

## “The case for and against reversing blanket\* speed limit reductions” [1News.co.nz](https://www.1news.co.nz), 9 July 2024

From the introduction to the story: “Advocates like road safety charity Brake argue that lower speed limits save lives and create safer communities, while opponents, like Transport Minister Simeon Brown, say the blanket\* speed limit reductions are an overreach that disrupts traffic flow without targeting high crash areas. Here, both sides present their arguments.”

*Questions and answers to the four questions posed are shown below. Responses from Caroline Perry, the Brake spokesperson, amount to 682 words, while Minister of Transport Simeon Brown provided 162 words.*

*\*Note: The term ‘blanket’ is not defined. However, the Minister’s new draft rule proposes a blanket reversal of every speed reduction made since 1 January 2020, with no benefit-cost analysis, and no community say.*

### 1. What impact do you think reversing blanket speed limit reductions will have for New Zealand’s roads and the people driving on them?

**Caroline Perry, spokesperson for Brake, the road safety charity:** Doing a blanket reversal of speed limits would put more people’s lives at risk on our roads.

We’re particularly concerned about proposals to reverse all lower speed limits around schools and replace any permanent lower speed limits with [variable ones outside the school gate](#) at drop-off and pick-up times only.

We’re also concerned that the proposed speed limit classifications don’t allow for any new 30km/h speed limits, except for variable school speed limits.

Research shows that slower speeds in urban areas make little difference to travel times and congestion, as congestion is mainly due to things like the number of vehicles on the road and time spent at intersections.

But lower speed limits make a significant difference to safety, reducing crashes and the likelihood of someone being killed or seriously injured.

They also have health and environmental benefits, as they help to make streets feel safer and enable people to walk and cycle more, which helps to take vehicles off the road and reduce emissions and congestion.

**Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport:** The previous Labour Government’s blanket speed reductions forced New Zealanders and our economy to slow down. Returning roads to their previous speed limits will enable Kiwis and freight to get to where they need to go, quickly and safely.

### 2. Why does this issue matter to you?

**Caroline Perry, spokesperson for Brake, the road safety charity:** As an organisation that works with people bereaved and injured in crashes, we see the devastating and long-term consequences they have.

Hundreds of families every year are dealing with the aftermath of a death on the road. Even more have to deal with serious and life-changing injuries. These aren’t just short-term impacts - they are life-long.

We have one of the [worst road safety records in the OECD](#) and there is a lot we need to do to improve safety. Safe speed limits are a key part of that.

Whether or not speed is the cause of a crash, [it’s a factor in the outcome of every crash](#). If a pedestrian or cyclist is involved in a crash at 30km/h, it’s the equivalent impact of falling from the first floor of a building. At 50km/h that impact is the equivalent of falling from the third floor.

We think children should be safe for their whole journey to school, not just outside the school gate, and be able to walk and cycle to school, to move around their neighbourhoods and access local facilities, safely. [A limit of 30km/h is international best practice](#) around schools and in communities.

**Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport:** We campaigned on reversing Labour’s blanket speed limit reductions at the last election.

New Zealanders overwhelmingly voted in favour of our government, and we are [delivering on what we promised](#).

### 3. What feedback have you been hearing from the community on the proposed changes?

**Caroline Perry, spokesperson for Brake, the road safety charity:** We've been talking to schools and have heard from many who currently have a 30km/h speed limit on streets around the school throughout the day and don't want to lose this.

There are lots of reasons why variable speed limits don't work for all schools. Some schools are in high-density neighbourhoods and have lots of children who walk and cycle or scoot to school. Some are split site and have children crossing the road throughout the day. Some have other community facilities on site or nearby that are accessed at all times of the day, such as a childcare centre, sports fields, or playgrounds.

And perception surveys have shown that **people support lower speed limits surrounding schools**, not just at the school gates, to help keep children safe on their whole journey to and from school.

**Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport:** New Zealanders are fed up with Labour's untargeted approach to reducing speed limits on state highways and local roads, rather than targeting the high crash areas of the network where it makes sense. Our approach will ensure that when speed limits are set, economic impacts and the views of road users and local communities are taken into account, alongside safety.

### 4. What would you say to people on the other side of this argument, those who would say the previous government's approach slowed New Zealanders and the economy down, rather than targeting high crash areas?

**Caroline Perry, spokesperson for Brake, the road safety charity:** Isn't someone's life worth more than a few seconds of time saved on a journey? A death or serious injury on the road is devastating and life-changing for families.

In urban areas, the effect of lower speed limits on travel time is minimal on an average journey, but the benefits can be huge, and can have a positive economic effect too. Lower speeds help streets feel safer, encouraging and enabling more people to walk and cycle, which takes traffic off the road, helping to reduce congestion and emissions.

Road crashes cost our economy, in terms of deaths and injuries, emergency services and health costs, and the costs to companies and individuals when a road is closed due to a crash. Preventing serious crashes saves lives and helps our economy.

While we do need to address high-crash areas, in order to make the improvements to safety we need, and significantly reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads, we must take a much broader approach to safety and look at the whole transport system. Targeting only high-crash areas isn't enough.

**Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport:** Keeping young New Zealanders safe as they arrive at or leave school is important, which is why we are requiring reduced variable speed limits outside schools during pick up and drop off times.