

The Facts about Safety Radars and the Safety Warning System in WA.

1. Evidence Based Decisions

The Government is proposing to ban safety radar detectors in WA without any investigation of the widely used safety warning system (SWS) and the drone radar warning system. The implementation of the SWS in WA has been a Community funded Road Safety Project and it is the Governments responsibility to properly investigate the merits of these systems, before any radar receiver ban is considered which would effectively render the SWS system useless.

- a. Road safety strategy and policy should rely on sound, evidence-based methodology to be effective in reducing the road toll. Road Safety Authorities in WA cannot provide any relevant recent evidence, data or reports to support their proposition that Safety Radar Detectors are a contributing factor to the road toll.
- b. They have also failed to investigate the safety aspects of the Safety Warning System (SWS) currently used in WA. This has been a Community funded Road Safety Project and has not cost the Government any money. This system utilises existing Safety Radar Detectors as safety receivers, providing a one kilometre warning of a specific fixed or moving road hazard with both a voice and LED warning. They are also used in WA to send road safety messages at blackspots and on regional highways. There are currently over 160 transmitting beacons and thousands of drone radar warning systems in rural WA. There are approximately 50,000 safety radar detectors acting as receivers of these warning alerts.

2. Research and History

This same evidence and proposition to ban safety radar detectors has been set aside by all previous WA Governments when presented with the proposal in 1999, 2002 and 2006 as there are no relevant studies, reports or data to support such a ban. Community support to implement the SWS in WA was based on the research provided by the Monash University Accident Research Centre and the following relevant facts.

- a. **1991** is the most recent report from anywhere in the world supporting a radar detector ban (Monash University Accident Research Centre). The report is out of date and irrelevant as it fails to consider the significant changes in vehicle and road technology since then.

- This report led to the development of the Safety Warning System. 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.
- b. **In 1998** the Independent Speed Management Task Force in Western Australia set up by the Liberal Coalition Government was provided with the same evidence and they concluded there was no evidence to support a ban on Radar Detector use in WA. (attachment 1)
 - c. **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 driver’s overall speed.
 - d. 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 in other states has improved road statistics.
 - e. **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.
 - f. **June 2010** There are currently 160 Safety Warning System (SWS) beacons that transmit to around 50,000 Safety Radar Detectors on WA roads. (attachment 2) These beacons transmit voice messages warning of upcoming road hazards and beam road safety messages at blackspots and on regional highways. SWS beacons are used on most **St John Ambulance Emergency Vehicles, Ambulance Australia Vehicles**, are widely used by **Traffic Management Crews, Traffic Arrow Boards at Road Hazard** sites and were used extensively along the Perth to Mandurah Rail works and remain on the Perth to Bunbury Highway. Traffic road crews support SWS. (attachment 2, 3, 4)
 - g. **June 2010** There are thousands of John Deere and Massey Ferguson tractors in rural WA fitted with Drone Radars which provide a 1km warning to drivers with Safety Radar Detectors, that they are approaching a tractor on the road ahead. Country WA accounts for more than 58% of road fatalities. (attachment 5 and 6)

3. Driver Behaviour with safety radar detectors and GPS systems

- a. GPS devices (including all navigation units) warn drivers that they are approaching a speed camera or red light camera. They work in the same way as safety radar detectors and are not only accepted but also encouraged by authorities. They provide a timely 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, alert and to check their speed. (attachment 8)
- b. Safety radar detectors cannot block or scramble police radar or laser signals. Today, the rapid increase in radar emitting devices set off alerts in safety radar detectors, and is a constant reminder for the driver to check their speed and thus keep to the speed limit. In recent testing of safety radar detector use in WA, the average number of alerts in Perth is over 40 between speed cameras. Automatic doors, microwave emitting devices, security systems and some mobile phones cause the detector to emit the same alert as a radar speed camera.
- c. 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 provide little or no warning to detector users.
- d. Current surveys indicate that safety radar detector users are generally aged 25 to 54, their license is critical for employment, they drive more kilometres than the average road user.
- e. 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 the reason why no reports after 1991 can be cited by Road Safety authorities to support a radar detector ban.

4. Radar Ban Enforcement

- a. Legislation to ban the use of a device that warns drivers of the possible presence of speed cameras should, in effect include GPS systems, including all navigation systems with a speed camera database. GPS units perform the same function as a radar detector by warning drivers of the possible presence of a speed camera. Many new safety radar detectors are now combined with GPS technology. We are not aware of any government authority worldwide that has enacted a ban on the use of GPS speed camera warning

- systems. More sensible would be to embrace both technologies and use them proactively for a positive safety benefit.
- b. Nearly all safety radar detectors sold over the past 5 years are now undetectable to all police scanning devices. Many of these detectors are built into the vehicles making detection and removal difficult and expensive.
 - c. The latest range of GPS devices enabled with SWS radar detection, are now being sold legally worldwide, as they are sold without police radar and laser detection capabilities. A downloadable software patch is readily available to enable radar and laser camera detection. If investigated, the reset button renders it back to its original form as a GPS and SWS device. A radar ban will potentially result in drivers upgrading their technology to devices that circumvent the law.
 - d. New Zealand authorities recently recognised that a ban on radar detectors would just result in users upgrading their technology. Instead they are now using the safety radar detectors in existence to assist in road safety campaigns. Seventy old police radar guns are being utilised at minimal cost to ensure radar and GPS users comply with the speed limit. (attachment 7)

5. WA Jobs, Businesses and Export Revenue.

- a. WA is the base for 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.
- b. We are supportive of any law that prohibits the use of devices that block or interfere with Police Speed monitoring devices.

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ADRA is a Western Australia based not-for-profit association concerned with Road Safety and providing a voice for the motoring public of Australia. Currently we have over 11,000 members across Australia.

Attachments

1. Chairman of Speed Management Task Force, Radar Ban findings, January 6 1998
2. Safety Warning System Beacon locations in WA, June 2010
3. SWS support letters from Quality Traffic Management, Carringtons Traffic Systems, WARP
4. SWS on St John's Emergency Ambulance
5. John Deere Tractors using Drone Radar Warning systems
6. Massey Ferguson Tractors using Drone Radar Warning systems
7. NZ Herald article on use of Drone Radar Police Cameras in NZ, Feb 9, 2010.
8. GPS devises Vs Radar Detectors
9. Drone Radar as Best Practice at freeway work zones. Virginia
10. Use of Drone Radar to reduce speed in work zones. South Carolina

REFERENCE

1. ADRA Radar Detector User Survey, 2000
2. MORI Radar Detector Survey UK, 2001
3. Development of strategies for best practice in speed enforcement in Western Australia, Max Cameron, Monash University Accident Research Centre, May 2008.
4. Police union defends radar alerts as safe, Kim Macdonald, Robert Taylor, Peter Kerr, The West Australian, 3 June 2009
5. Crash Index: Annual Road Safety Index, AAMI, 2008
6. AAMI road safety data shows inattention, not speeding is the biggest risk, Ralph Hanson, 21 August 2008
7. Road safety improvements in Australia, AusRAP lead by AAA, 2006
8. Multanova speed cameras, Wikipedia, 2009
9. National road safety – Eyes on the road ahead. Inquiry into national road safety, House of Representatives standing committee on transport, June 2004
10. Effectiveness of unmanned radar – A speed control technique in freeway work zones, VDOT, 1997
11. Comparison of Accident Rates of Radar Detector Users and Non users, Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, May 1987
12. Yankelovich Clancy Shulman Study, Nov 1988
13. The Duration of speed reduction attributable to radar detectors - Teed, Lund & Knoblich, Insurance Institute of Highway Safety VA USA, 14 Sept 1990
14. Are radar detector users less safe than nonusers – Cooper, Zuo, Pinilli, Insurance Corporation British Columbia, 23rd November 1990.