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Safe speeds – not that easy to achieve!

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With the research evidence pointing to a consistent and strong association between lowered speeds and a reduction in both crash numbers and crash severity, Australia's *Towards Zero* has as a cornerstone, the management of crash energies through safe speeds. This paper explores the speed/crash association within a Safe System framework and identifies some of the difficulties encountered in reducing speeds to levels likely to result in crash energies below the thresholds resulting in death or serious injury.

The paper has been based upon a review of the research literature and upon experiences from a recent Austroads project which sought to develop a new approach to the setting of speed limits in Western Australia based on harm reduction principles (Austroads Project - RS.SS.N.536).

Over the years 2006 to 2008, numerous attempts were made to gain the support of a Local Government Area to trial lower urban speed limits – including enlisting the support of the local traffic authorities, road safety community councils, the Western Australian Local Government Association and the officers of the regions approached. In spite of all efforts, no representative city or shire council in Western Australia agreed to implement the trial.

The paper concludes with a series of recommended steps if lowered speeds are to be approved by the elected representatives in Local Government in this country.