

**\$46.5 MILLION SCHOOL ZONE SAFETY BOOST**

NSW State Plan Priority S7. Safer roads

September 26, 2007

Premier Morris Iemma today announced a \$46.5 million four-year program to improve the safety of students in school zones.

New-generation flashing light technology and electronic alert systems will be installed in a further 400 school zones.

Mr Iemma said the rollout of 100 systems a year over the next four years would start immediately.

"The NSW Government is delivering on its commitment to improve road safety around schools," Mr Iemma said.

"This new technology is reliable, highly visible and doing a good job slowing people down in school zones.

"The original 100 new-generation flashing lights were installed in time for the start of the 2007 school year, and they have now been assessed.

"The assessment found the state-of-the-art technology reduced speeding in school zones with more motorists sticking to the 40km/h speed limit."

Roads Minister Eric Roozendaal said the four-year school zone safety program would be funded by revenue from speed cameras installed in school zones.

The NSW Government last year announced 50 speed cameras would be installed in school zones around the State. Since April this year 25 have been installed, with the rollout continuing

Latest figures until September 4 show 43,166 motorists have been caught by these cameras during school zone times. Overall, 91,472 have been caught.

These figures represent less than 1 per cent of the 37.5 million vehicles which have gone through these school zones over the same period of time. All the speed cameras are in school zones equipped with flashing lights.

"The vast majority of motorists are doing the right thing in school zones," Mr Roozendaal said.

"Motorists need to get the message that speeding through a school zone is dangerous and reckless behaviour.

"If you're caught speeding through a school zone your fine goes straight back into funding improvements in school zone safety.

"School zones are there to keep our children safe. There is no excuse for speeding, especially through a school zone.

"If you don't speed through a school zone, you won't have a problem."

School zones will be selected for the new technology rollout on safety criteria including traffic and pedestrian volumes, crash history and crash risk.

"Flashing lights are just one component in improving school road safety," Mr Lemma said.

"Other measures will also be looked at such as pedestrian overbridges, marked foot crossings, wombat crossings, pedestrian refuges, traffic signal-controlled pedestrian crossings or fencing which separates children from traffic and guides children toward a safer crossing facility.

"We need a commonsense approach to school zone safety."

The 12-week evaluation of the new-generation flashing lights found:

- Motorists slowed down an average of 7.4km/h as they entered the school zones;
- An extra 20 per cent of motorists stuck to the 40km/h school zone speed limit compared to before the lights were installed, meaning 60 per cent of motorists drove at or below the speed limit;
- A single flashing light design does not fit all road environments, meaning that school zones have to be assessed individually when deciding on the specific type of flashing lights technology; and
- The electronic warning systems used in the trial achieved a 98.2 per cent reliability rating. The flashing lights are equipped with back-to-base monitoring.

The report found:

"Road safety advice indicates that every 5km/h increase in speed above 60km/h doubles the risk of a fatality. To achieve a major road safety benefit, the RTA would seek the installation of technology that would achieve close to a 5km/h or greater reduction in traffic speed."

"This technology is proving to be reliable and is working to slow down drivers in school zones," Mr Roozendaal said.

"The risks motorists take speeding through school zones can have deadly consequences in the blink of an eye.

"A driver doing 40km/h in a school zone has enough time to stop if a child runs onto the road 27 metres in front of them.

"The same driver doing just 10km/h more takes an extra 9 metres to stop and would still be doing 41km/h when they hit they child.

"Over a typical 200 metre school zone, the difference between getting through at 50km/h and 40km/h is only 4 seconds – is saving 4 seconds really worth a child's life?"