

Safety Radar Detectors and Safety Warning System Usage in Western Australia.

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The Office of Road Safety has again proposed a ban be imposed on the use of Safety Radar Detectors in WA. This same evidence and proposition have been set aside by all previous Governments when presented with this proposal in 1999, 2002 and 2006 as there is no relevant studies, reports or data to support such a ban.

The two main arguments behind the ORS proposal are that research indicates that safety radar detectors contribute to both speeding and road crashes and secondly that WA has previously chosen not to implement ARR Rule 225 which bans the use of safety radar detectors.

The ORS has clearly ignored or failed to consider the safety aspects of the 134 Safety Warning System beacons currently in use in WA which use Safety radar detectors as safety receivers. These SWS beacons are widely used on Emergency Ambulance and Traffic Management Crews in WA as well as at the main blackspots in Perth and Regional WA. Overseas studies have proved this system saves lives and is recommended Best Practice by Highway Work Crews in the USA. They have also ignored or failed to consider the safety aspects of Safety Radar Detectors when used as safety receivers with the Drone Radar Beacons on thousands of John Deere Tractors in regional WA.

These road safety systems are well established and are extensively used in WA and merit proper investigation before that are dismantled and scrapped through a ban on safety radar detectors in WA.

1. Evidence Based Decisions

Road safety strategy and policy should rely on sound, evidence-based methodology to be effective in reducing the road toll. The ORS cannot provide any relevant recent evidence, data or reports to support their proposition that Safety Radar Detectors are a key factor in non-compliance with speed limits.

They have also failed to investigate the safety aspects of the Safety Warning System (SWS) currently being used in WA. This system utilises existing Safety Radar Detectors as safety receivers, providing a 1km warning of a specific fixed or moving hazard with both a voice and LED warning. There are currently over 130 beacons in use in WA at

black spots, on St John and Ambulance Australia Emergency Ambulance, FESA vehicles, at many Road Work sites and at accident sites. In rural WA there are thousands of John Deere Tractors fitted with Radar warning systems that provide advance warning to drivers using safety radar detectors.

The ORS' first contention relies solely on a few reports which are 18 to 21 years old, all predating 1991 and out of date as they fail to consider the significant changes in vehicle and road technology since then. These same reports were found to be flawed and inconclusive when tested by the US Federal Courts and Court of Appeal in 1995, which overturned a ban on radar detectors in the USA.

In Western Australia the Independent Speed Management Task Force set up by the Liberal Government in 1998 was provided with the same evidence and they concluded there was no evidence to support a ban on Radar Detector use in WA.

In 1998 and 1999, WA Parliament twice rejected legislation to ban radar detectors in WA. The move to ban detectors was based on a desire to "fall in line with other states' legislation" and to counter potential behavioural change in drivers. Again they concluded there was no evidence that detector use increased accidents or resulted in an increase in a user's overall speed.

In 1998, the UK repealed its laws banning radar detectors. Kevin Delaney, Road Safety Officer of RAC UK and former head of the Metropolitan Police Traffic Division stated on the use of radar detectors in the UK "they help people to obey the law and stay within the speed limit. I believe most drivers buy them as a timely reminder. You could argue they perform a similar function to the signs that police forces put up to remind people about the cameras".

In Australia, the Transport Safety Bureau (who compiles road statistics) also concludes that there is no evidence to substantiate that the banning of radar safety detectors has improved road statistics.

In July 2008 the detailed report by the Monash University Accident Research Centre on "Development of strategies for best practice in speed enforcement in Western Australia"

made no recommendations to ban safety radar detectors in WA. This report extensively researched the use of different speed cameras and technology to combat speed.

2. Driver Behaviour

The reason why no reports after 1992 can be cited by Road Safety authorities is that the most recent research has shown that safety detector users are more likely to check their speed more regularly in black spots and known radar areas than other drivers. This is one of the reasons why detector users find that they are much more aware of the speed limit, that they actually slow down after buying a radar detector and they reportedly have fewer accidents.

GPS devices that warn drivers that they are approaching a speed camera or red light camera work in the same way as safety radar detectors and are not only accepted but encouraged by authorities. On the Eastern States fixed speed cameras, as opposed to Radar Cameras are mainly used for speed enforcement. These GPS devices provide a warning to drivers to check their speed as they approach a speed camera. Radio stations that provide current warnings of speed camera locations also have the effect of reminding drivers to be aware and alert and to check their speed.

Furthermore in May 2009 the Police Union of WA rebuked the ORS stating that placing Police cars near speed cameras slowed drivers down and aided road safety and criticised the ORS as only trying to protect its speeding fine revenue.

3. Safety Warning System Cited as Best Practice at Road Hazards.

Since 2001 over 130 Safety Warning System beacons that use Safety Radar Detectors as safety receivers have been installed on WA roads. These are installed on most St John Ambulance Emergency Vehicles, Ambulance Australia Vehicles, widely used by Traffic Management Crews, were used along the Perth to Mandurah Rail works, at many metropolitan and country Black Spots, and on some tow trucks.

Reports and evidence prove that SWS when used with Safety Radar Detectors save lives and slows the mean speed of traffic in road hazard areas by up to 8km per hour. The same

SWS is used in many states in the USA and is cited and recommended by the Road Safety Commission as Best Practice at Road Work sites.

Use of the SWS with safety detectors has the support of the WA highway workers, Ambulance drivers, unions, work safety officers, traffic management companies and drivers.



“Highway Work Crews Ahead”



St Johns Ambulance fitted with SWS

4. Safety Warning System used in Country WA.

Country WA accounts for more than 58% of road fatalities. Radar Warning Devices are installed on thousands of John Deere Tractors in WA that warn drivers with Safety Radar Detectors, that they are approaching a tractor on the road ahead. SWS beacons are also installed in country WA at the states most dangerous sections of highway.



The contention that safety radar detectors contribute to speeding and accidents in today's driving environment cannot be supported by any evidence. In fact the most recent reports indicate that their use contribute to safer driving and safer roads especially in country areas and at road works protected by SWS.

5. Safety Radar Detector Testing in Western Australia

Today the rapid increase in radar emitting devices other than speed cameras that set off alerts in safety radar detectors, is a constant reminder for the detector user to check their speed and thus keep to the speed limit. Automatic doors, microwave emitting devices, security systems and some mobile phones cause the detector to emit the same alert as a radar speed camera.

In recent testing of safety radar detector use in WA, the average number of alerts in Perth is 42 between speed cameras. A safety radar detector cannot decipher between these alerts so a driver must check their speed for all alerts. This means that a driver using a detector will check their speed 43 times for every speed camera deployed.

Detector users are exposed to the same risk of speed infringement as non-users. The increased use of unmarked police cars, undetectable red light cameras, laser technology and the effective use of Multanova speed cameras in the open country provides little or no warning to detector users.

Current surveys indicate that safety radar detector users generally are aged 25 to 54, their license is critical for employment and they drive more kilometers than the average road user.

6. Risks Reduced of Inadvertent Speeding

Nearly all drivers in WA inadvertently speed at some point. Drivers in WA are exposed to frequent speed limit changes on the same stretch of road from 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 and 110 without a noticeable change in the road design. Frequent road work and speed limit changes are also a constant hazard. The frequent radar alerts remind drivers to check there speed and the speed limit.

7. Road Rules Should be Based on Relevance not Conformity.

The second contention is that WA is inconsistent with the rest of Australia for not accepting ARR Rule 225. It should be pointed out that many ARR rules are not accepted across different jurisdictions.

The use of different speed cameras is also inconsistent across different states, with WA being the only state using the Multanova Speed cameras. Consistency of Road Rules or speed camera technology does not lead to safer roads. Different states have very different needs and different requirements for road safety policy and acceptance of rules and changes to road safety policy should be evidence and outcome based.

Clearly in this instance the proposition to ban safety radar detectors is not evidence and outcome based and fails to consider the potential loss of the well established and operational SWS road safety initiative. There are only 26 Multanova speed cameras in operation in WA, compared to 134 SWS beacons and thousands of radar warning systems on John Deere Tractors in rural WA. These safety systems have not been investigated.

8. WA Jobs, Businesses and Export Revenue.

WA is the base to the servicing and sale of Safety Radar Detectors for New Zealand and Asia including China. This industry brings in millions of dollars in export revenue and employs many real, hardworking West Australians. In these tough economic times an unsubstantiated ban on safety radar detectors will mean the closing down of an industry, businesses, jobs and export dollars for Western Australia.

The Government's power to change laws and implement legislation should never be taken lightly as its impact on businesses, jobs and peoples livelihoods are far reaching. Like any law, changes to road rules and legislation should be based on sound evidence. We therefore call upon the Government to properly investigate the safety features of the SWS and John Deere drone radar safety system currently in extensive use in WA. This should be done before consideration is given to implement ARR Rule 225 or to implement a ban on the use of safety radar detectors in WA.

9. A Practical Strategy for Road Safety in WA Report.

As we see Evidence and Outcome based Road Safety as a priority, I will soon forward a detailed report on a Practical Strategy for Road Safety in WA for your consideration and discussion. I believe you will find the strategies suggested and detailed in the report more palatable, less punitive and more practical than many options put forward by other road safety authorities.

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