

Marked police vehicles are easy to detect and their presence acts as a deterrent to road users who may be tempted to break the law.

But what if a police vehicle looked like any other car. Would your behaviour as a driver change?

A recent three-month trial in the use of Q-Cars indicates this is the case for some drivers.

The term 'Q-Cars' originates from the term 'Q-Planes' which were used by the British during World War II. The planes were unmarked and flew behind enemy lines to photograph and gather evidence of troop movements and strategic installations.

Q-Cars were first used by Queensland Police Service plain-clothed traffic officers in the 1980s but their use ceased in 1991.

In December 2007 Judy Spence, Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport, requested a three-month trial in the use of Q-Cars to target drivers in the south-east corner of the state who put the lives of other road users at risk.

The two Q-Cars in the trial were equipped with covert emergency lights and sirens and driven by uniformed police officers attached to the State Traffic Taskforce.

Inspector Chris Thomas of the State Traffic Support Branch said the aim of the Q-Car trial was to target serial and dangerous high-speed offenders, anti-social drivers, and motorcyclists engaged in risk-taking behaviour.



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“Offenders were apprehended for overtaking Q-Cars at high speed; speeding prior to approaching a speed camera then slowing to the speed limit at the camera site and speeding up again; and slowing when seeing a marked police vehicle on the side of the road and then speeding up again upon seeing the officers dealing with another matter,” Inspector Thomas said.

“Within the first two months of the trial—a 66-day period—Q-Cars detected 1,255 offences.

“The most prevalent were 562 speeding offences, 173 mobile phone offences, 67 seatbelt offences, 36 unlicensed or disqualified, 25 undue noise and smoke, 21 drink drivers, and

seven unaccompanied learner drivers.

“The final results of the Q-Cars trial are still being collated and analysed but it appears it has been a successful operation.”

*By Inspector Chris Thomas,
State Traffic Support Branch*

Examples of high-risk behaviours detected by Q-Cars during the trial were:

- a 19-year-old P-plate driver detected with an alleged alcohol reading of 0.076 percent travelling at 81 km/h in a 60 km/h zone while contravening late night driving restrictions
- a 23-year-old driver with an alleged alcohol reading of 0.099 percent travelling at 167 km/h in a 110 km/h zone
- a 30-year-old motorcycle rider crossing double lines twice and allegedly travelling at 149 km/h in a 100 km/h zone, then at 110 km/h in a 60 km/h zone
- a 20-year-old motorcycle rider crossing double lines twice and allegedly travelling at 149 km/h in a 70 km/h zone.