

Can Outdoor Advertising Make Roads Safer?



The Outdoor advertising industry has committed to make roads safer, investing in new research demonstrating how it can help.

The risk of distraction

Every year, approximately 1,300 people die and 33,000 more are seriously injured on Australian roads. Every minute and a half, drivers do a 'secondary task' while driving (such as looking at their phone). In fact, 88% of driver distraction occurs inside our cars.¹

Despite the risk of in-car distractions, regulation is primarily focused on distractions outside the car.

Research shows Outdoor advertising helps

With thousands of roadside advertising signs across Australia, the Outdoor Media Association (OMA) has an ongoing research program to better understand driver behaviour.

Our latest research replicates a world-first 2017 study by independent road safety research institute, the Australian Road Research Board (ARRB). The study was conducted for Main Roads Western Australia, and measured all drivers passing a digital billboard in a real-world environment. Drivers were naive to the research, meaning the results accurately represent how people drive.

The OMA engaged ARRB to use the same methodology to investigate driver behaviour in the presence of two digital billboards at complex intersections in Queensland.

What we measured

Using video data of vehicle movement, we measured driver behaviour around billboards operating at dwell times ranging from 30 seconds down to 8 seconds (dwell time is the duration one advertisement is displayed before changing to the next).

We captured data during morning and afternoon peak hours and at night-time, analysing three key measures of distraction with potential to increase the risk of crashes, sideswipes, rear-enders or running a red light:

LANE DRIFT



STOPPING OVER THE LINE



INCIDENTS



Combined, lane drift and stopping over the line are responsible for 75% of serious accidents.²

The Results³

When the digital signs were switched on, and operated at a range of dwell times, we saw the following results:



Lane drift either improved or was unaffected



Stopping over the line improved at five of the six dwell time-site combinations



No incidents (crashes or red light running)

What does this mean?

The presence of digital billboards may focus lateral attention, reduce visual distraction and improve driving performance.

What can regulators do to help?

The Outdoor advertising industry is advocating for consistent dwell times of 6-10 seconds across the country for all digital signs.



Outdoor advertising delivers safety benefits to Australian road users in two other ways: safe driving campaigns and infrastructure investment.

Safe driving campaigns work

State Governments are one of the Outdoor industry's largest clients because roadside campaigns work. Here are three examples of successful road safety campaigns:

Western Australia: Research shows young men care about losing points from their licence and the right to drive. The 2016 'Time with Mum' campaign addressed these fears head on, achieving great success:

- 30,000 fewer speeding incidences across the state
- 70% of those surveyed said the campaign worked because it made them think about the embarrassment of losing their licence.

New South Wales: In 2007, the 'Pinkie' campaign ran in partnership with the NSW RTA, receiving global accolades for its salient message to young male drivers who ignored the speed limit. Billboards broadcasted the message "Speeding. No one thinks big of you" and yielded incredible results:

- 97% Campaign awareness
- 56 fewer deaths in target group of 17 to 25 year old males within two years of the campaign.

Victoria: In 2008, the Victorian TAC ran several campaigns on Outdoor advertising signs, targeting speeding, motorcyclists, and drunk drivers. TAC's 'This is why you're photographed when you speed' campaign resulted in the lowest speeding offences on record, and the 'This is 3 standard drinks' campaign saw drink driving drop 20%. The 'What's between you and the operating theatre?' campaign saw a 16% drop in two-wheeler fatalities across Victoria.



Outdoor advertising pays for road improvements

Outdoor advertising generates significant revenue for Australian governments, helping to fund more impactful road safety campaigns and essential improvements to roads.

About 50% of Outdoor advertising revenue is returned to Government and landlords in rent and taxes. In 2017, we estimate that \$418.6 million was received by state and local governments, out of the total industry revenue for the year. In addition, the industry has provided and does the maintenance on 17,664 items of public infrastructure such as bus shelters and bins, with a replacement value of \$352 million.

The evidence is in, good Outdoor advertising makes roads safer in three ways:

1. Roadside digital signage can have a positive impact on the way we drive
2. OOH campaigns save lives and reduce serious incidents on our roads
3. OOH advertising generates revenue, funding improvements to our roads.

1. Australian Naturalistic Driving Study (ANDS), Accident Research Centre, Monash University, 2018.

2. Development & Evaluation of an evidence-based parent coaching guide for learner teen drivers, Transport & Accident Commission (TAC), 2015.

3. On-road evaluation of the driving performance impact of digital billboards at intersections, ARRB, 2018.