

Queensland Speeding Engagement Trial: Developing a Road Policing Procedural Justice Intervention

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Abstract

Research is increasingly identifying the benefits of incorporating the principles of procedural justice within road policing interventions. We have developed an intervention for use with camera detected speed camera offences. This intervention uses a letter that incorporates the principles of procedural justice as well as key road safety messages. Using randomised control trial conditions, we aim to test whether experimental drivers who receive the procedurally just letter alongside their camera detected infringement notice have more positive perceptions of police and speed enforcement, and commit less repeat speeding offences than control drivers receiving the traditional traffic infringement notice without the letter.

Background

Police enforcement is utilised to alter driver behaviour and, while a significant proportion of road policing is informed by deterrence theory, there appears to be scope to improve outcomes by using procedural justice (Bates, 2014) which has four elements: fairness and respect, trustworthiness, neutrality in decisions, and providing opportunity for voice (Sargeant, Murphy, Davis, & Mazerolle, 2012). Research shows when police use principles of procedural justice in their interactions with the public, the public have higher levels of trust in police (Murphy & Mazerolle, 2016), enhanced perceptions of police (Sargeant, Antrobus, Murphy, Bennett, & Mazerolle, 2014) and are more likely to cooperate with police (Bradford, 2014).

Within a road policing context, procedurally just random breath tests were conducted as part of a randomized field experiment resulting in drivers changing their views on drinking and driving (Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus, & Eggins, 2012). Additionally, a vignette study with young drivers suggested those who had a procedurally just interaction with a police officer were less likely to report speeding in the future (Barkworth & Murphy, 2015). It appears that in some contexts, certain elements of procedural justice are more important than others. Research with young drivers identified that fairness was the procedural justice concept they most linked to speed cameras (Bates, Allen, & Watson, 2016). Despite the growing research regarding procedural justice within road policing contexts, the focus has been on face-to-face interactions. This project will attempt to influence procedural justice in non face-to-face interactions; speed camera enforcement.

Context

Speeding is one of the 'fatal five' major contributing factors to fatalities on Queensland roads. In 2015, 62 or 25.5% of fatalities, and 300 or 4.9% of hospitalised casualties in Queensland involved speeding drivers or riders (Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2017). Speeding and red light cameras form part of the Queensland Camera Detected Offence Program (CDOP). The CDOP is responsible for detecting approximately 70 per cent of speeding and red light traffic infringement notices issued in Queensland (Queensland Audit Office, 2015).

Intervention

We developed a letter incorporating the principles of procedural justice and key road safety messages to include with a camera detected infringement notice. The letter is designed to influence drivers' perceptions of police, views on committing traffic offences and changing their driving behaviour. It includes statistical information on the number of people injured as the result of crashes on Queensland roads, the reason for speed limits and how the revenue from speed cameras is used.

An extensive process was used to develop this letter. Firstly, consideration of the procedural justice literature occurred. Then, an initial letter was developed based on the prior experience of project team members who had developed these type of interventions in other contexts. Finally, extensive consultation occurred with very experienced road safety practitioners from the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads and other policing agencies.

Next steps

We propose to conduct a randomised field experiment regarding the addition of this letter. We will measure both short term (e.g. perceptions of police and speed enforcement) and long term (repeat traffic offences) outcomes of the experimental group drivers who receive the letter with control group drivers who receive the standard infringement notice. Our hypothesis is that individuals that receive the procedurally just letter in addition to their traffic infringement notice will be less likely to engage in future speeding behavior and will have higher perceptions of police. We anticipate this project will have a significant impact for both road safety and the prevention of traffic offences.

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