

The Queensland Speed Conversation – Changing the way motorists look at speed

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Abstract

In May 2016 the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) released the Queensland Speed Conversation (the Conversation) which sets the long term vision for changing Queensland motorists' attitudes and behaviours around speed through education and empowerment of individual responsibility. TMR has engaged with various motorist groups through a range of communication methods to commence delivery of this vision. Consequently, there have been significant learnings around readiness of motorists to receive speed education and creating positive engagement between motorists and speed messaging. These learnings are continually fed back into activities to continually improve the efficacy and relevance of speed safety messaging delivered to Queensland motorists.

Background

Speed continues to be a major contributing factor to road trauma in Queensland, with around 1 in 4 fatal crashes caused by speeding. Speeding is a unique behaviour in that many motorists who engage in speeding do not accept the associated crash risks as they have never experienced adverse consequences or feelings of impairment as with other equivalent risky behaviours such as drink driving.

Yearly attitudinal surveys continue to demonstrate that a large proportion of motorists travel over the speed limit and that the potential to receive penalties for speeding is one of the key determinants in deciding whether to speed. In contrast, a vast majority of motorists believe individuals are responsible for their own speed decisions and that it is time speeding was considered socially unacceptable (MCR, 2017). These self-reported attitudes indicate there is both a need and an opportunity to educate motorists about the realities of speeding and empower individuals to take responsibility for making safe speed choices to keep themselves and others safe.

The Conversation recognises this need and opportunity and commits TMR to the long term vision of changing the attitudes of Queensland motorists around safe speeds. While attitude and behaviour change can be a difficult process that needs to be pursued over many years, it is essential to create more sustainable and voluntary adoption of safe speeds to reduce speed related road trauma in Queensland.

This commitment represents a culture change to Queensland's normal business of achieving safer speeds in parallel with continuing effective programs, such as enforcement. To deliver on this commitment TMR has focused education and messaging efforts at a number of areas and target groups aligned with the aims for creating, increasing and sustaining public demand for safer speeds (Austroads, 2016), including:

- internal departmental messaging
- general external messaging (for example, social media)
- project related engagement and communication (for example, location specific messaging run in parallel with speed limit reduction demonstration sites)
- offence related targeted messaging (for example, warning notices for repeat offenders)

- non-speed related driving behaviours messaging (for example, road safety messaging for Cloncurry).

After nearly 18 months (at time of conference) of implementing the vision under the Conversation, there have been significant learnings about Queensland motorists' attitudes and reception to speed safety education that have been used to inform future education messaging and content. Learnings include:

- Speed safety facts that challenge customers' existing views are generally poorly received. Likely explained by a lack of understanding around methodologies and limitations of road safety research.
- 'Traditional' misconceptions about speed and enforcement still persist, such as perceptions of cameras as revenue raising, covert cameras as ineffective for safety, and speed limits should increase as roads and vehicles become safer.
- Motorists are more receptive of speed safety content when packaged with content that reinforces existing road safety views.
- Targeted, localised messaging is better received, by both road safety stakeholders and the public.
- Partnering with stakeholders to deliver messaging improves reach of messages as well as relevance of messages to recipients.
- Education and messaging can be cost efficient by utilising knowledge, skills and reach within the organisation and existing stakeholder networks.

Yearly attitudinal surveys and evaluations of individual projects will continue to provide guidance around the impact of these speed safety messaging efforts. However, evaluation of actual impacts on behaviour continue to be affected by the difficulties in identifying long term, direct, causal relationships between educational content and changed attitudes and behaviours.

References

Austroroads. (2016). *Public Demand for Safer Speeds: Identification of Interventions for Trial AP-R507-16*.

Market Communications Research (MCR). (2017). *RSPAT Survey 2017. Draft report on survey measures related to Speed*.