

Speed limits on South Australian Beaches

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Government of South Australia
Department for Infrastructure
and Transport

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Executive Summary

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (the Department) is seeking feedback on options to manage vehicle speeds on South Australian beaches to improve safety for all beach users.

Beaches in South Australia are considered a 'road-related area' under road traffic legislation. This means that where no speed limit is set, the default speed limit applies. As such, many South Australian beaches are subject to the default speed limit of 100 kilometres (km) per hour that applies outside built up areas. In built up areas, the default speed limit of 50 km/h applies.

Vehicle crashes on beaches are recorded as part of road safety statistics. Over the five years (2017-2021) there were 29 reported crashes on South Australian beaches resulting in the loss of one life, 15 serious injuries and 13 minor injuries. During this period, speed was identified as a contributing factor in approximately 50% of all reported crashes that occurred on a beach.

The need for a lower default speed limit for South Australian beaches is being considered to improve safety for all beach users, especially given the impracticality of formal road infrastructure to separate vehicles from pedestrians and the changing nature of driving conditions on a beach.

Purpose

This discussion paper proposes four options for speed limits on South Australian beaches.

Options under consideration include:

- Option 1: A default beach speed limit of 40 km/h.
- Option 2: A default beach speed limit of 25 km/h.
- Option 3: A default beach speed limit of 40 km/h and 25 km/h when passing or within 100 metres of a pedestrian.
- Option 4: No change to current default speed limits.

Any new default beach speed limit will apply to all beaches accessible by vehicles across the state, unless otherwise signposted.

Recognising that the impacts of vehicles on the coastal environment and wildlife is an area of concern to many, this paper does not consider:

- Restricting or changing any access arrangements to South Australian beaches that are accessible by vehicle.
- Any environmental impacts from vehicles accessing a range of South Australian beaches.

This is because the primary purpose of a management framework for speed limits is to provide for the safe movement of people and vehicles on roads, and road related areas.

Background

Speed limits on South Australian beaches

Beaches in South Australia are considered a 'road-related area' under road traffic legislation and the Australian Road Rules apply, including rules related to speed limits.

The Department is responsible for managing speed limits within South Australia in accordance with the Speed Limit Guideline for South Australia.

There are two types of default speed limits, which exist in the absence of signposted speed limits:

- A default urban speed limit of 50 km/h which applies in built-up areas ¹, and
- A default rural speed limit of 100 km/h which applies elsewhere in non-built-up areas.

The default speed limit on most beaches in South Australia is 100 km/h due to the definition of a built-up area.

Nonetheless, a person must not drive a vehicle without due care or attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons using the road ², including beaches as road related areas.

Some beaches in South Australia have signposted speed limits. Several Adelaide metropolitan beaches such as Moana, Aldinga and Sellicks Beach, have a 10 km/h speed limit. A 40 km/h limit applies where beaches are within in a National Park, and no speed limit has been fixed by the relevant authority, in accordance with the *National Parks and Wildlife (National Parks) Regulations 2016*.

Generally, local councils are responsible for managing beaches in South Australia where they have care and control of beaches (down to the low tide water mark). They can manage access to beaches via the enactment of by-laws under section 246 of the *Local Government Act 1999*. Any signposted speed limits on beaches under the care and control of local councils must be approved via the Department as the authorising body.

South Australia Police (SAPOL) are responsible for enforcement of traffic offences relating to vehicles being driven on roads and road-related areas. Enforcement is often very difficult, given the resourcing requirements, terrain and geographic challenges presented by beaches throughout South Australia.

¹ A **built-up area**, in relation to a length of road, is defined within the Australian Road Rules (ARR) as an area in which either of the following is present for a distance of at least 500 metres or, if the length of road is shorter than 500 metres, for the whole road:

- Buildings, not over 100 metres apart, on land next to the road.
- Streetlights not over 100 metres apart.

² Section 45 of the Road Traffic Act 1961

Safety Concerns

One of the main concerns raised with vehicles accessing South Australian beaches is the safety of vulnerable beach goers (pedestrians) and the potential conflict between vehicles driving on a beach and pedestrians.

Beaches represent a unique driving environment that is less predictable than a more conventional road environment ³. The absence of any formal road infrastructure means there is no separation between vehicles and beach goers.

Over five years (2017-2021) there were 29 reported crashes on South Australian beaches resulting in the loss of one life, 15 serious injuries and 13 minor injuries ⁴. Travelling at an inappropriate speed was as a contributing factor in approximately 50% of all reported crashes on South Australian beaches.

Speed limits on beaches were highlighted as a concern during a 2020 Natural Resources Committee (NRC) Parliamentary Inquiry into 'the use of off-road vehicles in South Australia'.

Speed limits on beaches interstate

In New South Wales, some councils have enacted their own speed limits via their council by-laws, with a variety of speed limits being applied across a range of different locations. Variations range from 30 to 40 km/h, with some speed limits including a further reduction when in close proximity of a pedestrian, or another vehicle.

In Victoria, off road and recreational vehicles are not permitted on any Victorian public beaches, except for private access.

In Western Australia, recreational vehicles on beaches are managed in accordance with the Western Australian Road Traffic Act and local by-laws. For example, in the Shire of Broom, drivers can be fined \$175 for exceeding the 15 km/h speed limit under their Local Government Property and Public Places by-law.

In Queensland, the 100 km/h default speed limit applies unless there is a lower posted speed limit.

Movement and Place

Movement and Place is a framework that is increasingly being applied to guide transport planning in delivering a more integrated transport system to support a range of customer outcomes and user groups.

Movement and Place recognises that streets are not just about moving goods and people, but that they are also places for people to live, work, and spend time.

³ All responsibility, no care: a systems analysis case study of beach driving stakeholders in Australia, Page 8, Nicholas J. Stevens, Paul M. Salmon, *Centre for Human Factors and Sociotechnical Systems, University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore, 4558, Australia*

⁴ Note: Crashes on beaches are only reported where the beach is accessible to vehicles.

Movement and Place is an approach that takes into account the local context and road function in road design and operation.

This approach informs speed management and road design and can be used to inform decisions, including those about speed management. Accordingly, consideration is being given to the needs of all beach users and the sense of 'place' associated with a beach, particularly from a recreational and experiential perspective.

Safe Systems Approach

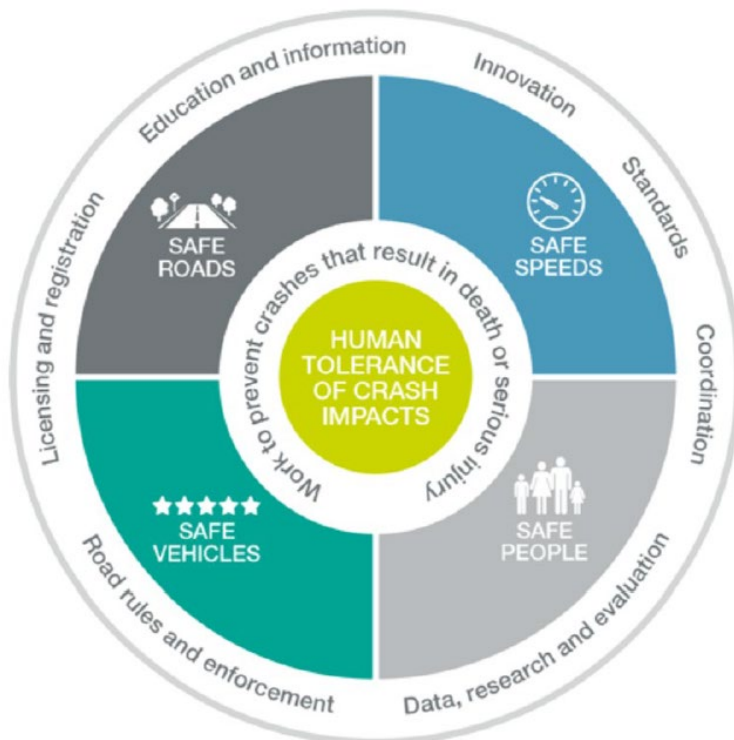
As outlined, in South Australia's Road Safety Strategy to 2031 ⁵, the Safe System approach adopts a holistic view of the road transport system and the interactions between people, vehicles, and the road environment. It recognises that people will always make mistakes and may have road crashes – but those crashes should not result in death or serious injury.

The Safe System model is regarded as international best practice and is the framework for improving road safety across Australia. It is built upon several key principles.



There are four overarching pillars under the Safe System approach that influence road safety outcomes as outlined in the diagram below. They include safe roads (infrastructure), safe vehicles, safe speeds at which people travel and safe people (road user behaviour).

⁵ Department for Infrastructure and Transport, South Australia's Road Safety Strategy to 2031, page 19



Source: Adapted from *Safer Roads, Safer Queensland: Queensland's Road Safety Strategy 2015–21*
<http://roadsafety.gov.au/nrss/safe-system.asp>

Austroads, is Australia's foremost transport industry organisation who provide impartial advice to transport agencies. They advise that the Safe System speed limit for vehicles, within an environment where they are interacting with pedestrians, is 30 km/h. Impact speeds above this value are understood to result in a rapid rise in the risk of severe injury, or even death, to the struck pedestrian or cyclist ⁶.

It is however, challenging to provide the appropriate infrastructure required to encourage compliance with a 30 km/h speed limit. In a beach environment, where no road infrastructure exists, this is particularly challenging.

Where vehicles are permitted on beaches it is not practical to use infrastructure to provide a safe environment for pedestrians through physical separation or barriers. This means that other measures such as vehicle speed need to be considered.

⁶ Austroads, Feb 2020, Integrating Safe Systems with Movement and Place for Vulnerable Road Users, page 24

DISCUSSION

Default beach speed limit options

Four options for a default speed limit on beaches are set out below. These have been informed by current best practice speed management principles and interstate approaches.

Any change to the default speed limit on beaches would require a variation to existing regulations, and feedback is sought on the following options prior to any decision for this to occur.

Option 1: A default beach speed limit of 40 km/h.

This option is consistent with similar speed limits applied to roads within other recreational areas, such as parks, reserves, sporting fields, or large parking areas.

A 40 km/h speed limit currently applies on beaches in National Parks (where no speed limit has been fixed by the relevant authority) and has for some time.

This speed limit allows for some improvement in road safety, including a likely reduction in casualty crash rates experienced across South Australian beaches.

Option 2: A default beach speed limit of 25 km/h.

This option recognises that 25 km/h is typically applied in a road environment where there is an increased emphasis on pedestrians, such as at locations where school children cross, or where there are road works.

It provides for a more substantial reduction in speed, and significant improvement in road safety, accommodating a higher level of protection for vulnerable beach users.

In some circumstances, a beach speed limit of 25 km/h may not provide sufficient speed (or momentum) to avoid vehicles getting bogged in soft sand beach environments.

Option 3: A default beach speed limit of 40 km/h and 25 km/h when passing or within 100 metres of a pedestrian.

This option is a combination of option 1 and 2. It allows for a higher speed limit at most times, with a part-time reduced speed limit that improves safety for vulnerable beach users.

The 25 km/h temporary speed limit is consistent with other existing part-time speed limits, such as school zones “25 when children present”.

The level of compliance and enforcement may be difficult, given the increased complexities associated with a part-time speed limit.

Option 4: No change to current default speed limit.

This option maintains the current situation, with posted speed limits used on some South Australian beaches.

It does not provide the same road safety benefit as the other options, as it is not practical to install speed limit signage on all beaches. The existing default speed limit of 100 km/h would therefore continue to apply, unless posted otherwise.

Extent of a beach

Feedback is also sought on how a beach will be defined for the purposes of applying the default speed limit, which could include:

- The area of the coast (pebble, sand or mudflats) that falls between the mean high-water mark and the mean low-water mark, commonly referred to as the **beach face** ⁷
- The **backshore**; the part of the beach lying between the beach face and the front of the dune, and
- Any **coastal dune environments** (sandy or vegetated) that extend inland to non-coastal land.

⁷ The beach face is the part of the beach which is wetted due to the varying tide and waves under normal conditions.

Next steps

We invite comments and feedback on the options outlined in this discussion paper for speed limits on South Australian beaches.

Have your say

Community input is important, so please have your say:

- Complete the online survey via our yourSAy webpage:

<https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/speed-limits-on-beaches>

- Email any comments to DIT.RoadSafety@sa.gov.au
- Post any written feedback or comments to:

Speed Limits on Beaches

Road Safety Policy and Research
Department for Infrastructure and Transport
GPO BOX 1533
Adelaide SA 5001

Sharing the yourSAy web link can encourage others to provide their input.

dit.sa.gov.au

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