**Death by distraction**

Phone use at the wheel is killing Australians. We investigate how the issue is being battled.

**AUTHORITIES** have admitted they are losing the battle to curb mobile phone use in cars, as the proliferation of smartphone technology sees more and more drivers dangerously distracted at the wheel. A staggering 62 percent of Australian drivers admit they use their phones while driving, according to government figures, with new research linking the dangers of phone use to that of driving under the influence.

Western Australia is now investigating new roadside camera technology to combat distracted driving, which it estimates causes 22 percent of fatal and serious crashes.

**“There are three different models,” road safety Commissioner, Kim Papalia, explains. “We have roadside cameras which are not dissimilar to mobile safety camera operations that [are used] around Australia, then we have fixed sites that can operate as gantry or high camera operations moving with the flow of traffic.”**

The final example is described as a high-riding police vehicle, festooned with cameras, to chase drivers in the act on the road.

Victoria is going a step further, with police working in conjunction with transport and telecommunications companies to implement a system that could limit phone use in cars altogether.

“Throughout the country for the last two years, there have been various approaches, various attempts to try and combat this issue,” Senior Constable Jake Hugill, from Victoria Police, told Wheels. “I can’t go into too much detail on how our police are doing or where they are doing it. But I can say it is the right thing to do to fight this battle.”

**“I can imagine we can also have cars with rear-wheel drive or two-wheel drive in the future”**

Wheels Sport CEO, Stephanie Whiddon, speculated to Auto Express about the performance sub-brand moving away from AWD.

**“The problem is they just can’t help themselves.”**

Wheels top cop Doug Fryer told Wheels. “The first thing I would jump to as a solution is a defence solicitor is to say it really is an invasion of privacy,” he said. “If a driver is holding a black rectangular object [such as a sunglass case] it may be mistaken for a phone, and in that sense it would be unfair or prejudicial on an accused person.”

Yet as authorities scramble to find a solution, a key fact to remember is this: at 100km/h, taking your eyes off the road for two seconds sees you cover a little over 50 metres. Unfortunately, the message is yet to get through to drivers.

**Cameron Kirby & Staff**