

DRIVERS — MOBILE PHONES — PENALTIES

**25. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to making our roads safer.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government's tough new penalties for drivers using a mobile phone will help tackle dangerous, distracted driving on our roads?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how these penalties compare with those in the rest of the country?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:**

I thank the member for Belmont for her question and for her commitment to road safety.

- (1)–(2) The fact of the matter is that national research indicates that distraction is a factor in at least 16 per cent of road crashes. Here in Western Australia, we believe that distraction was a factor in at least 31 fatalities last year. Chief amongst those factors that can distract people are mobile phones. I know that whenever one of the TV channels shows vision that perhaps a passenger in another vehicle has taken of somebody texting, emailing or doing some of Facebook thing or whatever else on their phone whilst they are driving—sometimes we are shown vision of people in 100 and 110 kilometres-an-hour zones texting—I am inundated with calls and correspondence from members of the public. We also know that if someone is not looking at the road for just two seconds in a 60 kilometres-an-hour zone, they will travel over 30 metres. If someone does not look at the road for two seconds in a 100 kms zone, they can travel over 50 metres. Think about it—it is the length of a swimming pool. It is a long distance to travel, and whilst they are travelling that distance, there could be a pedestrian or a cyclist that they do not see in their peripheral vision. In fact, they do not see that their car has travelled 50 metres in those higher speed zones or 30 metres in a lower speed zone. So, mobile phone use is a major problem. Most of us know anecdotally from looking around each day, especially if we are the passenger in a vehicle, that people are on their mobile phones very frequently. I would be surprised if anyone in this chamber has not sat behind someone at traffic lights who has been slow to move off and you can see them looking down at their mobile phone. It is a real problem. It is a significant factor.

That is why we have moved to up the penalties. For a basic infringement, we are upping the penalty by \$100 to \$500. We are introducing a new penalty, based on what has already been implemented in the Australian Capital Territory, for people who are doing those higher level distractions—things that take their eyes off the road. People cannot have their eyes on both the road and a phone while doing a text or an email or something like that. We believe that that should be in a similar category to careless or reckless driving, and that is why we are putting in this tough \$1 000 penalty and upping the points that people get from three points to four points for that level of offence. We are also mindful of the fact that we have a double-demerits regime here in Western Australia for mobile phones. Not all states have that. Over half the states have double demerits, but amongst those, not all of them have double demerits for mobile phone use. Indeed, when we introduced double demerits here in Western Australia, we put it in place for restraints, seat belts, speed, alcohol and drugs. Added later was mobile phone use, so we do have that. People who are charged with that higher level of offence during double demerit periods will lose 10 points; they will just about lose their licence in one shot. This is a much tougher approach. I do not make any apology for it. It does not necessarily cost the life of the person who is doing it, but it could cost the life of someone else. Somebody texting while driving kills the cyclist, kills the pedestrian or kills someone loved by many people in the community. That is why we are doing it. It is about driving our road toll down. It is about having our roads made safer for all individuals.