Speed - the biggest and most contested road killer

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Study objectives & methods

• Examine how community attitudes to speeding are influenced

• Search Google on terms:
  – Australia nanny state speed enforcement
    • (3 million articles & blogs)
  – Australia road safety speed enforcement
    • (1.36 million articles & blogs)

• Compare the views and facts presented
Definitions of *speed* and *nanny state*

**Definition of (unsafe) speed:**

- *Driving too fast for the road & traffic conditions*
- *Exceeding the legal speed limit*

(Speed Management: a road safety manual)

**Definition of nanny state:**

- A government perceived as having excessive interest in or control over the welfare of its citizens, especially in the enforcement of extensive public health and safety regulations (American Heritage Dictionary)

**Examples of nanny state debate**

- **Mainstream media** –
  - Today Tonight
  - A Current Affair
  - News interviews – Mark Skaife, Mark Webber

- **Websites**
  - Liberal Democratic Party
  - Outdoor Recreation Party

- **Blogs**
  - *the only person at risk is yourself, you don’t care about the nanny state road rules.*
  - *I rely on my vehicle’s performance for extra safety … get back in your Corolla and keep out of the right-hand lane.*
Arguments for **nanny state** views

**Civil liberties** –
- Liberal Democratic Party & Outdoor Recreation Party policies
- Rights to choose speed and optimise high performance vehicles

**Offensive** –
- to be “treated like naughty children”
- Revenue raising

**Social detriment** –
- discourages individual responsibility

**Safety disbenefits** –
- driving faster may combat fatigue

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Pro speed enforcement views

**Evidence that speed enforcement** *saves lives*
- Mostly governments and researchers

**Evidence that speed is a factor** in a large proportion of serious crashes

**Evidence that incremental speed increases** have *exponential harm* effects in crashes

**Evidence that speed cameras reduce speeding** and crashes
Evidence that speed enforcement works

Discussion

• Scientific versus social discourse at odds
• More people get informed by commercial media, internet sites and blogs
• Political populism is strong in Australia
• Risk behaviour is normal for humans
• Individual experience supports speeding
• People are willing to debate speed issues
Challenges

• Academics discouraged from social media debate
• Government practitioners discouraged from any debate
• Politicians are more strongly influenced by public opinion than scientific evidence
• Efforts to convey the evidence is time-consuming and costly
• People just like to speed, damn it.
Influencing public opinion

• Need to engage with community opinion leaders
• 2-way communications – dialogue campaigns
• Better use of social media in campaigns
• Leverage community demand for speed management
• Make speeding socially unacceptable through strategic messaging (esp on social media)

Recommendations:

• gain an understanding of the key anti-speed enforcement positions held by major and minor opinion leaders in Australia;
• develop more effective ways of influencing community debate on speeding; and
• explore, develop, trial and evaluate “dialogue communications” campaigns on speeding.