

Request for Urban Speed Limits to be safe.

To: The Premier, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, other responsible Ministers and Cabinet.

This area of Brisbane is divided into very small areas by a network of major roads with speed limits of 60km/h or higher. These speed limits are required by Queensland Transport "rules". The result is a network of roads that are generally perceived as far too dangerous for walking or cycling, whether by the young walking or cycling to school, the elderly taking useful exercise to shops or other local facilities or people of all ages walking or cycling to public transport.

The case studies provide a number of examples typical of the wider problem. The speed limits required by QT "rules" take no account of the needs of people walking or cycling including gaining access to public transport and local facilities.

The result is people using their cars almost literally to cross these major roads because using these roads by bicycle and/or crossing these roads on foot is not considered safe.

In fact, provision for crossing the roads is not provided because the road authorities consider such provisions are unsafe ... the primary reason being the high speed of traffic!

This situation appears to have occurred because there is no Community Road Safety Council "opportunity" provided in Queensland. So local issues such as those in the case studies are prevented from being subject to local responses. They must conform to a set of "engineering" rules set by Queensland Transport and Main Roads, noting they both have the same Minister. This set of rules is supposedly effective whether in the centre of Brisbane or in the main streets of rural townships and resort villages. The speed limits are not set by the local community. It is denied any "opportunity" for input. The speed limits are set by QT "rules" which are inflexible in regard to local needs and/or context.

QT "rules" require that the speed (limit) on urban main roads MUST be 60km/h or higher.

Main road speed limits must be 60km/h despite local community requests for slower speeds in Brisbane and elsewhere and requests to the Travelsafe Committee from community groups in Brisbane and from rural shire engineers.

The ability to set speed limits that are appropriate to the local community needs and the safety of people of all ages and abilities whether cycling, walking or using a mobility aid, must be given to the local community and local government in order to reflect local needs and context. The "opportunity" provided by a Community Road Safety Council is well demonstrated in other states. Why is this or a similar local "opportunity" not provided and promoted in Queensland?

The experience in Brisbane and elsewhere suggests that the current system is deliberately geared to the perceptions of "road safety" as determined by motorists. The "safety" of pedestrians and cyclists appears to be regarded almost as a nuisance issue. There is no public participation opportunity provided so motorists set both speed limits and road safety.

As only 15% of crashes in 60km/h zones are in local residential streets of the type being converted to 50km/h, the dangers of the main roads must be recognised ... especially where pedestrians and cyclists must travel along or cross the road. Urban speed limits are not considered safe yet this is implied by the current "speed" campaign!

The "safety+convenience" (Yeates 2000) of pedestrians and cyclists is imperative if increased use of walking, cycling and public transport and reduced dominance of urban environments by high speed motorised vehicles is to be achieved.

Therefore, as increased walking, cycling and public transport use instead of car use appears to be the goal of the IRTP and Vision 2007 and a host of related health, safety, environment and planning "plans" and policies, it would seem appropriate for the Premier, the Minister and/or Cabinet to initiate some local "slower speed" trials utilising de facto Community Road Safety Councils set up by the local state member and/or the local councillors as appropriate to the circumstances. It is fortuitous and to their credit that the state member and local councillors are concerned about these issues and in particular, that the state member has already initiated a cycling advisory group which meets informally.

The Premier, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and/or the Cabinet is therefore requested to consider and approve a trial of a Community Road Safety Council in this area (and others) in order to trial a process to ensure that roads are perceived as safe for pedestrians and cyclists ... not just for motorists travelling at 60km/h or higher speeds.

The trial would include trials of reduced speed limits in appropriate areas as determined by the Community Road Safety Council in conjunction with local and state road authorities.

Supportive case studies:

The following examples illustrate potential sites for trials of reduced speed limits where the current QT "rules" for setting speed limits clearly fail to take account of pedestrian and/or cycling needs and local amenity issues.

a. **Radnor Street Indooroopilly** provides an ideal scenic connection between the Indooroopilly Citytrain station precinct (which also includes Indooroopilly Shoppingtown, the Jack Pesch "green" Bridge and the major cycling routes to UQ, the CBD and to the south-western suburbs) and the Western Freeway Bikeway. However the speed limit is required by the QT "rules" is 50km/h. This is clearly much too fast as the road and the frequent 30km/h advisory signs imply if not confirm. When BCC was requested to place BIKE symbols on this well used cycle route, this was refused and the word SLOW was painted on the road instead. This is of course useless! It provides no indication of how slow or why! For inexperienced (or timid ie non-assertive) cyclists, sharing such a road with motorists allowed by law to travel at 50km/h is perceived as a major threat. Further, this same threat is clearly perceived by BCC and is demonstrated by the refusal to identify on the road that this well used cycle route is used by cyclists or alternatively is a BIKE ROUTE.

If it is considered necessary to provide 30km/h advisory signs (with the supporting plate "for next 1km") and as this is a very useful and direct cycling route, then it is appropriate that the speed limit be either 30 or 40km/h and the route positively identified as a BIKE ROUTE eg by BIKE symbols on the road.

[NOTE : IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE PREMIER AND RELEVANT MINISTERS MIGHT TRAVEL THIS ROUTE TO AND/OR FROM THE RIVERGLENN COMMUNITY CABINET VENUE FOR EXPERIENCE.]

b. **Hawken Drive and Swann Road St Lucia** provide an ideal hilltop cycle route from West Taringa to UQ. While curving and undulating, the route is relatively flat. However the QT "rules" require a 60km/h speed limit resulting in numerous 30 and 40km/h advisory speed signs at most of the curves and excessive speed through the straight sections through shops and residential areas. Being a well used cycle route, BCC has commenced installation of the yellow BIKE symbols but clearly, in some areas, 60 is far too fast so in these narrow areas which are the most threatening to cyclists, there is nothing! The route is also a high frequency BCC bus route.

At minimum the route should be 50km/h with sections of 40km/h where appropriate ie the two shopping centre(s), near Ironside State School and UQ and in the very narrow sections. It should be positively identified as a BIKE ROUTE.

c. **Hawken Drive shopping centre** has a roundabout at one end and an extremely narrow entry with a pedestrian crossing at the other. However the QT "rules" require the speed limit to be 60km/h through this centre! A local petition has been collected supporting a much slower speed limit in the shopping centre. This would also be appropriate at the Ironside State School and shopping precinct given the roundabout, pedestrian crossing etc.

There should be a 40km/h speed limit through these strip shops with yellow BIKE symbols to emphasise the "priority" of local walking and cycling traffic and cars being parked ... rather than the current priority for cars, trucks and in particular the buses (due to their size and frequency) being encouraged to travel at 60km/h.

d. **Sherwood Road Sherwood** connects from a precinct of 40 and 50km/h roads to the west through the shopping strip across the major intersection of Oxley Road to the end of the shopping strip beyond the Sherwood State School. While it does function as an extension of Honour Avenue and as a high vehicle route, the section from Marlborough Avenue to Sherwood Road is clearly not a 60km/h speed environment! There have been numerous attempts including petitions to reduce the speed limit in what is the "main street" of Sherwood. However QT "rules" require the speed limit to be 60km/h so that even despite the recent upgrade of Sherwood Road (with the new Woolworths shopping complex), the speed limit must remain 60km/h, there is only one pedestrian crossing which is unsuitable for several desire lines (and therefore is frequently ignored) and despite also being a useful cycling and public transport interchange, no BIKE symbols or equivalent were included, probably because the road is too narrow and has to have a 60km/h speed limit.

From Dewar Terrace (which is already 40km/h) to Egmont Street (the proposed site for a major bike route crossing), the speed limit should be 40 or 50km/h at all hours.

e. **North Stradbroke Island "villages"** typify the problem of the QT "rules" that require 60km/h speed limits even where clearly inappropriate, in this case, typical of both rural and coastal, working or holiday/resort townships. As there is no main road south of Dunwich and it is a small "working" village, there is no reason why the village should not have a speed limit that is safe for walking and cycling and for the road network to be signed and managed accordingly. The major threats are (i) visitors to the island and (ii) trucks either local or visiting the island. Both groups will tend to travel as fast as allowed to get to their destination. It is clearly inappropriate for the speed limit to be 60km/h. Similarly in the village of Point Lookout which is clearly a destination! There is no main road beyond the village. As it is also so small and suitable for walking and cycling, there is no possible justification for a 60km/h speed limit on the main road. Unlike most rural townships, these "villages" do not even have a main road through them yet still the QT "rules" require 60km/h. The main road should be 40 or 50km/h with walking and cycling facilities to encourage these modes and discourage speeding. Especially as there is no through traffic, the road speed limit need only increase at the edge of the villages.

As for the urban examples above, rural and coastal villages such as these should have a speed limit of 50 or less on all roads with 40km/h in the main street and in areas of heavy pedestrian and cycling use and/or throughout the village to provide conditions that are “safe+convenient” for walking and cycling and/or to allow facilities to be provided for them.

Three other related examples should also be considered.

f. Pedestrian (and cyclist) crossings must be provided across main roads if walking, cycling and public transport use is to increase. One very typical example is at **Boundary Road Bardon** where it is clear from the current road design (and crash records) and adjacent roundabout and configuration of nearby bike routes, schools and shops and bus stops, that the speed limit on this section of the main road should be reduced.

Pedestrian and cycling connectivity should be maintained with a high level of “safety+convenience” including across and along main roads. Where traffic speed is of concern as at Boundary Road, the 60km/h required by QT “rules” should be reduced to 50km/h as has been achieved elsewhere on some (very selective) main roads.

g. Speed limits should be reduced to ensure adequate “safe+convenient” access for pedestrians and cyclists through and to major “local centres”. Examples are **Coonan Street and Lambert Road Indooroopilly** in the “local CBD” precinct that includes Indooroopilly Shoppingtown and its bus station and Indooroopilly Citytrain station. The combination of 60km/h roads required by the QT “rules”, lack of “convenient” and accessible at-grade pedestrian crossings and cycling facilities and uncoordinated development creates a major barrier to walking and cycling. The result in a very important and major railway station is part of the “local CBD” being effectively isolated from it for pedestrians (including people with disabilities) and cyclists. This precinct services three major high schools and Indooroopilly Shoppingtown, and is potentially a major bike+bus-rail interchange precinct for UQ. There are no facilities for cyclists. Existing bus stops are poorly located at an excessive distance primarily due to the desire to maintain 60km/h through traffic priority. There are several major redevelopments currently being promoted nearby. These will further reduce the options for bus+bike-rail interchange. Despite previous “consultation”, no “plan” to make the station or the precinct accessible or to provide bus or cycle access “to and through” it has been developed and released to and accepted by the local community.

The needs of pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities should be taken into account in setting speed limits in local areas where the current 60km/h or higher speed limit prevents provision of “safe+convenient” access for these modes. Such precincts should therefore have either a 40 or 50km/h speed limit or, if not, then exemplary alternative “safe+convenient” access should be provided for both “to and through” travel as pedestrians and cyclists.

h. School catchments extend far beyond the school property yet QT “rules” combine to prevent extended SCHOOL ZONES and reduced speed limits nearby. A recent example is at **St Peters Lutheran College in Harts Road** where the SCHOOL ZONE has been greatly reduced in extent in order to conform to the QT “rules”. In doing so, the SCHOOL ZONE does not extend to even half the extent of on-road after school pick-up car parking, the majority of which will now be in a 60km/h speed limit because the QT “rules” require Harts Road to have a 60km/h speed limit despite the substandard width, bus route, numerous expressed concerns about safety and requests for 50km/h. Because the road is required to have a 60km/h speed limit, it is unlikely BCC will mark it as a BIKE ROUTE or introduce speed reducing devices where required. So while it is signed as a SCHOOL ZONE, the road speed environment must remain suitable for 60km/h. This results in excessive speed which results in frequent and excessive parking on the footpath.

As with shopping precincts, school precincts should be able to be designed to be “safe+convenient” for walking and cycling and to “allow” the road authorities to provide walking and cycling facilities and/or promote walking and cycling safely. To enable this, the local community must be able to request extended speed limits of 40 and 50km/h at all hours and to seek that the roads be treated to suit the local community environment rather than be treated as 60km/h main roads where through traffic has total priority. The recently awarded BCC SCHOOL ZONE standard marking is to be commended. A standard protocol which includes it plus parking controls, bus stop zones, set down zones, cycling and pedestrian facilities (eg as at Bardon State School in Simpsons Road) should be able to be trialed.

In summary, the above examples are specific to this area but exemplify the problems at local community level of dealing with the QT “rules” that mandate inflexible outcomes that do not and in some cases cannot respond to the local context.

1. This submission seeks a process for community participation that can achieve locally responsive outcomes that meet local needs and the local context. It suggests the trial of Community Road Safety Councils in this area including in particular, the area covered by the local state member who, to his credit, has already inaugurated a cycling advisory group.

2. This submission also seeks to inform the Premier, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and the Cabinet of the inappropriate restrictions that the current QT “rules” on speed limits (and related facilities) are in opposition to the goals of the IRTP and Vision 2007 and other policies such as health and safety.

3. The submission also seeks to have the specific examples considered by the Premier, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Cabinet in the hope that these particular examples might result in outcomes which can and will be generalised.

This submission was prepared for and on behalf of the various community interest groups in the respective areas by Michael Yeates, Convenor, Bicycle User Research Group.