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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES**  
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Submission No 29 – Alex Turini

Inquiry into the impact of revised speed limits in Civic – Petitions 31-21 and 38-21

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# Inquiry into impact of revised speed limits In Civic.

## Petitions 31-21 and 38-21.

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50 unless signposted otherwise. Unless otherwise and not signposted.

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Prepared For | Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services  
ACT Legislative Assembly

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1.1	24/Oct/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sentence removed from title page.</li><li>• Road type clarification &amp; wording change p4.</li><li>• Clarifications, p5.</li><li>• Added missing captain, p12.</li><li>• Duplicate sentence deleted &amp; wording clarified, p24.</li><li>• Clarification, p31.</li></ul>



Figure 1: Speed limit signage on Geelong Street, Fyshwick, September 2021.

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## Thank You

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the impact of the new 40 km/h speed limit on Northbourne Avenue. Speed limits and their enforcement are a provocative issue Australia wide, and I'm sure you've had a wide range of replies to this inquiry. I'd like to thank you in advance for taking the time to read my response. I acknowledge in advance my response will vary from the scope of the inquiry. I attempt to look at wider systemic issues with speed limits in Canberra, which in my opinion, has led to the average Canberran motorist to hold a general lack of respect for all speed limits in the city.

If you do not have time to read my full reply, then the key points I wish to have considered are contained within the executive summary and conclusion sections of this document.

## Executive Summary

It is my opinion that the new 40 km/h speed limit on Northbourne Avenue was exceptionally well signposted, and significantly exceeded signposting requirements as laid out in the relevant Australian Standard, AS1742.4. Motorists were given a grace period of several months before enforcement of the speed limit commenced via speed cameras. Such a grace period was very generous. The abundantly clear signage, road markings and electronic variable message boards, meant that automated enforcement of the limit could have commenced almost immediately.

All Australian motorists are required to know the laws regarding speed limits and are required to adhere to all speed limits. This applies to temporary speed limits set for emergencies or roadworks and applies when the boundaries of permanent speed limits are changed, or when permanent speed limits are reduced. Failure to adhere to speed limits, including changes in speed limits, will result in a penalty. After several penalties, a driver will have their driving privileges suspended. Every motorist knows that they have a legal obligation to observe and obey all speed limits. Unfortunately, in the ACT, understanding and obeying speed limits is easier said than done.

If the ACT Government was able to display a history of Canberra's speed limits being logical, with signage properly installed and properly maintained, then my submission to this inquiry would end here. If this was the case, those caught exceeding 40 km/h on Northbourne Avenue in July and August, would not have a leg to stand on. However, this is not the case. I view the "Inquiry into impact of revised speed limits In Civic" as an opportunity to raise issues regarding Canberra's speed limit signage that I have been concerned about for some time.

This submission includes some opening pages on the need to force cars to be driven at slower speeds in all of Canberra's urban areas, and all areas where pedestrians may be present. The submission will then explore how speed limit signage in the ACT has historically been maintained to an extraordinarily subpar standard, using Wanniasa as a case study. The exceptionally well signposted Northbourne Avenue 40 km/h zone is an exception to what is otherwise a dismal norm. While I resent the entitlement on display from some of the motorists who have been caught exceeding 40 km/h on Northbourne Avenue, I concede speed limits in Canberra are often so poorly signposted, that even a seasoned Canberran motorist may be legitimately confused about which speed limit is meant to apply to which stretches of road, which signage is correctly installed, and which signage has been installed in error.

On the surface, all this this may seem out of scope of the inquiry. However, I believe systemic problems of setting unclear speed limits and improperly signposting speed limits have ultimately collimated to have Canberran motorists routinely disregarding speed limits altogether. **This is a public health crisis.** When Canberra's speed limit signage is installed and maintained with absolute apathy, it is understandable that motorists have become apathetic about obeying speed limits. In turn, this has resulted in several thousand motorists believing that the new 40 km/h signage on Northbourne Avenue may not have been correct.

## We Need to Slow Down

I am in no way disputing the need for slower speed limits throughout all of Australia's urban areas. I would be the first in line to advocate for a 30 km/h default speed limit for all the ACT's local access streets, and high pedestrian activity areas.

Plenty of peer reviewed evidence exists demonstrating a need to slow cars and trucks down in all urban areas. Méndez, Sánchez, & Luque (2015) concluded that the risk of a fatal collision occurring almost always increases in line with average vehicle speeds increasing. Austroads state that lower average motor vehicle speeds substantially reduce the risk of crashes occurring (Austroads, 2020). In the same document, Austroads also state "To avoid death or serious injury being sustained by a pedestrian or cyclist negotiating an intersection, **it is fundamentally important that vehicle travel speeds do not exceed 30 km/h**" (Austroads, 2020, pp. 30, 41, 49, 59, 67, 94) [emphasis added]. Isaksson-Hellman & Töreki (2019) demonstrated that a reduction in urban area speed limits from 50-60 km/h to 30-40 km/h was associated with a 25% decrease in moderate to fatal cyclist collisions.

Regarding vehicle speeds, the Stockholm Declaration of 2020 resolved a need to "Focus on speed management, including the strengthening of law enforcement to prevent speeding and **mandate a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h** [emphasis added] in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe, noting that efforts to reduce speed in general will have a beneficial impact on air quality and climate change as well as being vital to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries." (WHO, 2020) The 2020 Stockholm Declaration has since been endorsed by the United Nations.

Australia's urban speed limits, including those found in Canberra, remain some of the highest in the developed world. This is dangerous and illogical, especially for a country which is otherwise extraordinarily risk averse.

## What are urban areas for?

In attempting to figure out appropriate speeds for our urban areas, we must ask, what is the primary purpose of our urban areas? Our urban areas should be considered human habitats. They are places for people, places for people to be safe. They are places where we work and play. They are places where our children should be able to get out and about, explore and take part in society, without being fear of being killed by a motorist. The ability for children to explore their environments, to take place in culture and the arts, is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). But for decades, this right has been violated in most Australian cities, including Canberra. We assign so much priority to driving our cars and driving them fast in the places we live, that time poor parents often have no choice but to lock their children away from the public realm, entertained by phones and tablets. Since World War 2, all Australian cities have prioritised driving to and from work in a little less time, over the physical and mental health of our own children.

## The happiest children in the world

It can be difficult to have a discussion with proponents of building cities and transport infrastructure which does not revolve around the private automobile, without the Dutch experience being raised. The Dutch are perhaps famous in urban planning circles for continuing to construct their urban environments at a human scale with a range of transport options. Their cities and urban areas are easy and safe to traverse by bicycle (Nello-Deakin & Nikolaeva, 2020) (Pucher, Buehler, & Sgm, 2008) and their public transport is prioritized and convenient (Ramorobi, McGuigan, & Mouws, 2011). The absence of fast-moving motor vehicles means that Dutch built environments are so safe, children gain their independence and start taking themselves to school at a very young age (Hutchison, 2018). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) consistently rates Dutch children as being the happiest in the world. The same report found that out of the 38 countries examined, **Australian children have the 3<sup>rd</sup> poorest mental health** (UNICEF, 2020, p. 11). It's entirely reasonable to conclude that Australia's obsession with prioritising cars and speed in every iota of our street space, resulting in parents keeping children locked indoors, has contributed to a decline in our children's mental health.

## We need leadership

Despite evidence existing for several decades which demonstrates how detrimental high motor vehicle speeds are to the basic functioning of our urban areas, of society, and of our children's mental health, Canberra's residents remain convinced that the key motive to require motorists to drive slowly, is one of revenue raising. I believe that the ACT has yet to invest in and commit to proper change management to change both the public's understanding of speed related risk and trauma, and the ACT Governments own internal understanding of the same.

The most recent revision of the ACT's Estate Development Code still mandates that brand new residential streets in Canberra must be built to design speeds of 50 and 60 km/h. We have known for decades that if a pedestrian is hit at these speeds, death or life changing injury is guaranteed. There is no excuse for Canberra to still be requiring new roads to facilitate these speeds on our local access streets today. Absolutely no excuse.

It gets worse though, in 2013, the design speed requirement for the ACT's local access streets was **increased** from 50 km/h to 60 km/h in the ACT's Estate Development Code. This speed requirement remained in place for several years before being reverted. How did this happen? Why did this happen? How could the ACT's decision makers implement a change which did not remotely align with safe system or vision zero road safety philosophies? Why are the engineers & decision makers who made this change apparently entirely apathetic, or ignorant of an abundance of peer reviewed evidence which demonstrates that when a pedestrian is hit at 60 km/h, they are almost always going to die? Were those responsible for this change simply unaware of pedestrian impact speed risk curves? Or perhaps worse; does a rampant pro-motoring culture, reminiscent of the NCDC days, still exist deep inside the ACT

Government? A culture which ensures the built environment of our city prioritises the desires of those who wish to drive cars quickly, over the needs of our children's safety, and over the needs every other activity which could otherwise take place in Canberra's public realm.

I put to all members of this committee, as some of the people who are currently responsible for transport related decisions in Canberra at this present time, you have an obligation to address and eliminate any pro-motoring culture which may remain within all corners of the ACT Government. Any government culture which continues to prioritise motor vehicle speed over the physical safety and mental health of Canberra's citizens, should not exist in 2021.

Immediate action is required to ensure the Territory Plan is amended to reduce required design speeds for all roads in the ACT's residential areas to be no faster than 50 km/h. There is no need for design speeds higher than 50 km/h in urban areas when our current default urban speed limit is 50 km/h. This includes Access Roads A & B, and minor collector roads, as currently defined in version R260 of the current Territory Plan.

Based on established evidence, including the speed management directions mandated in the Stockholm Declaration of 2020, ACT Government discussions should immediately commence investigations to ascertain what is required to force Access Roads A & B in new developments, to have design speeds no faster than 30 km/h. A plan to roll out 30 km/h speed limits on Canberra's existing local access streets within the next few years is also necessary.

More closely related to this inquiry, the committee also have a responsibility to address apathetic speed limit signage and maintenance standards, which when combined with rigorous speed limit enforcement, will inevitably fail to convince motorists that lower speed limits being rolled out in Canberra are due to genuine safety issues. Failure to address these problems will mean motorists will continue to see speed limit enforcement as "revenue raising" and will not see a genuine need to slow down

I trust that all of this will be achieved in non-partisan manner the wake of this inquiry.

## Canberra's speed limits in the 1990's

In my opinion, a significant driver behind the public hostility observable when speed limits are lowered in Canberra, is exceptionally poor road signage standards in this city. Though things have not always been this way.

Prior to the introduction of 50 km/h speed limits in the ACT in the early 2000's, maximum permitted speeds on Canberra's roads were simple:

- 40 km/h for school zones.
- 60 default speed limits on all roads inside urban areas, with 60 km/h signage often present at boundaries of 60 km/h urban areas.
- 60 km/h on some arterial roads.
- 70 km/h – I personally cannot recall any
- 80 km/h on most arterial roads
- 90 km/h – I can only recall one 90 km/h limit existing on William Hovell Drive
- 100 km/h default rural speed limit and on select arterial roads.

None of these speed limits were enforced by speed cameras, only by police officers who would stop an offender in their tracks.

This was easy. On any given day, motorists driving in urban areas would typically only encounter one of two speed limits. 60 km/h in built up areas, or 80 km/h on arterial roads, except for school zones or roadwork sites.

Naturally, I am not advocating for a 60 km/h default speed limit to return to Canberra's urban areas, quite the opposite. As already established, a default limit of 60 km/h was far too fast and never appropriate for our urban areas. However, as I hope to make apparent; despite Canberra's old speed limits being too fast, motorists caught exceeding them had little ground to stand on about being "confused" about how fast they were allowed to drive, as 60 km/h speed limits were ubiquitous inside our urban areas.

## Canberra's speed limits today

- 10 km/h within some shared zones.
- 20 km/h within some shared zones.
- 40 km/h within school zones and high pedestrian activity areas.
- 50 km/h default urban speed limit. Signage rarely present at boundaries of 50 km/h urban areas.
- 50 km/h on local access streets.
- 50 km/h on some minor collector roads.
- 50 km/h on some major collector roads.
- 60 km/h on some minor collector roads.
- 60 km/h on some major collector roads.
- 70 km/h on some major collector roads.
- 40 km/h on some arterial roads designated as high pedestrian activity areas.
- 60 km/h on some arterial roads.
- 70 km/h on some arterial roads.
- 80 km/h on some arterial roads.
- 90 km/h on some arterial roads.
- 100 km/h default rural speed limit.
- 100 km/h default limit on the ACT's highest quality arterial roads.<sup>1</sup>
- 100 km/h on the ACT's lowest quality and most dangerous rural roads, including unsealed roads.<sup>1</sup>

Permanent and mobile speed cameras are now in use throughout the ACT to catch motorists who exceed the speed limits above.

Clearly, speed limits in Canberra are far from simple anymore. Motorists must now contend with a wider variety of speed limits (which to be explored are often poorly signposted), with many of these limits enforced by speed cameras.

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<sup>1</sup> I have included granular descriptions of rural speed limits here, because despite beginning to address higher speed limits in Canberra's urban areas, we've yet to address inappropriately high speed limits on the ACT's rural roads.

## Revenue Raising?

Nobody who has read the peer reviewed evidence can deny that excessive vehicle speed is one of the leading contributors to road trauma all over the world. As Canberra is not a microcosm, this is also the case in our city. However, those responsible for slowing motorists down need to look at the issue of vehicle speed and speed enforcement, through the eyes of road users who may not be interested in the evidence. Through no fault of their own, most Australian motorists live in an echo chamber.

Driving can be a stressful and frustrating activity. Stress and frustration breeds emotion. Frustrated motorists are quick to share the same grievances with one another, creating a toxic network of confirmation bias baked in unadulterated windscreen perspective. When discussing issues of road safety, many motorists are likely to be uninterested in evidence or opinions which contradicts with their own perceptions, especially when it's easy to find so many other motorists who agree with their own interpretations of the issues. As such when it comes to issues of road safety, most motorists live in an echo chamber reminiscent of the internet's "flat-earth" echo chambers. Though given the dangers of motorists bouncing incorrect ideas about road safety priorities off one another, a more apt and topical comparison can be made between the "motoring" echo chamber, and the anti-vaccine echo chamber. Motorists who firmly believe that speed enforcement is about revenue raising, are more likely to break speed limits, putting all road users at risk.

While driving anywhere can be a stressful activity, Canberra's motorists must also contend with ambiguous, confusing, poorly signposted speed limits, yet if they make a mistake when interpreting which speed limit applies to any given length of road, they'll be punished via automatic enforcement. This situation does not pass the pub test; not even remotely. It's easy to understand why vehicle speed enforcement is an emotive issue in Canberra.

# How are the ACT's urban speed limits ambiguous?

Up until the early 2000's, the ACT had a default urban speed limit of 60 km/h. Where a street in an urban area was not signposted with a speed limit, a motorist was to assume a speed limit of 60 km/h applied until they passed a sign advising otherwise. This is almost identical to how 50 km/h speed limits operate today, however there was one key difference. When the default speed limit in the ACT was 60 km/h, a motorist who turned off an arterial road and into an urban area, would almost always pass at least one 60 km/h sign. These 60 km/h signs helped motorists to identify the boundaries of areas where the default urban speed limit applied. All subsequent streets that motorists may have turned into within the urban area were unlikely to have any speed limit signs, however, the speed limit would not change from the last speed limit sign the motorist had passed; 60 km/h. The image below depicts Wanniasa's speed limits in the 1990's.

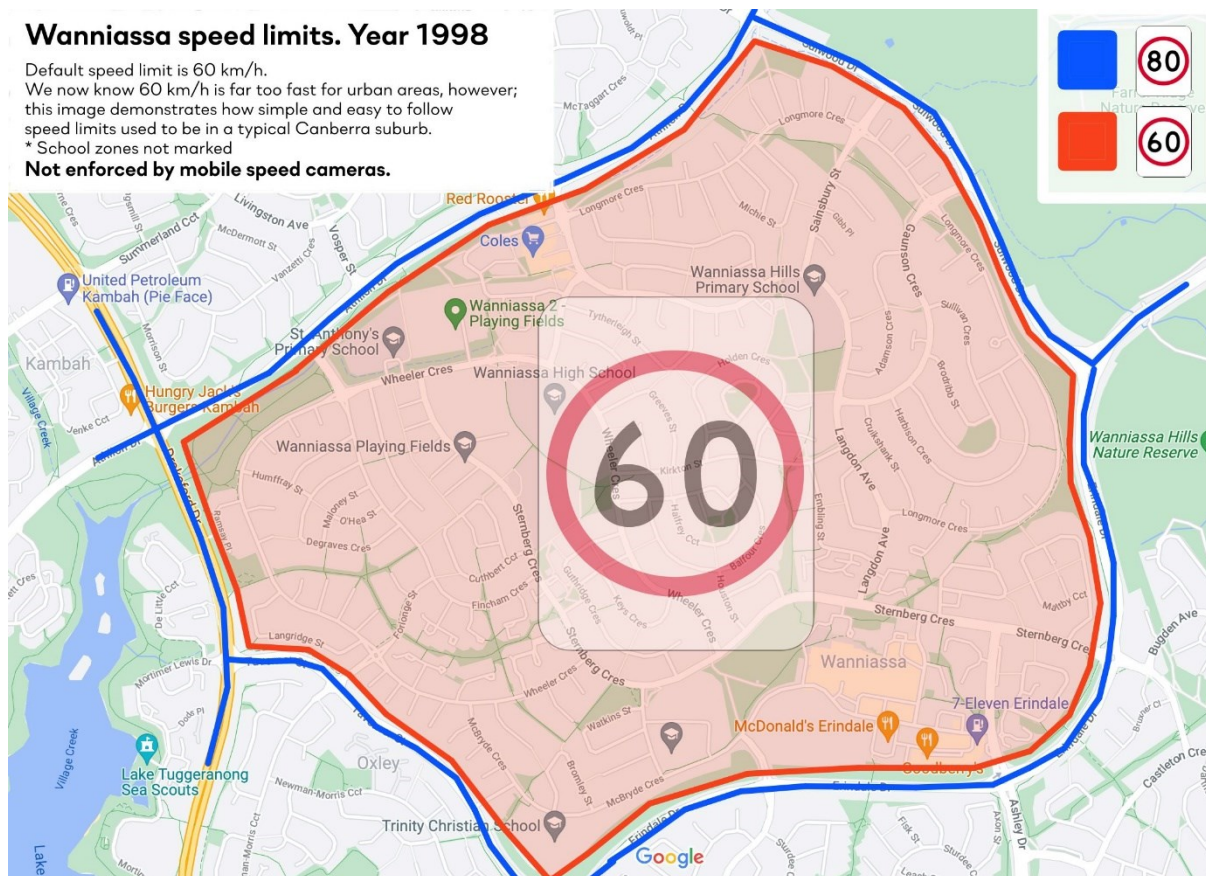


Figure 2 Above: Wanniasa's single speed limit in 1998

When the ACT's default 50 km/h speed limit was introduced, decision makers chose to only implement the new limit on the ACT's local access streets. Most minor collector and major collector roads would retain their 60 km/h speed limits. Motorists entering a residential area would now turn off an arterial road with an 80 km/h speed limit, and onto a major/minor collector road with already existing 60 km/h signage, then finally onto a local access street which now had a 50 km/h speed limit, but no sign informing of the final drop from 60 to 50 km/h. Or: in some cases, motorists would turn off an arterial road, and onto a road that used to have a 60 km/h sign, but now has no sign at all. In such situations, motorists were meant to decipher that the removal of a 60 km/h sign meant a 50 km/h limit now applied. This was not ideal, but not entirely complicated for an observant motorist. Naturally though, this is not the final issue to be raised.

I was not privy to the decision-making process so do not know why the speed limits on minor/major collector roads within urban areas were also not lowered to 50 km/h, nor do I know why the decision was made not to install 50 km/h speed limit signs at the entrances to streets where a motorist was turning off a road with a higher speed limit. Though I theorise that this was at least in part, a cost saving measure. Under this scenario, very little speed limit signage required changing when the new 50 km/h default limits came in. Many of the "reminder" 60 km/h speed limit signs found on collector roads at the boundaries of urban areas could remain in place. By shifting the adage of "if there's no sign the speed limit is XX" from being a fallback in situations where a sign may not be present, to the primary method of speed limit identification, the ACT Government had to install very few 50 km/h speed limit signs throughout Canberra.

Unfortunately, this cost saving measure, followed by 20 years of ACT Government apathy towards quality assurance of any road signage, means that today, Canberra's suburbs now have dozens of situations where roads have 60 km/h speed limits posted for one direction of travel, but no sign and therefore 50 km/h speed limits for the other direction of travel. Wanniasa alone has four such instances of this.

Urban roads which are now explicitly posted with 60 km/h limits, do not have 60 km/h signage posted in the vicinity of most intersections. This creates situations where two motorists can be travelling on the same road, in the same direction, but one is yet to pass a 60 km/h sign. By following the adage "50 unless signposted otherwise" the motorist who is yet to pass a 60 km/h sign must not exceed 50 km/h, whilst someone behind them has caught up, potentially wondering why the motorist in front is travelling at 50 km/h.

Of course, most motorists will happily exceed 50 km/h if they are familiar with the road and know they're going to pass a 60 km/h sign soon. This means that unofficial adage followed by most of Canberra's motorists is:

**50 unless signposted otherwise, unless otherwise and not signposted.**

Unfortunately, the 60 km/h sign motorists may believe exists somewhere on that road, may have been there in error. Ever since the ACT's default speed limit was decreased, road work crews often mix up which speed limit sign was meant to be put up at the end of their roadwork zones inside urban areas. For years, motorists may have been driving a length of road with no speed limit sign visible, therefore 50 km/h applies. One day, they'll encounter "End Roadwork (60)" signage, implying the street should normally have a speed limit of 60 km/h. This signage may remain in place for days or weeks. Upon the roadwork site being packed up, the 60 km/h sign would be removed, leaving motorists to decipher that the 60 km/h sign at the end of the roadwork was a mistake, and a 50 km/h limit applied to the road.

The opposite situation is also true, as to be established in the "Geelong Street" section.

The following image depicts what Wanniasa's speed limits look like today, assuming no incorrect roadwork signage exists. The situation is far from straight forward, to the extent that the image alone is confusing to look at.

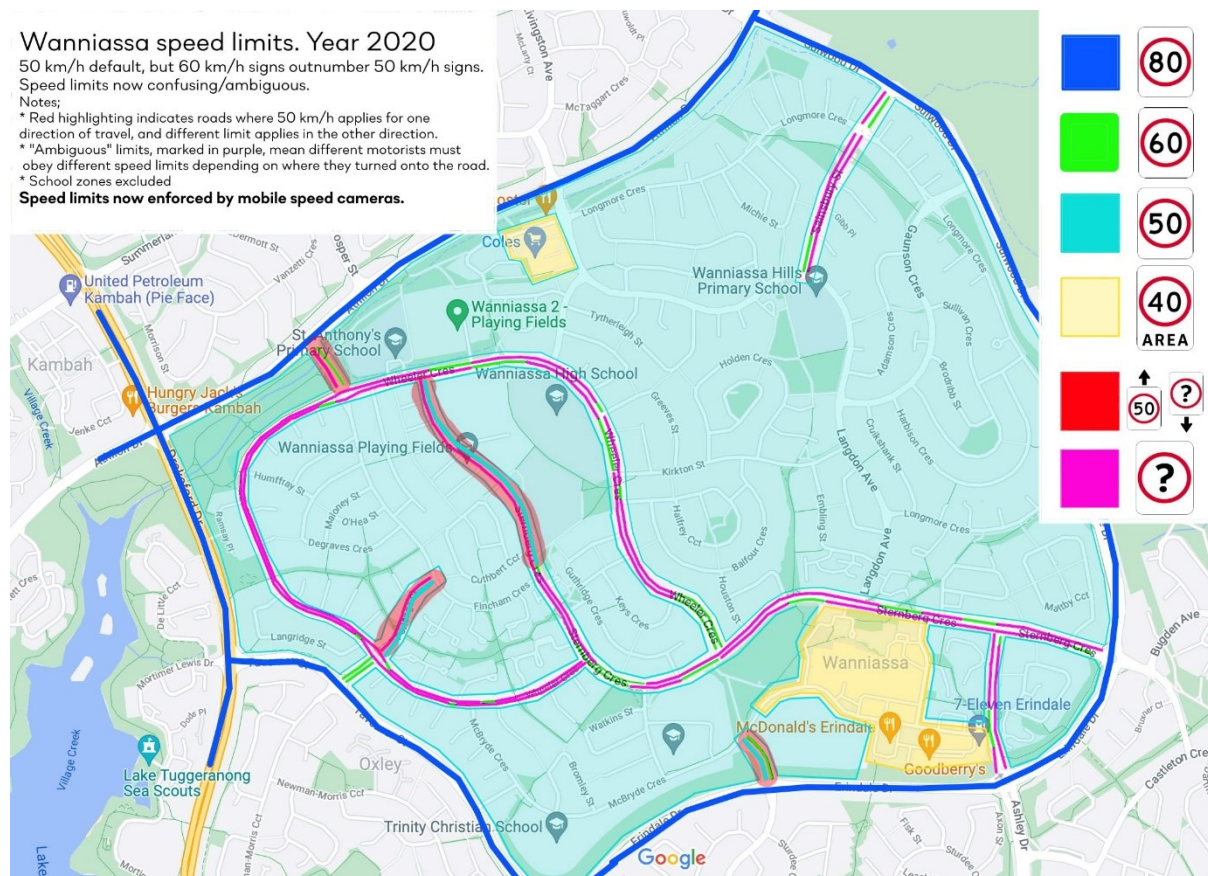


Figure 3 Above: Wanniasa Speed Limits Year 2020

## Road Topology & Visual Cue's

The width of Canberra's residential streets varies greatly depending on the road classification. For a motorist, driving on a wide road at 50 km/h can feel slow, whilst 50 km/h on a narrow road can feel dangerously fast. The following images demonstrate that for Wanniasa, road topography and width play little to no part in determining which roads will be posted with 60 km/h.

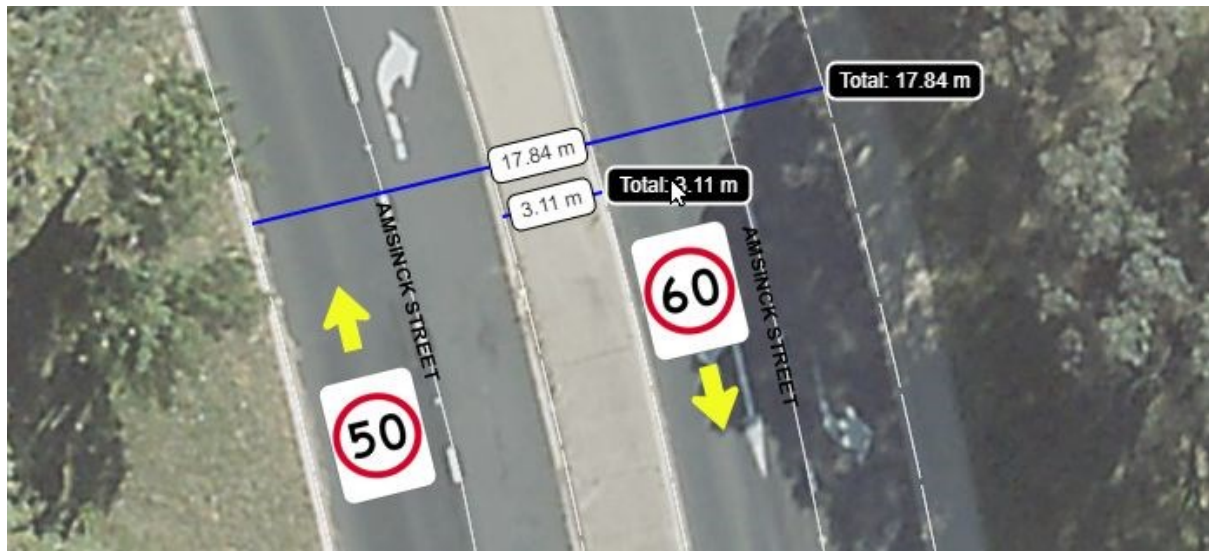


Figure 4: Amsinck Street has no speed limit sign posted for one direction, and a 60 km/h sign posted in the other.

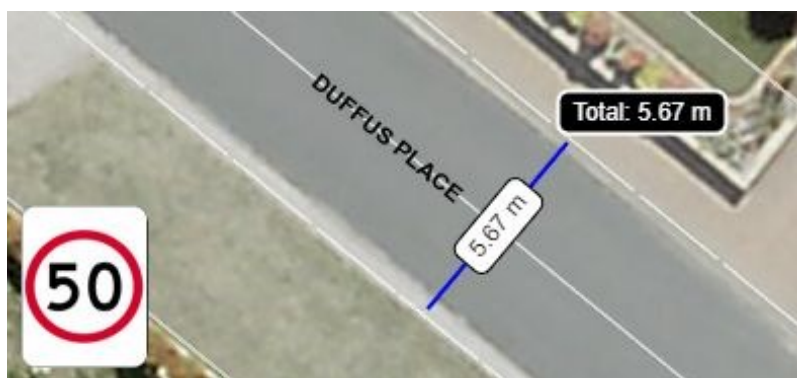


Figure 5: Duffus Place

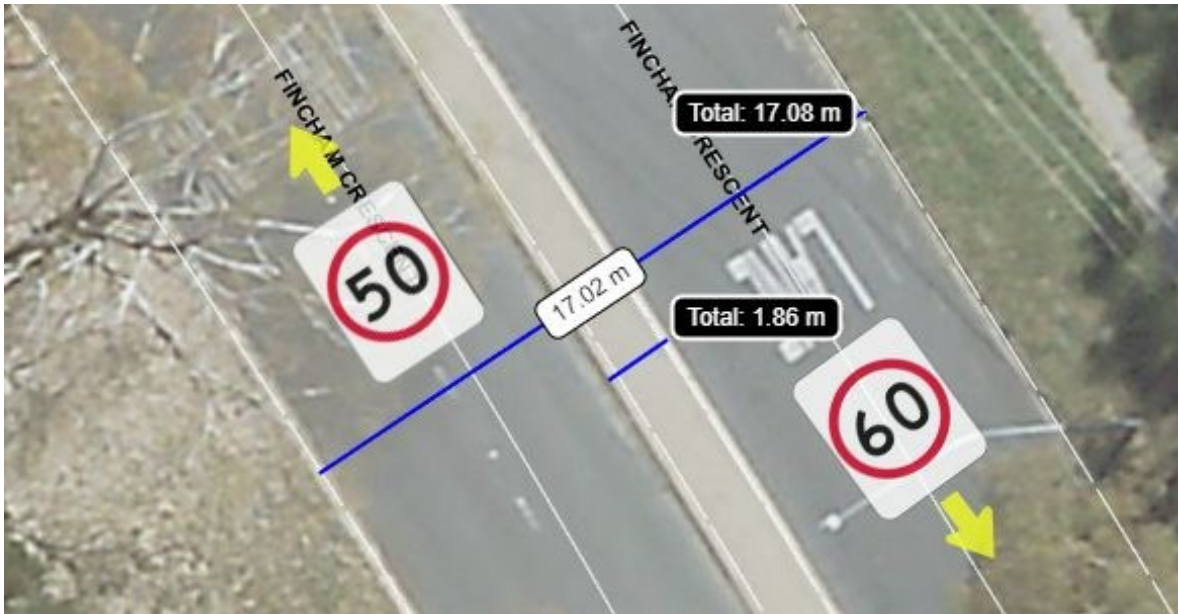


Figure 6: This 200 metre section of Fincham Crescent is marked with a 60 km/h sign for one direction of traffic only.



Figure 7: Image of Forlonge Street between Taverner Street and Fincham Crescent. Motorists who enter Forlonge Street from Taverner Street will pass two 60 km/h signs, but those entering the same street from Wheeler Crescent will not pass any signs. For motorists travelling Northbound on Forlonge Street, two speed limits can apply to the same length of road in the same direction. Motorists travelling southbound have not passed any signs by this point, so must obey a 50 km/h speed limit.



Figure 8: Another example of an exceptionally wide road with a 50 km/h speed limit. Gaunson Crescent is one of two main roads entering Wanniasa from Sulwood Drive. The other road, Sainsbury Street, has a layout and width almost identical to Gaunson Crescent, but has a 60 km/h speed limit.



Figure 9: Sainsbury Street, the other main road into Wanniasa from Sulwood Drive, has a 60 km/h speed limit.

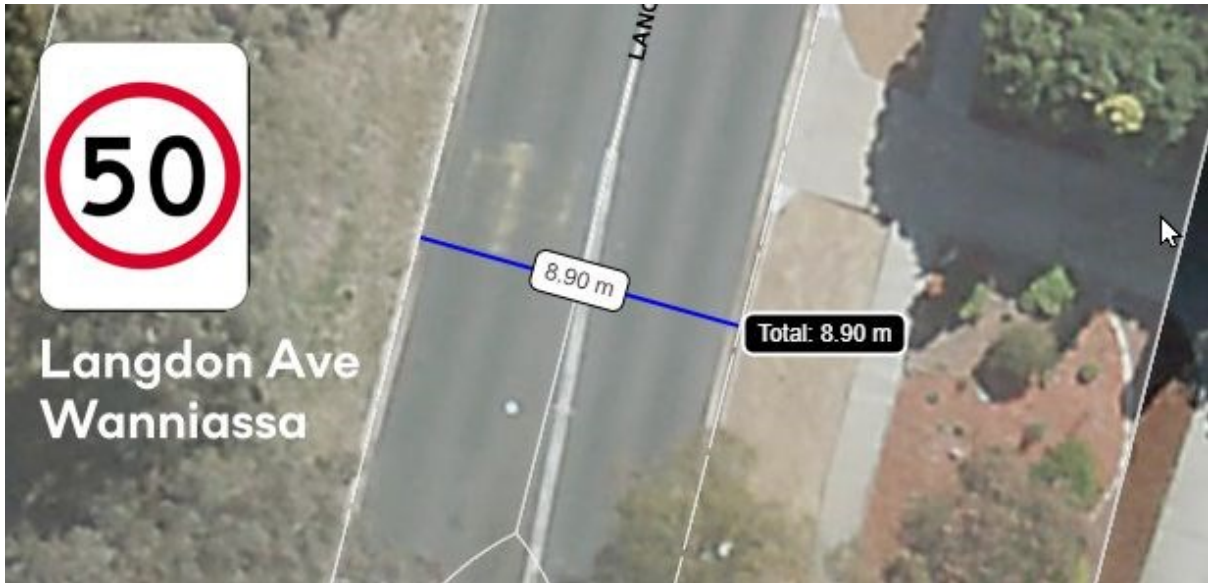


Figure 10: Despite its width, Langdon Avenue has had a 50 km/h speed limit since the ACT's default limit dropped to 50 km/h. In 2012, I observed "End Roadwork" signage with a 60 km/h speed limit sign attached, for several days at the Northern end of Langdon Avenue. This was reported to Roads ACT, who to their credit, responded by installing permanent 50 km/h signs for motorists who turn into Langdon Avenue from Athllon Drive to clear up any confusion that the erroneous roadwork signage may have caused.



Figure 11: Longmore Crescent has a 50 km/h speed limit along its entire length, despite being the same width as other roads in Wanniasa that have 60 km/h speed limits.



Figure 12: McBryde Cres 40 km/h Area. Some traffic calming has been installed in this 40 km/h area, but it is not particularly aggressive. This speed limit is almost never obeyed.



Figure 13: Section of McBryde Cres with a 50 km/h speed limit.



Figure 14: Rylah Crescent 40 km/h area, 7 metres wide.

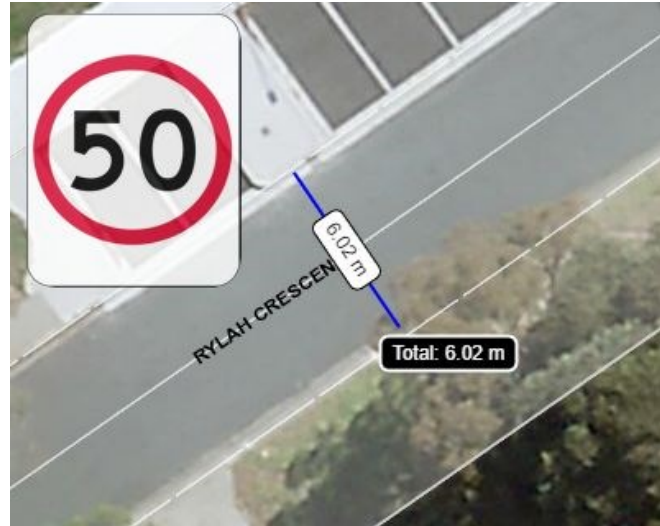


Figure 15: Rylah Crescent, 50 km/h area, 6 metres wide.

Rylah Crescent deserves a special mention here. These pictures help to illustrate the need to plan for all of Canberra's local access streets to have speed limits even lower than 50 km/h.

As motorists pass through the commercial area of Rylah Crescent, they are not permitted to exceed 40 km/h.

However, when motorists exit the commercial area and enter the residential section of Rylah Crescent, the road narrows and the likelihood of children being present on or near the road increases. Yet motorists are advised that it is safe to **increase** their travel speed by 10 km/h, up to 50 km/h.

A vulnerable road user has a 75% chance of surviving a collision with a car at 40 km/h, but at 50 km/h that chance drops to 15%.

This situation doesn't make sense and is unnecessarily dangerous.



Figure 16: Laurens Street is the widest in Wanniasa but has a 50 km/h speed limit. Fortunately, this road does include 50 km/h speed limit signs for motorists turning into Wanniasa from Taverner Street. While it could be argued that despite it's width, Laurens Street was too short to have a 60 km/h speed limit, it is the same length as the western portion of Fincham Crescent, posted with a 60 km/h limit, and Amsinck Street which has a posted 60 km/h speed limit (for southbound traffic only).



Figure 17: The road width of Snowball Place is only 5 metres wide but has an identical speed limit to several of Wanniasa's 17-metre-wide roads. If this had been the case due to the ACT trying to simplify urban area speed limits by setting a 50 km/h on every road and street in every residential area, then coming across two vastly different residential roads with an identical speed limit could have made sense. However as this was not the case. Therefore this situation does not make sense.



Figure 18: Sternberg Crescent has a 60 km/h speed limit for most of its length (with an exception of the northern most end with a 50 km/h speed limit for southbound traffic only), and yet it's slightly narrower than many other roads in Wanniasa with 50 km/h speed limits.



Figure 19: Wheeler Crescent has a 60 km/h speed limit for its entire length, but also has traffic calming installed in many sections. Why advise motorists they can safely travel at 60 km/h, then install traffic calming which requires them to routinely slow to 20 km/h? That doesn't make sense. Wheeler Crescent is also 9 metres wide for almost its entire length. Why is this road set at 60 km/h, but Longmore Cres and Langdon Avenue, roads that are almost identical in width and purpose, have 50 km/h speed limits?

<b>Road Name</b>	<b>Road Width (m) <sup>1 2</sup></b>	<b>Speed Limit (km/h) <sup>3 4</sup></b>
Amsinck Street	18	60
Laurens Street	18	50
Fincham Cres (Northern End)	17	60
Gaunson Cres (Eastern End)	17	50
Sainsbury Street	17	60
Forlonge Street	9	60
Langdon Ave	9	50
Longmore Cres	9	50
McBryde Cres (Commercial Area)	9	40
McBryde Cres (Residential Area)	9	50
Sternberg Crescent	9	60
Wheeler Crescent	9	60
Rylah Cres (Commercial Area)	7	40
Hanna Street	6.5	50
Rylah Cres (Residential Area)	6	50
Duffus Place	5.5	50
Snowball Place	5	50
<p><sup>1</sup> Measurements obtained from ArcGIS. Rounded to nearest 50cm.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Includes width of median strip where present</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Speed limits confirmed with Google Street view imagery from August 2020.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this table, on roads with ambiguous speed limits, or speed different speed limits in each direction of travel, the highest speed limit applicable at the cross section location has been used.</p>		

The previous table has been ordered by road width, with Wanniasa's widest roads at the top. If speed limits in Canberra's residential areas were set in a manner intended to be logical to the average motorist, then the highest speed limits in Wanniasa should only be found towards the top of this table.

If Canberra's residential areas had a simple, blanket 50 km/h speed limit, then a tangible reason would exist when explaining why roads of various width have the same speed limit.

Almost all roads with 60 km/h speed limits in Wanniasa, are 9 metres wide. Motorists who have driven these roads many times will rarely see a 60 km/h sign, but they'll know they are present. As such, motorists will become accustomed to turning onto roads that are 9 metres wide, then immediately accelerate up to 60 km/h, operating under the assumption they'll eventually pass a 60 km/h sign. These sections of road are marked in purple in Figure 3.

However, it is possible for a motorist to be on a different 9-meter-wide road, which looks and feels identical to other residential roads posted at 60 km/h, yet this 9-metre-wide road has a 50 km/h speed limit. Add mobile speed cameras to the 9-metre-wide roads with 50 km/h speed limits, and the situation has been created where the average motorist will become adamant that the primary motivation behind speed enforcement, is to deliberately catch people out for "revenue raising" purposes.

Keep in mind, this (rushed) case study has examined just one of Canberra's suburbs. Every urban area of Canberra has speed limit issues similar to Wanniasa's. For nearly 20 years, motorists have contended with Canberra's urban speed limits being poorly signposted and rigorously enforced throughout Canberra. The speed camera enforcement of Northbourne Avenue's 40 km/h zone may have been a tipping point for many, which is ultimately why this inquiry is being held.

I'm going to give the ACT Government the benefit of the doubt and assume that the ACT's confusing and highly enforced speed limit situation can be explained by Hanlon's razor. Though I concede that it is understandable, and at times, not unreasonable for so many motorists to view the situation as entrapment and revenue raising.

## A Quick Fix

How can a large proportion of Canberra’s ambiguous speed limits be quickly fixed? The answer is simple. The default urban speed limit in the ACT is 50 km/h. A higher speed limit should only be posted within our urban areas where there is an exceptional and compelling reason to do so. This means that any road with frequent private property access, or pedestrians likely to be present, or is otherwise a non-arterial road which fits the definition of being inside a “built-up” area under the ACT’s Road Transport (Road Rules) Regulation 2017, should never have speed limits set higher than 50 km/h.

The image below depicts what Wanniasa’s speed limits should have looked like after Canberra’s default urban speed limit formally dropped to 50 km/h in 2003.

Where the political will exists to ban 60 km/h speed limits within the boundaries of Canberra’s residential suburbs, almost all issues raised between page 9 and this point of this document, would immediately be rectified.

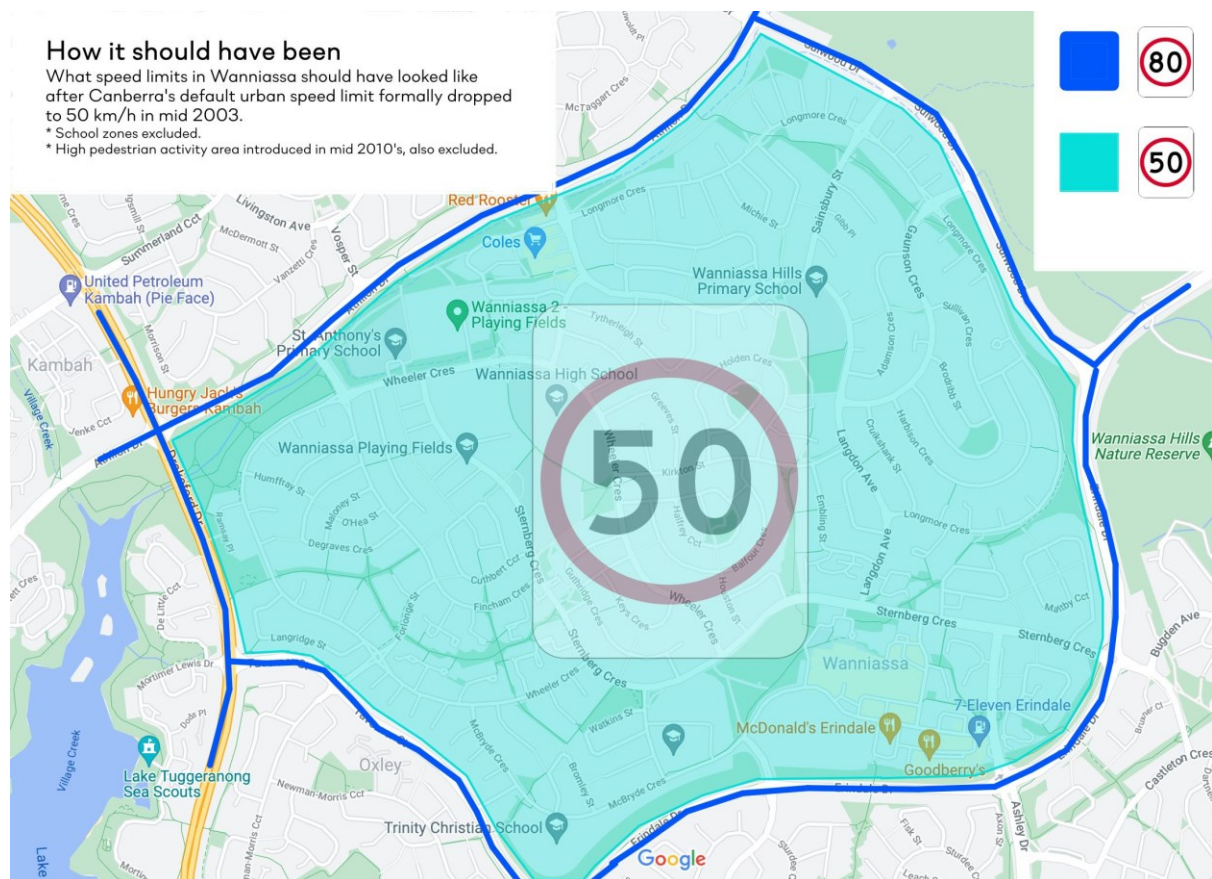


Figure 20: How the default 50 km/h speed limit should have been implemented in Wanniasa, when the ACT's 50 km/h speed limit was introduced back in 2003. For comparison with current speed limits, please revisit Figure 3.

## Other Examples

There are other issues which need exploring, however I must budget the time I have available to respond to the inquiry. Hopefully by virtue of needing several thousand words and a dozen pages to illustrate just how confusing speed limits are in just one of Canberra's suburbs, I've been able to communicate that a problem exists. Though I have included some more examples of problems I am aware of outside of Wanniasa.

### Jerrabomberra Avenue – 4 speed limits in 500 metres

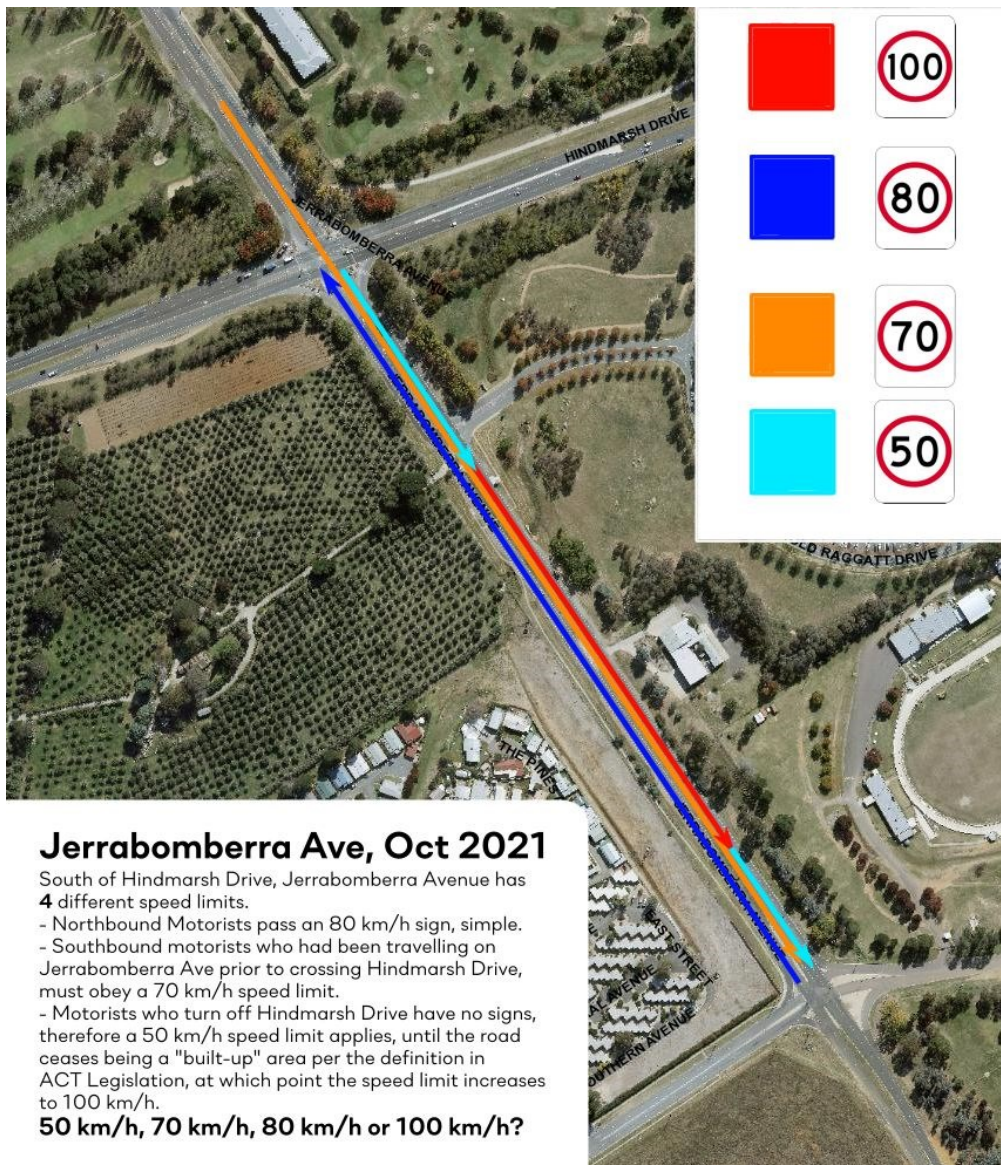


Figure 21: 500 Metres of Jerrabomberra Avenue has four different speed limits per current signposting, or lack thereof.

According to Google Maps street view, the situation above has existed for at least four years.

## Williamson Street, Holder – Camera operator confusion

This is a situation I witnessed personally sometime in the mid 2000's. Despite no speed limit signs existing on Williamson Street, a speed camera operator had set up their van with signs on the roof advising the speed limit for the road was 60 km/h. I took the time to stop and approach the operator to ask why a 60 km/h speed limit was being enforced, when the speed limit on the road was 50 km/h. The operator advised me despite no speed limit signs existing on the street, the speed limit according to her documentation, was 60 km/h.

## Woodcock Drive, Gordon – Camera operator carelessness

This is another situation regarding camera enforcement that I personally witnessed. During the mid-year school break of 2021, school zone speed limits did not apply, as is standard. During the first week of Term 3, Covenant Christian School in Gordon did not immediately re-open to students, and thus did not “unfold” their 40 km/h signage.

During that week, I observed a speed camera van set up to enforce the 40 km/h school zone, despite the “School Zone (40)” signage being closed.

How many motorists would have had their perceptions of “the government doesn't know what they're doing” reenforced by a speed camera being set up, without the operator having checked that the speed zone they were enforcing actually existed? How would this situation go down in a pub test?

I took the time to stop and advise the camera operator the signs weren't up, at which point she packed up the van and left the site

If I had not stopped to talk to the operator, how many speeding fines would have been issued in error? How much time would motorists have had to spend fighting the incorrectly issued tickets? How many motorists would have just paid the fine without realising the fine was incorrectly issued?

There is no excuse for any speed camera operator to set up their equipment without first ascertaining that the speed limit they will be enforcing is appropriately signposted.

## Cowlishaw Street, Greenway – Poor quality assurance

A recently expanded 40km/h speed limit in Greenway now includes Cowlishaw Street. I photographed the situation below in mid-August 2021. These are brand new speed limit signs, with one incorrectly advising motorists the “40 Area” speed limit has ended, moments before another “40 Area” sign advises them it continues.

Whilst this situation may not be as dangerous as other erroneous speed limit signage in Canberra, it helps to illustrate that those in charge of installing and maintaining speed limit signage in Canberra simply are not concerned about quality assurance of their work. It illustrates they are not remotely concerned with ensuring speed limit signage is clear, concise, or respectable, in the ACT.



Figure 22: Brand new signage in Greenway illustrates how little care the ACT Government takes when installing and maintaining speed limit signage.

## Cessnock Street – 50 one way 60 the other

Ipswich Street, with a 60 km/h speed limit, previously terminated at Newcastle Street. Cessnock Street opened for public use approximately 10 years ago, allowing motorists to drive straight on from the northern end of Ipswich Street, on to the new road. Motorists who enter Cessnock Street from Newcastle Street, do not pass a speed limit sign, and must obey a 50 km/h speed limit. Motorists who have continued into Cessnock St from Ipswich Street, have not passed any signage advising the speed limit has dropped from 60 km/h, so may continue

travelling at 60 km/h. Motorists travelling on the southbound side of Cessnock Street must obey a speed limit of 50 km/h.

This situation has existed since Cessnock Street opened to traffic. It is not a result of speed limit signage being vandalised or knocked over. It is a result of poor quality assurance of speed limit signage by the ACT Government. Cessnock Street opened to public, passed all ACT Government inspections, with a 60 km/h speed limit one way and a 50 km/h speed limit the other. How did this happen?

The northern end of Cessnock Street continues into Kembla Street. Kembla Street used to have a 50km/h speed limit in both directions. Thanks to poor quality assurance of signage on Cessnock Street, motorists who have travelled on Ipswich Street, through Cessnock Street, and onto Kembla Street, can now legitimately argue that Kembla Street has a 60 km/h speed limit.

How could a government who is genuinely concerned about addressing speed, one of the leading causes of road trauma, allow a new road to be opened in such a state?

### Erindale Drive – 50 or 80?

A small Section of Erindale Drive was duplicated approximately 6 years ago. In a similar vein to Cessnock street, the new carriageway of Erindale Drive was opened to traffic with no speed limit signage. 6 years on, motorists who turn onto the southbound carriageway of Erindale Drive from Sternberg Crescent, do not pass a speed limit sign until after they pass through the next round about with Ashley Drive. As such, for 600 metres, some motorists on a brand-new section of Erindale Drive must obey a 50 km/h speed limit, and others will obey an 80 km/h speed limit.

Of course, few motorists if any would obey a 50 km/h speed limit on this section of Erindale Drive as they know the speed limit is likely to be 80 km/h. This gives more credit to my claim that the unofficial speed limit adage for Canberra is:

**50 unless signposted otherwise, unless otherwise and not signposted**

## Hindmarsh Drive - 50 one way, 80 the other

Motorists turning off Wyangala Street onto the eastbound side of Hindmarsh Drive will not pass a visible speed limit sign for nearly 1 km. An 80 km/h sign does exist, but for 6 years it has been so overgrown with bushes that it is almost invisible to motorists.

This part of Hindmarsh Drive meets the definition of a “road in a built up area” under the ACT’s Road Transport (Road Rules) Regulation 2017. Without a visible speed limit sign, should motorists travel no faster than 50 km/h, despite other motorists travelling in the same direction at up to 80 km/h? Or is it acceptable for motorists to travel faster than 50 km/h when they believe a speed limit sign may exist somewhere?

If even basic maintenance of road the ACT’s speed limit signs was conducted, this situation would not have been allowed to exist for 6 years.

## Townshend Street, Phillip – Dangerously Fast

Townshend Street in Phillip has a 60 km/h speed limit for one direction and 50 km/h the other. This only recently became the case, as the road had a 60 km/h speed limit in both directions for some time. It is worth questioning though, why motorists using this urban road, with significant pedestrian traffic, and sporting what I believe is the highest density of intersections in all of Canberra, were ever told that travelling 10 km/h faster than the urban speed limit was safe. A pedestrian hit at 60 km/h will probably die. When side on crashes occur at speeds faster than 50 km/h, serious injuries to vehicle occupants is more likely to occur. 60 km/h has always been an inappropriate speed on Townshend Street in Phillip. I have raised this issue in the “fix my street” platform more than once over the last 10 years, yet I have never received a reply.

All the Phillip CZ3 precinct, as bounded by Melrose, Hindmarsh, and Athllon Drives, should have been one of the first places to have a 40 km/h Area speed limit implemented.

## More examples

Other roads that I’m familiar with which have different speed limits for opposing directions of traffic include:

- Currong Street South, Reid – 60 km/h one way and 50 km/h the other. This has been the case here for at least 10 years.
- The eastern half of Mapleton Avenue, Harrison
- Trevor Gibson Way, Taylor (another brand-new road)

And last, but not least, Geelong Street, Fyshwick.

## Geelong Street

Almost everything I have raised regarding my concerns with Canberra's default speed limit implementation, I also raised during an in-person conversation with Roads ACT Director, Tony Gill, back in 2012. To be fair on Mr Gill, it was a very brief conversation, and I was not able to demonstrate my concerns to him with any of the visual aids included in this letter. When I questioned why the decision had been made to not install 50 km/h signs at the new boundaries to the ACT's 50 km/h speed limits, when 60 km/h signs used to mark the boundaries of our old 60 km/h limits, he advised that this had never been the case and that I was mistaken. I asked Mr Gill which roads in Fyshwick should be posted with 60 km/h speed limits, he advised that only Ipswich and Newcastle Streets were now 60 km/h roads. In response to this, I advised Mr Gill that the 60 km/h boundary speed limit signs that he claims to have never existed, still exist on Whyalla Street, and that at that point, Whyalla Street had a 60 km/h speed limit one way and 50 km/h the other, for nearly 10 years.

Also to Mr. Gills credit, he organised to have the erroneous 60 km/h speed limit signs removed from Whyalla Street within 48 hours of being notified. Whyalla Street's old 60 km/h signs were replaced with Fyshwick's first "boundary" 50 km/h speed limit sign, which is still in place today.

At the time, I did not tell Mr. Gill about Geelong Street, as I could not remember the name of that road. Geelong Street is in the same area of Fyshwick as Whyalla Street. Unlike Whyalla Street, old 60 km/h boundary speed limit signage still exists on Geelong Street today. This means the crew sent out to replace Whyalla Street's speed limit signage in 2012 apparently were not asked to perform an audit of other speed limit signage in Fyshwick.

There is something unique about Geelong Street though, which is why I've mentioned it a few times. Approximately 200 metres from Geelong Street's erroneous 60 km/h speed limit signs, is the ACT Government Roads Maintenance Building, at 255 Canberra Avenue. To commute to this building, ACT Government Roads Maintenance staff will frequently turn off Canberra Avenue and into Geelong Street, passing the incorrect speed limit signage.

As such, for nearly 20 years, the ACT Government personnel who oversee road signage in the territory, have passed erroneous 60 km/h signs on a near daily basis. Yet for 20 years, nobody has identified these signs were incorrect, or taken action to have them fixed. In 20 years, ACT roads and signage maintenance personnel have failed to rectify erroneous speed limit signage located almost immediately outside their own building. This signage encourages motorists to travel at potentially deadly speeds down a local access road.

I cannot understand what could cause such an oversight to have occurred for almost one fifth of a century. For me, the speed limit signage situation on Geelong Street is perfectly symbolic of just how apathetic the ACT Government has been when it has come to ensuring the ACT's speed limit signage is clear, correct, respectable and enforceable. 20 years of incorrect speed limit signage outside the ACT Government Road Maintenance building indicates that at no time, has a city-wide audit of Canberra's speed limit signage been carried out. At no time has

the ACT Government encouraged the ACT's Road Maintenance personnel to look out for road signage problems to ensure issues are corrected.



Figure 23: Incorrect speed limit signage on Geelong Street. Captured by Google Street view in 2009.

## Geelong Street gets worse

In approximately 2014 – 2015, the Geelong Street / Canberra Avenue intersection was upgraded to include traffic lights. Part of these works included installing new street lighting. During these works, the erroneous 60 km/h signs were removed, then re-installed on the new streetlamp posts.

The completed intersection upgrade passed inspections, and the intersection was re-opened to the public with the incorrect speed limit signs back in place.



Figure 24: Incorrect speed limit signage on Geelong Street, captured by Google Street view in 2020. The signs were taken down, then reinstalled during intersection upgrades.

## Geelong Street gets even worse

During September 2021, roadworks took place on Geelong Street.

I took the photo below on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2021. At that point, the roadwork signage as pictured had been in place for three weeks. The temporary 50 km/h sign in the background of this photo, may be the first time the correct speed limit has been posted on Geelong Street since 2003.

The ACT Government department in charge of road signage allowed this situation to exist for at least three weeks, only 200 meters from their own building. I have not been to this area of Fyshwick since I took the photo below, so do not know if this is still the case.

Despite roadwork signage like this being commonplace in Canberra, the ACT Government insists that motorists must observe and obey all speed limits, or they risk being penalised or losing their licence.



Figure 25: With situations like this existing in the territory, the ACT Government cannot be taken seriously when they ask motorists to obey speed limits.

## Northbourne Avenue & Conclusion

As I've hopefully established, those ultimately responsible for setting speed limits and maintaining road signage have spent the last 20 years failing Canberrans. For the past 20 years, Canberrans have often been forced to figure speed limits out for themselves, but if they don't get it right, they'll receive a penalty. In a city that has been built to ensure that the only practical mode of transport for most people is their car, receiving speeding penalties and/or a licence suspension can be a life ruining event.

When Canberra City's 40 km/h Area speed limit was expanded to include Northbourne Avenue, the 40 km/h signage installed was very visible and the boundaries of the 40 km/h limit were clear. Unfortunately, no traffic calming was implemented & the road's visual cues remain unchanged, meaning 40 km/h feels unreasonably slow to many motorists. Given an average Canberran motorist is likely to have experienced up to 20 years of speed limits that are confusing, don't make sense, are improperly signposted, or incorrectly signposted, I am not surprised that so many people chose to either ignore Northbourne's new 40 zone, or believed the signage had been installed in error.

I am personally in support of the speed limit reduction on Northbourne Avenue, though an abundance of evidence exists demonstrating that 30 km/h is a more appropriate speed limit for high pedestrian activity areas. We know that unnecessary and excessive vehicle speed is one of the leading contributors to road trauma worldwide. "Speed Kills" is not meant to be a catch phrase to justify the existence of speed cameras. Yet an unacceptable proportion of Canberran motorists still believe that reduced speed limits and increased speed enforcement is primarily a revenue raising venture on the part of the ACT Government.

Such a large proportion of motorists having such little respect for the risks involved with driving unnecessarily fast, places everyone at risk. As excessive and unnecessary speed is one of the leading causes of road trauma in Canberra, this issue should be viewed as a **public health crisis**. It is a crisis which the ACT Government must immediately address.

To address this crisis, the ACT Government must first look internally to ascertain how on earth Canberra's speed limit signage has ended up in the state where so many motorists don't take it seriously. If Canberra's motorists are to be convinced the ACT Government genuinely believes that "speed kills", if they are to be convinced that they have to slow down, and prior to "speed kills" ever passing the pub test, the ACT Government must ensure there is not an ounce of complacency, nor one iota of ambiguity when it comes to signposting Canberra's speed limits.

I acknowledge this document has been lengthy. I am sure my frustration with this decades long problem contributed to my wording being superfluous. Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts on the matter.

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