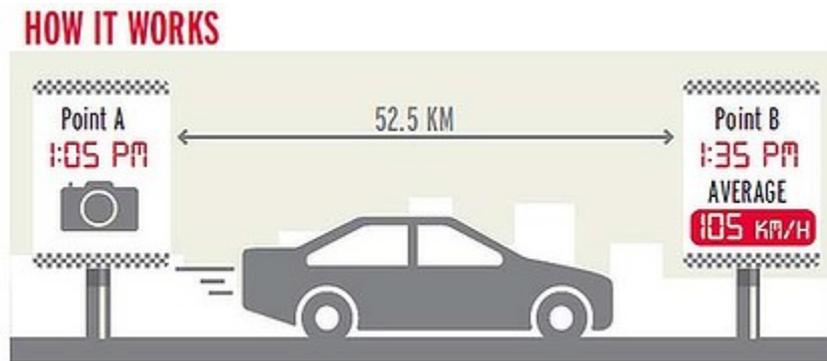


# Tens of thousands of speeding drivers get off scot-free

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Alexandra Smith

Almost 100,000 drivers were detected speeding by point-to-point speed cameras in nine months last year but not one received a fine or lost a demerit point because the system targets only trucks.



The speeds were recorded at the state's two sites with the cameras - a 27-kilometre stretch of the Great Western Highway near Meadow Flat outside Bathurst and a 35-kilometre section of the Pacific Highway near New Italy south of Ballina.

But the 94,271 vehicles caught speeding avoided punishment because the government does not want to extend the use of the cameras to cars, despite pleas from road safety experts.

In a submission to a national road safety strategy, being prepared by the heads of transport and road agencies, the National Road Safety Council said point-to-point cameras targeting all vehicles were crucial.

The council, established by the Council of Australian Governments in 2009, said a new strategy should be "unambiguous in specifying that governments will systematically install point-to-point speed cameras enforcing all vehicles".

The figures, revealed in documents obtained by the Pedestrian Council under freedom of information laws, show that only 117 warning letters were sent to trucks caught exceeding the limit.

When the government revealed in 2009 that trucks would be targeted, they said surveys taken on main freight routes in 2005 found 51 per cent of heavy vehicles exceeded the speed limit and nearly 7 per cent travelled at more than 115 km/h.

The technology - which takes a photograph of a number plate then measures the amount of time the vehicle takes to go between two points before calculating its average speed - is widely used in Europe.

But last year, the Roads Minister, David Berger, again ruled out extending the cameras to check car speeds. But he did commit to providing point-to-point cameras for heavy vehicles at 21 sites.

The opposition spokesman on roads, Andrew Stoner, has also ruled out using the technology for cars.

Harold Scruby, the chairman of the Pedestrian Council, said the Roads and Traffic Authority had conceded to him that the figures might be incorrect because some data was missing.

"The figures are definitely higher than this because there are months when the cameras are not operational or the data capture has been flawed," he said.

"The truck drivers who know they will be booked are almost perfectly behaved. Yet a significant amount of "other" motorists are quite happy to flout the law because they know they are immune from prosecution."

Mr Scruby said the fact that the government had access to the number of speeding cars but ignored it was proof that it was more worried about the political effects of introducing the cameras than reducing the road toll.

There are no statistics on how many fatalities were caused by drivers exceeding the speed limit, however they say 41 per cent of road deaths were caused by people driving too fast for the conditions (which includes driving below the speed limit).