

## Targeted speed limit reductions for vulnerable road users – case learnings

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### Abstract

In 2018, the Department of Transport and Main Roads undertook two demonstration projects to reduce speed limits in areas of high pedestrian and cyclist activity. The demonstration sites included one state-controlled strip road and one local government-controlled CBD area with above-average rates of casualty crashes. By developing a compelling case for speed limit reductions including crash data, alternative solutions, stakeholder support and road user mix data, lower speed limits for the two demonstration sites were introduced, supported by targeted local communications.

### Background, Method, Results and Conclusions

#### *Background*

Vulnerable road users are a priority group for road safety in Queensland. In 2017, pedestrians and bicycle riders made up 16 per cent of the road toll, 32 per cent higher than the previous 5 year average.

TMR undertook a project to reduce speed limits in areas of high pedestrian and cyclist activity, consistent with repeated research findings which advocate lower travelling speeds and speed limits set for survivability to address trauma for vulnerable road users. This project aligned with existing policy actions and an election commitment.

The project intent was to demonstrate that speed limit reductions are a low cost and simple way to reduce road trauma when implemented in suitable locations. A parallel requirement of the project was to demonstrate delivery of low cost communications to educate the community about the need for and benefit of the reduction.

Statewide crash analysis and preliminary site investigations found two sites suitable for pursuing lower speed limits, being David Low Way, Coolum (beachfront esplanade) and Cairns CBD (tourism and business center).

In Coolum, the state road authority supported the speed limit reduction on the crash and survey evidence. In Cairns, TMR collaborated with council's road safety and engineering team, establishing a working group of local community and business representatives to gather support for the speed limit reduction recommendation to the Council.

#### *Issues*

Key issues associated with achieving approval in Cairns from decision makers and influencers were:

- Awareness – of the crash issue.
- Belief – that reduced speed limits would effect the crash issue.
- Community reaction.
- Misconceptions – about the causes of crashes and road users involved.

## ***Approach***

The joint TMR and Council project team, supported by the working group, drew all the facts and issues together to create a narrative that explained: the problem, why it could not be ignored, what the solution was (and was not), and how the solution could be carried out – making it easy and compelling for decision makers to say ‘yes’.

- Facts – Gathered facts regarding site history, case studies, focus groups, detailed crash data analysis, road user intersection counts, travelling speed surveys, observational explanations of behaviour.
- Engagement – Educated while consulting (focus groups), engaged local community representatives, educated while engaging decision makers, listened and responded to decision makers’ individual issues or concerns.
- Alternatives – Investigated alternative solutions, including ‘do nothing’. Demonstrated why the alternatives are unsuitable or inferior to speed limit reductions.
- Professional help – Engaged communications specialist to lead stakeholder engagement, undertake local focus groups and develop messaging strategies to produce site-specific communications toolkits.

## ***Outcomes***

The ultimate outcomes were speed limit reductions in both locations. As the speed limit reductions commenced in December 2018 and February 2019 it is too soon to consider crash outcomes.

Further project to investigate speed limit reductions at another 20 sites.

Key learnings:

- Structure community engagement to maximise likelihood of success.
- Work collaboratively and flexibly with the local road authority.
- Create the narrative so that it’s impossible to do nothing, but easy to say yes.