



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy), Mark Parton MLA

Submission No 46 – Matthew Sandford

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

Received - 18/10/21

Authorised – 04/11/21

To the Committee

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF REVISED SPEED LIMITS IN CIVIC PETITIONS 31-21 AND 38-21

I write in strong support of the petition calling for waiver of fines for the month of July.

I have received an infringement notices in the month of July for going 46 Kmh in the effect ted zone . I live on the south side and regularly transit along Northbourne avenue as part of my duties as a worker in the construction industry. I have been driving for over 40 years and have a very good driving record and regularly listen to the news on the radio and TV and receive the Canberra Times every day. I do not nor will I ever listen to commercial radio stations something I am sure I am not alone in, in, the ACT. Subsequently I was not aware of the changes in the speed limit until articles started appearing on the front page of the Canberra Times towards the end of July.

As noted above my speed was only 6 kmh above the new limit which in all honesty was just good luck as I at the time had no idea the new limit was in force. I have written to the Department to dispute the infringements and to seek a withdrawal on the basis that I was not aware of the speed changes – both communication and signage were clearly inadequate which is supported by the significant number of fines. I understand it is unheard of for the Department to reverse these decisions once they are made. So really this committee provides the only opportunity for us to achieve some justice in relation to this matter as several of my fines have now been referred to the ACT Magistrates Court.

I note that fines were issued in July, the response did not arrive until October as so many people wrote in requesting a waiver for similar reasons to me and by in large because this whole process is just unfair, just a money raising exercise for the ACT government. I am so angry I therefore intend to take the matter to the ACT Magistrates Court which will then incur further costs to government in terms of processing all of these individual claims in that forum.

When I received my first fine I went back into town and parked my car in the usual space and walked along Rudd St to Northbourne Avenue and down to London circuit. I turn right from Rudd into Northbourne and stay in the inside lane on the light rail side. There were absolutely no signs there indicating a change in the speed limit or a 40km limit. On the other side of Northbourne I saw two signs which said Roadwork and had a 40km sign. There was no announcement of changes to speed limits at all.

I can see that in recent weeks many new signs have been erected so that now when officials write back to me, they can say that there is clear signage, this was not actually the case at the time and I understand that other people who signed the petition have taken photos of the minimal signs in place in early July.

I understand from the Canberra Times that Access Canberra officials briefed Ministers that ‘a public information campaign was not viable in all circumstances’ and that a recommendation that every licensed driver in Canberra receive a letter to inform them of the changed to the speed limit was rejected by Ministers. It is Canberra’s main arterial road from south to north and a significant change like this did require proper notification.

I also understand that in the period when the cameras were on from 21 June to 4 July and infringements were not issued, there was no notification provided to those who exceeded the limit as a warning of the changes to come. This seems like a shocking oversight as people would have continued to drive the way they had been for the previous weeks unaware of the changes which had

taken place. Clearly the notification and communication process has been from start to finish a complete failure.

This failure has resulted in a significant impacts on a substantial proportion of the community given the number of people that have been fined reflected in the significant rise in revenue to more than \$32m this year as outlined in the ACT Budget papers. Given these changes were followed soon after by our lockdown which commenced 14 August, the community is dealing with significant stresses including job losses and emotional well-being issues. Collectively these circumstances justify a fines waiver for the month of July as the impact on individuals is great. In my case over \$1500 in fines which is substantial and 5 demerit points. As the allowable demerit points for a licence in the ACT are 12 within a three-year period this means the accumulation of these points could also lead to a suspension of my licence any time over the next 3 years. This also puts added pressure on individuals, it certainly does on me.

I also note under the relevant legislation that the nature of the offences and the relevant risk should be taken into account when making decisions to waive fines. None of these infringements are serious and they all represent a low risk as long as drivers were driving below the speed limit of 60km they assumed was in force at the time.

I understand that the role of the Committee is not to consider whether the speed limit of 40km is appropriate for Northbourne avenue so I will keep my comments focused on the terms of reference.

If the speed limit remains at 40km I would suggest that more communication is required over a significant period to reinforce the changes to the public including visitors to Canberra.

In summary it is clear to me that the changes to the speed limit on Northbourne Avenue were implemented without effective communication and signage and I recommend that this Committee take action and recommend a fines waiver for the month of July. I also recommend that a decision be taken quickly and announced to stop further waste of taxpayers money by action being taken in the ACT Magistrates Court and relieve the financial and personal pressure on individuals.

Thank you for your consideration

Matthew Sandford

18 October 2021

