

# Oxley Highway

Speed zone review on a 44 kilometre section, west of Wauchope

**Since 2011, six people have died and more than 57 injured on a 44 kilometre section of the Oxley Highway, west of Wauchope. These crashes devastate families and are damaging for tourism and local communities along the Oxley Highway. We all share a responsibility to ensure safer journeys for travellers on the Oxley Highway.**



Oxley Highway at Gingers Creek, west of Wauchope

In response to the high crash rate a package of safety measures will be introduced on the 44 kilometre section of the Oxley Highway with the aim of reducing the number and severity of crashes. Motorcyclists are at greatest risk on this section of highway. They dominate the crash rates and all six deaths have been motorcyclists.

The safety package focuses on keeping cars on the road and riders on their bikes and creating a more forgiving environment for motorcyclists. Safety measures include:

- Reducing the speed limit from 100 km/h to 80 km/h. Lower speed limits increase the time for drivers and

riders to react to dangerous situations and reduce the severity of an accident

- Increasing driver awareness with upgraded signs, new high visibility warning signs on winding corners, and improvements to the road surface
- Providing better safety barrier protection with improvements to guard rail and targeted locations for motorcycle protection rail
- The 'Ride to Live' education campaign has tips for motorcycle riders, from choosing the right line in tight curves to choosing the right helmet. An update will soon be available for this section of the highway.

## Frequently asked questions

### What are the speed zone changes and how long will it add to my journey?

A new speed limit of 80km/h will be implemented on a 44 kilometre section of the Oxley Highway to the west of Wauchope, between Long Flat and Walcha. The current speed limit on this section is 100 km/h.

A 20 km/h reduction across the 44 kilometre stretch of road will only add a few minutes at most to travel times between Wauchope and Walcha. For the majority of car drivers this change is unlikely to increase travel time because they are already travelling at 80 km/h or below.

### How did you determine the speed limit?

A team of traffic engineers and road safety officers analysed traffic flow and speed data for the 44 kilometre length of highway. They undertook crash analysis, site inspections and speed surveys to determine a speed limit that reflects the road safety risk to the road users.

The speed zone review was carried out in line with the NSW Speed Zoning Guidelines, which provide a well established point of reference to ensure the consistent application of speed limits throughout NSW.

### What did the crash data reveal?

- A total of 67 crashes were recorded from 2011 to 2016, which resulted in 57 casualties, five of which were fatalities, 23 serious injuries and 20 moderate injuries. A further tragic fatal motorcycle crash occurred in March 2017, outside of the crash data analysis period.
- All six fatalities were motorcyclists and 42 of the 67 crashes involved motorcyclists.
- Speeding was reported as a factor in 45 of the 67 (67%) crashes and four of the five fatal crashes. Fatigue was reported as a factor in three crashes (4.5%) and alcohol in two crashes (3%).
- 57 of the 67 crashes (85%) occurred in daylight and 50 of 67 crashes (75%) in fine weather.

### What did the speed and traffic surveys reveal?

- The analysis revealed a high number of car drivers are already travelling at 80 km/h or below on this section of the highway.
- Speed data found the current 100 km/h speed limit is consistently being exceeded by motorcyclists.
- Cars are the main users of this section of highway (67% of all traffic).
- Motorcycles make up 13% of all traffic. This percentage increases to 23% over the weekends.



Bridge barrier improvements installed on the Oxley Highway at Hyndmans Creek

## How does this compare to the state average?

Our statistics show that even though motorcycles only represented 4% of motor vehicle registrations in 2015, they account for 19% of all road fatalities and 21% of all serious injuries in NSW.

In the last five years on this section of the Oxley Highway, motorcyclists accounted for all the road fatalities and 63% of all road injuries.

## How can reducing speed limits improve safety?

Speeding is the biggest single factor involved in road deaths, contributing to around 40% of road fatalities each year in NSW. Traffic and crash data collected on this section of road found speed is a major contributor to the number and severity of crashes – particularly for motorcyclists.

International and Australian research shows that even small reductions in vehicle speed can reduce the number of deaths and severity of injuries caused by crashes. A small decrease in vehicle speed can make a big difference to your chances of survival.

## When will the safety measures be implemented?

Work is expected to start shortly and be rolled out in stages. The reduced speed limit will be in place from late 2017. New, consistent advisory and crash zone signs will be installed and improvements to safety barrier protection will then be carried out at key locations.

We will be promoting motorcycle safety awareness in the area, with a 'Ride to Live' video which gives riders tips on how to cope with the challenges of this section of highway.

The community will be kept informed as work progresses.

## What safety measures have been completed on this section of the highway?

Recent improvements have included resurfacing of the road, kerb and gutter installation, and the installation of five pull over bays with emergency satellite phones.

The locations for the pull over bays and emergency phones were identified in consultation with the NSW Centre for Road Safety and the Motorcycle Council of NSW.

The sites, selected based on mobile phone coverage blackspots, utilise satellite phone technology. Calls on the emergency phones are free and answered 24 hours a day by the NRMA call centre.

Phone users are reminded these emergency phones use satellite technology. Subsequently, there can be a delay for your message to reach the other party and when they respond. Please be patient and wait for the reply before you continue with the call. We recently upgraded the solar panels to improve the reliability of the phones.

## What other work is taking place to support safety upgrades on the Oxley Highway?

The NSW Government is funding vital road improvements along the 514 kilometre Oxley Highway between Port Macquarie and the Mitchell Highway at Nevertire.

Work carried out to date has included improvements to intersections and bridge approach barriers. A number of key projects are also in development including a new overtaking lane and improvements to the alignment at Spencers Cutting and near Rosewood Road and a new roundabout at the Boundary Road intersection.

## What else is being done to improve safety for motorcyclists?

As part of the NSW Centre for Road Safety Motorcycle Safety Strategy, a three year action plan has been developed aimed at improving motorcycling safety across NSW. The NSW Government will continue to consult with the community in the delivery of these actions.



An emergency phone installed at Gingers Creek Road House, one of five along the Oxley Highway



New roundabout to be installed at the intersection of Boundary Road and Oxley Highway, Gunnedah

## For more information

For more information please contact the Grafton Regional Office by:

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November 2017  
RMS 17.532



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