to adhere to speed limits.

As many of these vehicles, particularly the truck traffic have loud exhausts the driving decisions are flagged quite clearly some time before the vehicles can be seen. It is quite apparent that the behaviour is deliberate and habitual.

Further, heavy vehicle drivers can be occasionally be seen deliberately harassing slower vehicles by tailgating and the use of noisy exhaust braking. This behaviour is not confined to heavy vehicles.

Other drivers find it difficult to stay within lanes, often crossing over double lines and foglines, and also using the sealed verge as part of their "line" through corners.

This culture results in crashes and harm to the drivers and other parties involved.

Changing culture is not an overnight process, but it can be done. We have the tools. They are well understood. For some unknown reason we have simply not been using them either through neglect or underfunding. We need to refocus, and set forth in a deliberate and consistent way. We need to begin with the following recommendations:

The toolkit we must use is the Safe System. It is the foundation upon which good road safety rests. It is not new but seems to have been forgotten or neglected. The pillars are Safe Speeds, Safer people, Safe roads and Roadsides and Safe vehicles.

Safer Speeds

As noted previously, roadside and property observation over the day reveals regular low level speeding interspersed with dramatic and life threatening foolish speeding. I have often observed light and heavy vehicles including the occasional motorcycle speeding, as have many others in our community and this has become a point of discussion for residents of Port Huon. For many of the heavy vehicles it is habitual. Due to their high noise levels the driver decisions are signalled some distance away when they are still out of sight. Some of these antisocial behaviours are quite deliberate as well as habitual. Typically the heavy vehicles involve the timber and fish farm transports, but also include cement mixers, trade's vehicles and so in. These behaviours are best viewed from the roadside on any of the straight sections of road where the opportunity is exploited.

In Port Huon for example there are double and then broken lines which effectively permit speeding as the reckless fearlessly speed in the 60kph zone as they are "permitted" to overtake according to the road markings.

Regarding enforcement; current traffic police activities appear to be insufficient to affect the observed behaviour. The general duties police appear to be busy on other aspects of policing suggesting that there is insufficient available staff. Some neighbours have noted an occasional unmarked car, however this does not have any long term effect on behaviour change.

Recommendation:

- **a dedicated highway patrol with funding to suit to allow more effective enforcement;**
- Reviewing the current speed zoning;
- Review the existing line marking;
- **Use traffic classifiers to gather mid-block traffic data and share this with the Police. As this data typically includes date and time stamp, speed and vehicle type, the enforcement can be strategic and effective.**

Safer vehicles

Vehicles with only one headlight in use are regularly seen (one local resident commented that he had counted 17 in an evening) and anecdotally mentioned home repairs using second hand equipment is common. The ageing of the pool of vehicles in Tasmania is acknowledged, and noting that the current system does not appear to be working, then annual safety checks as part of the annual registration process should be considered (as is done in NSW for vehicles older than 5 years).

Recommendation:

- **Annual safety inspections as part of the registration renewal should be introduced for all light vehicles 5 years old or older.**

Safer people

Unsafe behaviours are regularly observed; tailgating, high speed overtaking and cornering by crossing the fogline to maintain speed. The tailgating seems to be an intimidatory tactic to pressure the slower driver into pulling over or speeding up. If the tailgating vehicle is a heavy vehicle then

exhaust braking is also used to intimidate. There seems to be a strong sense of entitlement – expectations that the road ahead should be free for them to travel at their preferred high speed with ready frustration if they are obstructed by slower traffic. Overtaking in 50k zones and 60k zones has been observed where to do so required a significant speed above the posted limit.

Recommendations:

- Develop education programs and media to educate and support enforcement of road rules;
- Road safety advertising which focuses on the “fatal five” using non scare techniques;
- Remedial training for road users who exceed a nominated number of offences;
- Remove parents/relatives from equation as much as possible ie increase the subsidised lessons for learners and;
- Provide support training for family members who act as learner driver mentors.

Safer roads and roadsides

The local roads are in largely good condition. Some improvement could be made by effective clearing of the roadside verge, and in some cases plantings on private land also mask lines of sight. Road safety audits would greatly assist in identifying safety issues.

Some of the frustration of the speeding motorists could be relieved if more safe overtaking opportunities could be provided outside the urban limit.

Recommendations:

- Clearing of verges to improve lines of sight, and also where appropriate emphasise the urban zone;
- Widen the verge to support bus stops;
- Use gateway treatments to emphasise the urban area and low speed zone. This could also be an opportunity to engage the community over the type of treatment while emphasising safe urban speeds;
- 2+1 overtaking opportunities which could reduce frustration and risky overtaking. (maybe more cost effective than duplication?)
- Conduct road safety audits of any area where crashes involving injury and fatality occur.

Government support

Government support of community transport and health, road safety education and enforcement appear to be lacking. This is an assumption based on the lack of service.

Recommendations:

- A review of current issues and an appropriate adjustment would be appropriate. Goal setting should also include policy, funding, strategic and action plans which meet these needs and performance measures put in place;
- Active engagement with councils and communities to promote road safety;
- Active engagement with councils and government departments to gather traffic data which can be shared with enforcement in order to have both a strategic understanding and effective policing (data sharing);

- Continue to support Driver education, Keys to Drive and second lesson, Community mentor programs, and RYDA U Turn the Wheel;
- Support promote and celebrate these programs.

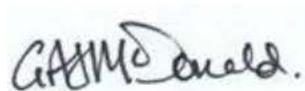
Post crash

Following a crash involving injury an adequately supported health system should be able to recover the injured and transport them to care as quickly as possible. Anecdotal discussion indicates ambulances are pulled in from the regions to support more urban centres (apparently to meet urban kpis), therefore inadequate staffing at outlying regions so that the ambulance can be driven, but no care provided and so on. This has the hallmarks of inadequate funding and a need to review performance measures.

Recommendations:

- Review Ambulance kpis to ensure remote communities wait times are reduced;
- Adequately support remote communities with Ambulance/paramedics;
- Increase hospital capacity to ensure ramping and other “health” indicators are met.

While these are my observations as a resident of Port Huon, my working life has been spend building expertise in drivers and motorcyclists, developing road safety policy and writing about these issues in the online magazine RO2. I have worked across multiple states of Australia and make these recommendations as a professional safety officer and member of the public concerned about the health and safety of all road users and residents in the Huon Valley.



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Summary of Recommendations	
Safer Speeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dedicated highway patrol with funding to suite to allow more effective enforcement • Reviewing the current speed zoning. • Review the existing line marking • Use traffic classifiers to gather mid-block traffic data and share this with the Police. As this data typically includes date and time stamp, speed and vehicle type, the enforcement can be strategic and effective.
Safer Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual safety inspections as part of the registration renewal should be introduced for all light vehicles 5 years old or older.
Safer People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop education programs and media to educate and support enforcement of road rules • road safety advertising which focuses on the “fatal five” using non scare techniques • remedial training for road users who exceed a nominated number of offences • remove parents/relatives from equation as much as possible ie increase the subsidised lessons for learners and • provide support training for family members who act as learner driver mentors
Safer Roads and roadsides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearing of verges to improve lines of sight, and also where appropriate emphasise the urban zone • Widen the verge to support bus stops • use gateway treatments to emphasise the urban area and low speed zone. This could also be an opportunity to engage the community over the type of treatment while emphasising safe urban speeds • 2+1 overtaking opportunities which could reduce frustration and risky overtaking. (maybe more cost effective than duplication?) • Conduct road safety audits of any area where crashes involving injury and fatality occur.
Government support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of current issues and an appropriate adjustment would be appropriate. Goal setting should also include policy, funding, strategic and action plans which meet these needs and performance measures put in place. • active engagement with councils and communities to promote road safety • active engagement with councils and government departments to gather traffic data which can be shared with enforcement in order to have both a strategic understanding and effective policing (data sharing) • Continue to support Driver education, Keys to Drive and second lesson, Community mentor programs, and RYDA U Turn the Wheel • support promote and celebrate these programs
Post Crash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Ambulance kpis to ensure remote communities wait times are reduced • Adequately support remote communities with Ambulance/paramedics • Increase hospital capacity to ensure ramping and other “health” indicators are met