

# 'Enough' death

## Petitioners demand speed reductions

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REPORTER

CINDY POWELL experienced the horror of losing her sister, Gailene, in a Dome Valley crash on May 20.

She was left with Gailene's two young boys to raise.

"Let's not let anyone else go through this," she says.

Two further deaths last week prompted the Massey resident to say 'enough'.

She wants Transport Minister Annette King to do something about State Highway One through the Dome Valley urgently.

Ms Powell says her sister was killed in a collision with a truck while travelling from her Wellsford home to start a new secondary job in Warkworth. The smash was so horrific they couldn't have an open casket. She says the tragedy badly affected their father.

Many family members are scared to use the Dome Valley and bypass it, usually via State Highway 16.

"We used to go to Mangawhai with the kids. But we didn't go these summer holidays because they are frightened about going through there," Ms Powell says.

An informal roadside service for her sister was also unnerving. "The velocity of trucks travelling through there was such that the wind was pushing us around on the opposite side of the road," Ms Powell says.

Anything that can improve State Highway One's safety in the Dome Valley must be done as soon as possible, she says.

That is in line with community sentiment, according to the results of a Warkworth petition. About 511 people signed it asking for a 65kmh limit through Dome Valley in wet weather.

The petition organiser, who didn't want to be named, was amazed at the strength of feeling on the issue.

Nearly everyone who signed supported an 80kmh limit through the Dome at all times, she says.

"This shows how badly people around the area are affected by this."

A road safety team studying the Dome Valley will meet on March 29.

Transit New Zealand, which can change the speed limit on State Highway One in certain conditions, is represented.

Northern operations manager Joseph Flanagan says a speed limit change to 90kmh at the Dome Valley is likely within the next six months. A further reduction to 80kmh is being discussed.

New guard rails will also be installed, and edge lines on the road raised.

"This has to go through a process, but we believe it's important and we'll be pushing this through," he says.

Rodney District Council road safety co-ordinator Jacqui Dawson also supports a speed limit change.

"The council does support reducing the speed limit to 80kmh," she says. "I'm going to be bringing a copy of the petition signatures to the March 29 meeting to show how serious people are about it."

Upcoming road safety initiative 'Operation Plateau' will also focus on improving Dome Valley safety.

Increased highway patrols and education measures are planned.

The campaign is the follow-up to last year's 'Operation Diffuse', undertaken by police and the Rodney District Council, which saw an 86 percent reduction in fatal crashes in Rodney. It is due to start on April 10 and finish by July.

About 18 people have died from Dome Valley crashes in 10 years.

## Fatal crash closes motorway

A FATAL crash on the northern motorway yesterday caused major traffic delays for Rodney motorists.

Police say Mark David Bailey, 40, a managing director of Dairy Flat, died after the Ford Transit van he was driving hit the Bawden Rd bridge abutment beside State Highway One, south of Silverdale, about 6.30am.

Motorists were diverted to East Coast Rd or State Highway 17 through Albany.

Queues backed up for kilometres along the diversions and on Whangaparaoa Rd before the highway was reopened at 10.33am.

A dog was saved after firefighters cut it from the back of the wrecked utility van.

The police serious crash unit is investigating the accident and wants anyone seeing the van, registration F1XIT4, before the crash to phone 481 0300.