
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS
MEDIA RELEASE



Surgeons point to fewer high speed deaths as proof that speed limits work

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Recently published evidence has confirmed what Northern Territory surgeons have been arguing for years: that the introduction of speed limits on Northern Territory highways has significantly cut the death rate of motorists travelling at higher speeds.

Dr David Read, surgeon and the Northern Territory representative on the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Trauma Committee, said a new study reveals that 48 fewer people have died while driving at speeds in excess of 100km/h since the introduction of speed limits in 2007.

"The Transport and Road Safety Research Group at the University of New South Wales has analysed data collected by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics which indicates that in the five years leading up to the introduction of speed limits in 2007, 153 people died on Territory roads while travelling at speeds in excess of 100km/h," Dr Read said. "In the five years after 2007, which was the transition year and which was excluded from this analysis, the number fell to 105. In effect therefore, the law which implemented speed limits has saved nearly ten lives per year."

"Given this new evidence, the College of Surgeons renews its call for the Northern Territory government to reverse its utterly irresponsible plan to abolish existing speed limits on our highways. Given there is no compelling reason to proceed with this proposal, it seems madness to invite ten people a year to kill themselves, leaving devastated family and friends behind."

Dr Read said the same study had revealed a very disturbing trend about road deaths at lower speeds.

"The data reveals that since the introduction of the new law in 2007, the number of motorists killed on Northern Territory roads while travelling at speeds below 100km/h has risen dramatically, from 88 between 2002 and 2006 to 137 between 2008 and 2012. This rise in fatalities in lower speed zones is particularly worrying and warrants the immediate and thorough attention of road safety experts and the government," he said. "This increase has offset the significant reduction in fatalities at higher speeds, and explains the widely misinterpreted fact that overall road deaths have remained fairly constant."

The Northern Territory used derestriction signs to indicate unlimited speeds until 2007, when an open road default limit of 110 km/h was introduced, along with 130km/h limits on the Territory's four major highways, the Stuart, Arnhem, Barkly and Victoria.

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