

Wipe Off 5 – A Victorian Social Marketing Campaign

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ABSTRACT

In August 2001, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) embarked on a major public education campaign focussing on reducing low level speeding in Victoria, i.e. speeds some 5-10 km/h in excess of the speed limit.

The *Wipe Off 5* campaign forms part of a broader, longer term Victorian program to reduce speeds based on three linked strategies:

- reduction in the speed limit on local streets in built up areas throughout Victoria from 60 to 50 km/h;
- provision of information using mass media to reinforce the proven benefits of reducing low level speeding; and
- more intensive Police enforcement of speed limits to deter potential offenders – including more hours of camera operation, less visible cars and more camera locations, supported by higher penalties and reduced speed tolerances.

Wipe Off 5 was developed to directly support Victoria Police's enforcement activity and reinforce the significant changes in speed camera systems.

This paper will outline the steps undertaken in developing and implementing the program and point to key indicators of success relating to Victoria's speed reduction program.

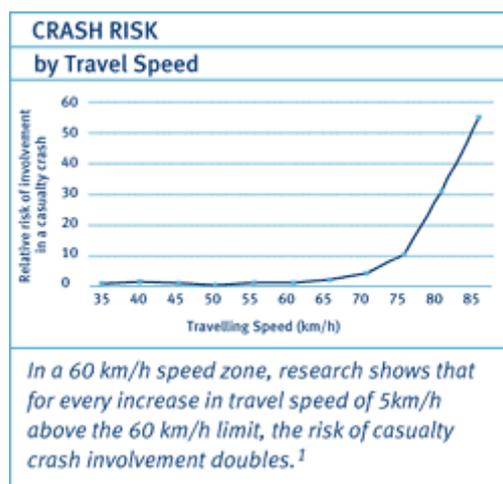
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Excessive or inappropriate travel speed is one of the major contributors to road trauma. Crash severity increases disproportionately the higher the speed at the time of impact. Reductions both in excessive speeds (rogue behaviour) and in "normal traffic speeds" will significantly improve safety for all road users. The Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) has calculated that an 11 per cent reduction in speed would reduce road deaths by 40 per cent (VicRoads 2001).

More specifically, a number of studies have shown that lower speeds result in fewer crashes and reduced severity of injuries (Kloeden, McLean, Moore & Ponte 1997; Kloeden, Ponte & McLean 2001; Leaf & Preusser 1999; McLean, Anderson, Farmer, Lee & Brooks 1994). An important conclusion from these studies is that even small changes in speed (i.e. as little as five kilometres per hour) can significantly reduce road deaths and severe injuries.

Despite this, there is still a widespread belief that it is only speeds well in excess of current limits (or prevailing speeds) that are risky. Australian research has provided direct evidence that speeds just 5 km/h above average in urban (60 km/h; see Figure 1) areas (Kloeden et al. 1997), and 10 km/h above average in rural areas (Kloeden et al. 2001) are sufficient to double the risk of a casualty crash. This is roughly equivalent to the increase in risk associated with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.05 (ATSB 2004).

Figure 1. Crash risk by travel speed



Source: VicRoads (2001)

The ATSB (2004) reports evidence that indicates that although 'moderate' speeding (i.e., within 10 or 15 km/h of the posted limit) is far less risky than more extreme speeds, it makes a comparable contribution to serious road crashes because it is more common. Compliance with speed limits is still far from perfect, and better compliance would cut road deaths significantly. The *National Road Safety Strategy* (cited in ATSB 2004) notes the need for enforcement and education initiatives to promote the public perception that compliance 'everywhere, all the time' is the best way of avoiding penalties and improving safety.

Consequently, speeding is listed as one of the key challenges in the Victorian Government's Road Safety Strategy – *arrive alive!* (VicRoads, 2001). The TAC, in conjunction with its road safety partners, considers reducing speeding on Victoria's roads as one of its top road safety objectives.

1.1 The Approach

In order to tackle the issue of speed the road safety partners mapped out an overall, longer term Victorian speed reduction program. This program was based on three closely linked strategies including:

- reduction in the speed limit on local streets in built up areas throughout Victoria from 60 to 50 km/h;
- provision of information using mass media to reinforce the proven benefits of reducing low level speeding; and

- more intensive Police enforcement of speed limits to deter potential offenders – including more hours of camera operation, less visible cars and more camera locations, supported by higher penalties and reduced speed tolerances.

This paper focuses mainly on the TAC's responsibility for the second of these items, outlining the mass media campaign, its challenges, its results to date and how it was used to support the other initiatives in the State's speed reduction program.

2.0 PUBLIC EDUCATION

The TAC is unique among personal injury insurers in that one of its key roles is to promote road safety. Working closely with Victoria Police and VicRoads, since 1989 the TAC has developed campaigns aimed at increasing awareness of issues, changing behaviour and ultimately, in conjunction with complementary measures, reducing the incidence of road trauma.

Up until 2001, the TAC's speed campaigns had combated higher level speeding with the proposition 'Don't fool yourself, speed kills'. The campaigns aimed to marginalise excessive speeders and blatant risk takers, particularly on the open highways. However, by the end of the nineties the road toll was showing signs of rising, and in 2001 it hit 444. Speeding continued to be a major contributor to fatal and other serious injury crashes.

In response to this rising toll, and in light of evidence demonstrating that small reductions in speed could result in large reductions in road trauma, the focus of the TAC's speeding campaign moved from 'Speed Kills' (excessive speed) to 'Wipe Off 5' which targeted low-level speeding.

2.1 The *Wipe Off 5* Campaign

The *Wipe Off 5* campaign commenced in August 2001, comprising mass media advertising in the form of television, radio and billboard. It coincided with and supported a reduction of speed limits in built up areas and increased Police enforcement. The key thrust of the campaign was to convince drivers that a small drop of as little as 5 km/h in speed reduced the risk of a crash injury, and to dispel the myth that exceeding the limit by 5 to 10 km/h is 'safe'.

Since its inception, the TAC has implemented eight phases of the *Wipe Off 5* campaign addressing the following key communication aims:

- placing the issue on the community agenda;
- personalising the message;
- communicating that increased speed increases crash risk and the resulting level of trauma;
- highlighting the risk of detection for exceeding the speed limit; and
- reinforcing Police role as enforcers.

In order to meet these aims it was acknowledged that several key challenges would need to be addressed.

Facing the challenge

Challenges identified included:

- acknowledgement that a long term push would be needed to achieve a cultural shift;
- expecting resistance from the target market;
- the need to provide compelling research findings to support key messages; and
- changing the mindset of drivers who generally travel within 5km/h of the speed limit and believe they are 'safe'.

While motorists generally accepted that there was a connection between speed and safety, and that very high speeds were dangerous, few believed that small reductions in travel speed – eg. 5 km/h - had significant effects on reducing crashes. If motorists could be convinced of this link, and change their behaviour, many crashes would be prevented. This required change in behaviour did not involve major sacrifice, or cause any significant loss to the travelling time of most individuals. However, the general perception that exceeding the speed limit by a small amount does not constitute speeding presented a formidable challenge.

The long term aim of the campaign was and remains to convince the community that speeding is socially unacceptable. Since 1989, the TAC creative strategy has been built on three Es: Emotion, Enforcement and Education, targeting the hearts and heads of drivers to help prevent them from refuting the messages.

Television has been the preferred choice for communicating messages that “set the agenda” and seek to influence the behaviour of the target audience. Television advertisements have been supported by radio and billboards targeting drivers’ whilst in-situ and faced with decisions about speeding.

The *Wipe Off 5* campaign has evolved using each of these three elements. Table 1 sets out the timelines and describes each of the campaign phases.

Table 1. The timeline and phases of the *Wipe Off 5* campaign

Phase	Timeframe	Phase Description
Phase 1	August 2001	Reduction of speed and trauma correlation
Phase 2	August 2001	Physical difference 5km/h can make
Phase 3	November 2001	Reinforce the role of mobile speed cameras
Phase 4	February 2002	Guilt of responsibility
Phase 5	August 2002	Crash test proof
Phase 6	July 2003	Crash test proof on a human body
Phase 7	May 2004	Acceptance of blame (moral imperative)
Phase 8	February 2005	Acceptance of blame

Of particular note are the most recent phases – 7 and 8. Having demonstrated to the community that low level speeding was a road safety concern and provided evidence of the difference small changes in speed can make, it was time to personalise the speeding message. Using a moral imperative this phase of the campaign suggests

that if you speed and injure someone, it is not an accident – it is your fault, you contributed to the damage caused, and you will feel to blame. These executions focussed on the acceptance of guilt because legally you are breaking the law and you will be morally responsible.

Message delivery

The TAC has taken the position that if prevailing attitudes about speeding are to be changed, greater emphasis must be placed on influencing the beliefs and behaviour of drivers as a whole. Rather than concentrating only on a small group of drivers the target group must include drivers of all ages, both male and female, throughout Victoria.

Sponsorship of well-known and recognised organisations also enables the TAC to increase the impact and community acceptance of its campaigns. Key identities and role models have helped to promote the campaign by participating in schools education programmes and public relations events.

3.0 INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

In the past four years to 2004, Victoria has experienced reductions in road trauma, including its lowest road toll on record. Whilst it is acknowledged that such gains have been realised through a range of initiatives targeting key road safety issues, there are several indicators which can assist in determining the success of the *Wipe Off 5* campaign and related strategies. These indicators are discussed in this section.

3.1 Changes in rates of trauma

The main aim of any road safety program is to reduce the incidence and severity of road trauma. Crash numbers and rates provide good indications of road safety trends. From 2001 until 2004 Victoria's road toll dropped from 444 to 343 and in 2003 saw a record low of 330. This low was also reflected in the death rate per 10,000 vehicles of from 1.33 (2001) to 0.96 (2004).

Table 2 shows the fatalities and serious injuries recorded in 50 and 60 km/h zones, and 100 and 110 km/h zones on Victoria's roads since 2001. Both fatalities and serious injuries have decreased during this time in the lower and higher speed zones.

It is particularly encouraging to note the relatively large drops in the lower speed zones given the focus of the *Wipe Off 5* campaign on low level speeding in metropolitan areas and the introduction of the 50 km/h default speed limit in built up areas.

Table 2. Fatalities and Serious Injuries by Speed Zones

		2001	2002	2003	2004
Fatalities	50 & 60km/h	139	104	76	90
	100+ km/h	196	194	170	181
Serious Injuries	50 & 60km/h	3,404	3,612	3,443	3,176
	100+ km/h	1,740	1,684	1,640	1,608

3.2 Changes in attitudes and habits

The TAC uses independent market research agencies to conduct tracking surveys that gauge audience reactions and self reported changes in behaviour. This research has played an important role in helping unearth insights and trends.

A key measure used by the TAC was developed to better understand the incidence of speeding. The proportion of drivers (aged under 50 years of age) who report that they never speed has increased from 5% in 2001 to 11% in 2005, whilst those who report speeding most or all of the time has dropped from 25% in 2001 to 13% in 2005.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, a greater number of drivers report that they keep to the speed limit within specific speed zones. The market research data shows that gains have been made across all speed zones since 2001.

Table 3. Trends - Driving in Specific Speed Zones

Proportion Claiming to Drive at the Limit (%)			
	February 2001	Q2 2005	Improvements in % points since early 2001
50km/h	55	76	+21
60km/h	61	77	+16
80km/h	70	81	+11
100km/h	45	66	+21
110km/h	63	74	+11

Importantly, attitudes as to what constitutes speeding have also changed showing a rise in acceptance of the notion that exceeding the speed limit, even by low levels, is considered speeding. Table 4 indicates the percentage of respondents who agree that speeding is defined as travelling 5 km/h or more over the speed limit across various speed zones.

Table 4. Definition of speeding

Define 5km/h over the limit as speeding in	2002	2003	2004	2nd Qtr 2005
50km/h zone	85%	82%	83%	84%
60km/h zone	72%	71%	71%	82%
100km/h zone	53%	56%	57%	69%

Finally, research into the target market's recall and personal identification with specific advertisements is also undertaken. Such research has shown that these advertisements have had an impact on the driving public. For example, the most recent commercial in the *Wipe Off 5* campaign - *The Wife* is a case in point. *The Wife* is the sequel to a previous advertisement. It deals with the impact on the life of a driver, and his family, who contributed to the severity of a crash through travelling 5 km/h over the speed limit. In the first quarter of 2005 aided recall of *The Wife* averaged 58%, from a high of 81% to a low of 45% over a six week period. Of those respondents that recalled the advertisement, 82% felt personal identification with the situation depicted and 40% of claimed that they had changed their driving behaviour after seeing the commercial. It is important to note that caution should be exercised in interpreting self-reported results. Furthermore, in an exploratory focus group, an unprecedented average personal relevance score of 9.8 out of a possible 10 for *The Wife* was measured.

3.3 Changes in observed speeds

As a final measure of changes in attitudes and behaviours, the obvious question is whether drivers are travelling at slower speeds on average. It has always been difficult to separate the effects of enforcement from those of public education, however, it is known that in conjunction with one another they have a far greater effect on driver behaviour than either countermeasure on its own. Evidence from research undertaken as part of this program suggests that 'some motorists have been influenced to moderate their speed as a result of *Wipe Off 5* messages, whilst others have done so because of speed enforcement measures. However, such behaviour change seems to have been restricted mainly to urban areas rather than country roads' (Elliott, 2005).

To better understand changes in speeding behaviour, VicRoads regularly undertakes speed surveys to measure average travelling speeds in different speed zones. Table 5 summarises the results of these speed surveys from the past few years which clearly show a reduction in average speed across 60, 70 and 80 km/h speed zones. For example in 60 km/h zones average speeds have dropped by 3.3 km/h between 2001 and 2005. It is also known that 85th percentile speeds in 60 km/h zones have dropped by 4.3 km/h during the same time frame.

Substantial reductions in trauma are expected in conjunction with such reductions in speed. It is believed that a significant proportion of the observed reduction in trauma over the past four years has been due to the reductions in average speeds brought about by the afore mentioned speed reduction strategies.

Table 5. VicRoads Metropolitan Speed Zone Surveys

	May 2001	May 2002	May 2003	May 2004	May 2005
60km/h zones mean	62.6	61.0	61.2	60.4	59.3
60km/h zone 85 th %	68.0	66.1	66.3	65.3	63.7
70km/h zones mean	70.3	69.3	68.4	68.1	67.8
70km/h zone 85 th %	76.4	75.0	73.7	73.8	72.6
80km/h zones mean	77.6	76.5	76.3	75.1	75.1
80km/h zone 85 th %	83.7	82.4	81.9	81.0	81.1

One of the initiatives described above to reduce speeding in Victoria was to increase speed enforcement. An indicator of changes in speeding behaviour is mobile safety camera speeding infringement data. This data shows that the percentage of infringement notices issued for offences assessed 10km/h or more over the speed limit has reduced from 2.4% in 2001 to 1.1% in 2004.

4.0 Conclusion

Since its inception in 2001, the TAC has implemented eight phases of its *Wipe Off 5* campaign, moving through several stages described in this report. During this four years, the TAC in conjunction with the initiatives of its road safety partners has successfully:

- changed attitudes to speed;
- changed reported behaviours regarding speeding;
- changed actual travel speeds as reported by VicRoads; and
- witnessed a parallel reduction in serious road trauma.

This is by no means the end. The campaign on low level speeding is a long term strategy which is continually evolving as new ways of convincing motorists to simply slow down are explored.

6.0 REFERENCES

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