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## **MPs right to be cautious on road toll data**

### ***Academia runs into clear thinking speed bump***

Members of Parliament do not “lack courage” to cut the road toll but are in fact being appropriately cautious in balancing the right of motorists to drive without onerous and unnecessary restrictions against safety concerns, says Civil Liberties Australia, responding to criticism by Monash University Professor Max Cameron today.

“It is ironic that regular calls for more restrictions, higher penalties and harsher traffic enforcement regularly emanate from Monash University,” says CLA’s WA State Director Rex Widerstrom, “because that same university has done research which debunks what its ‘experts’ have to say.

“A literature review by a staffer from the Federal Department of Transport on secondment to Monash (<http://www.monash.edu.au/miri/research/reports/muarc053.pdf>) noted that a 10mph increase in speeds on US rural highways in the 80s, from 55 mph (88.5 kmh) to 65 mph (104.6 kmh) had actually resulted in a system-wide *reduction* in fatality rates of between 3.4% and 5.1%.

“The same review cites other studies which conclude that ‘...on highways with both lower and upper speed limits, the lower limit can be *two or three times more effective* than the upper limit in reducing overtaking and accident involvement rates’.

“The review itself concludes: ‘Whereas the relationship between speed and accident severity is well understood the same cannot be said for the role of speed in accident causation’.

“It would be nice if the formula were as simple as ‘a reduction in speed = a reduction in the road toll’ but it’s not, and it’s doing our MPs a disservice to say they’re not listening to the evidence when in fact there are numerous studies opposing the view of Professor Cameron,” Mr Widerstrom said. “We expect our representatives to be extremely cautious before passing laws which curtail freedoms when the evidence for the supposed good it will do is by no means clear cut. This is one of those occasions when our MPs are to be congratulated, not condemned.”

Ends

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