

ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL — SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION

Motion

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural) [10.08 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house acknowledges the following —

- (1) The Road Safety Council's proposal to lower all Western Australian speed limits by 10 kilometres per hour is unacceptable to the state's motoring public and to the Legislative Council; and
- (2) The Road Safety Council ought to instead refocus its endeavours to alleviate road trauma and deaths by the following approaches —
 - (a) implementing and requiring a more comprehensive training regime for learner drivers;
 - (b) ensuring that all road blackspots are funded and rectified;
 - (c) urging the government to continue to build passing lanes on all major highways and to fund the \$900 million maintenance shortfall on the state's roads; and
 - (d) encouraging the government to include driving theory and practice as an essential element of the education curriculum.

This is a very topical subject, especially as on 8 June the Road Safety Council announced consultation on its suggestion to reduce speed limits on roads by 10 kilometres an hour. The speed limit on all roads that have speed limits of between 40 and 100 kilometres an hour would fall by 10 kilometres an hour and the speed limit in 110-kilometre-an-hour zones also would be captured in this intent. This issue has come up before. It was very topical on talkback radio at the time. I did not hear one motorist support the lowering of speed limits by 10 kilometres an hour. I was also encouraged by the fact that the Premier said that this government would not entertain such a policy. I often wonder what the Road Safety Council is doing about alleviating or mitigating road trauma on our roads, especially when it comes up with policies such as this, which, obviously from a public and government perspective, will never be implemented. We need to remember that, as was stated in an article, 70 per cent of crashes are caused by somebody making a mistake because they are slightly tired or distracted or have a lapse in judgement. I would extend that to include people who are either under the influence of drugs or alcohol or fatigued. Whether a person is doing 80 kilometres an hour or 110 kilometres an hour, if they are distracted to the point at which they lose control of their vehicle, it will end in tragedy. That happens far too often. Under those parameters, it is very unclear to me and to other motorists how lowering the speed limit would help prevent these particular matters taking place. Any accident on the road that causes injury or death is an absolute tragedy. It happens far too often on our roads and I will get to that in a moment. I suggest that everybody concentrate on what they are doing on the road.

We have seen an outbreak, probably in the last two years—I have certainly experienced it—of people texting. What is that about? We need more police. We need greater policing. I suggest that anybody with a mobile phone, if they cannot help themselves, should put it in the glove box or the boot, or throw it in the bin. Do not answer it. The reality is that we need more patrols on our roads and highways. In fact, a study was done a number of years ago by the University of California within the Los Angeles Police Department and it found that although Multanovas assisted to some degree, the greatest deterrent to bad behaviour on roads and speeding was a marked patrol car. A marked patrol car that was visible to motorists on regular occasions had the best effect of ensuring that motorists did the right thing, obeyed the law, stayed within the speed limit and were courteous to other motorists. I am reasonably sure that there are examples of this in the United Kingdom and other places in the world. I do a lot of country driving, as do other members in this place who represent regional Western Australia, and it is pretty hard sometimes to see a police car. Yes, I see police cars on the side of the road in some sort of speed trap, but not patrolling the highways. I encourage the government to look at that, if it is serious about stopping the road toll, and put more patrol cars in place. A while ago I visited all the police stations in the area from Merredin south and their issue was about not only staffing, but also being resourced enough to patrol adequately. The road toll in regional Western Australia is unacceptable. The Western Australian road toll is 6.09 deaths per 100 000 people. Western Australia has the highest rate in the country, and that is for both metropolitan and regional areas. The national average is 4.59 deaths per 100 000 people, so Western Australia is a long way above that. Victoria has the lowest rate, at 3.31 deaths per 100 000 people. From my perusal of research on this subject, the rate of 6.09 deaths per 100 000 people is one of the highest in the western world, and it is not coming down.

In 2013, the RAC used the Australian road assessment program, or AusRAP, to grade the quality of roads in the Western Australian national highway network. There is 4 671 kilometres of roads in the national highway network

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in this state. The greatest asset this state has is our road system. Without a road system, we would not have much of an economy. The reason it is the greatest asset is that vehicles are our major mode of transport. We do not have a massive river system, as other countries do, and we certainly have a fragmented rail system, so road transport is absolutely critical. The RAC graded our road system in 2013 and, alarmingly, in a five-star grading system, it graded 27 per cent of our roads at one to two stars and the majority, or 57 per cent, at three stars. Eighty-four per cent of our arterial road system is below a four or five-star requirement. It is not good. I know that the previous government did its best, and I acknowledge that this government is doing its absolute best to rectify and improve the road system in this state, but it has an awful long way to go. Without safe roads—I will speak about the Swedish example soon—of course there will be road trauma and deaths.

Main Roads estimates that it would cost around \$450 million to implement a safer roads investment plan to rectify the one, two and three-star road system and if \$450 million to \$500 million was spent on rectifying our roads, it would bring the road system up to a four-star rating. People do not have to drive very far in the country, especially after a wet winter, such as last year's—I hope we have one this year—to find that on the standard highways, edges are gouged out through the hydraulic action of water and heavy traffic. If they are not experienced and their car hits that edge, they will end up on the other side of the road or in the scrub. There is a very simple fix—it is called maintenance. Maintaining these roads correctly—it is not being done—is absolutely essential.

I will move on to talk about the part of my motion that refers to training requirements. There are some things I hope the Road Safety Council looks at and gives serious consideration to in putting forward further policies, as opposed to the one to just lower the speed limit in the hope that that will give a good result. Sweden's road toll is 2.8 deaths per 100 000 people, Germany's is 4.4 deaths, and Western Australia's is 6.09, as I have said. In Australia, there are 7.3 road fatalities per 100 000 motor vehicles—that is not inhabitants—in Germany, it is 6.8; and in Sweden, it is 4.7. In 1997, the Swedish government put forward a policy called Vision Zero. At the time, seven people per 100 000 inhabitants in Sweden were killed on the roads, which is a little higher than our rate of 6.09 people. Sweden decided to implement a policy to try to alleviate these deaths on its roads. The prevailing thinking on road safety was about changing human behaviour. Vision Zero was about designing a system that recognised that human mistakes are an inherent part of driving and needed to be designed out through road construction. It was about engineering and more law enforcement on those roads. That program has been so successful in Sweden that the number of road fatalities has almost halved in that time. That is the sort of vision required by the Road Safety Council. It does take time. It would take a cultural change, but doing nothing will not alleviate these problems.

The other thing I would like to talk about is drivers' licences. I can remember when someone would go into their local police station, drive up and down the road with a police officer, be asked a few questions and be given a driver's licence. The result of that over a number of years in the 18 to 25-year-old cohort—insurance companies still consider that to be a very high risk group—was that the number of road deaths was just incomprehensible. Some time ago, the state decided to put in a six-step system to get a driver's licence. As I heard on the radio the other day, the number of deaths of learner drivers and P-platers in that young age group has plateaued—it is not continuing to rise. The actual licensing regime is working. The requirements under that regime are giving young drivers a better education of what is expected of them on the road and how to go about driving. I think it is a great step forward.

The Swedish system has five steps, not six like ours. It is a little more hands-on. It is a very similar system; however, there is a difference. Step 4 is risk training. It is compulsory. People have to pass each step before they can receive a driver's licence. Of course, Sweden has very cold and icy winters, so people learn how to control a vehicle in those conditions, as well as in wet and heavy traffic conditions, and if something goes wrong. All that is part of the risk component of this training program. They have to do a theory test on the risks and their ability to react under the influence of alcohol, drugs and fatigue. They then have to practise risk training with a driving instructor. It is interesting to note that the cost of a driver's licence in Sweden is about \$A805, as opposed to the cost in Western Australia, excluding the option of taking driving lessons, of \$137.95.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Can you give us those figures again?

Hon JIM CHOWN: The cost of a driver's licence in Sweden is \$A805. That cost includes the training program they have to undertake. In Western Australia, the cost of getting a driver's licence, excluding the driver training that a person would undertake voluntarily, is \$137.95.

I think the time has come when having a licence is not a right; it should be a privilege. That is how the Germans and Swedes look at it. The culture in their driver licensing system is not that everybody should have a licence if they desire to have one, but that people actually have to earn it. Drivers have to be responsible and must understand that when they are in control of a motor vehicle, it is actually a lethal weapon. They are also held responsible for their actions. If a person loses their licence in those countries, it is very hard to achieve one again. The steps they

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have to go through are quite draconian. I agree with all those things. I think the Swedish example, or some portion of it, should be considered by our government. I am talking about this applying to drivers who are applying for new licences—our youth or new residents to this country.

This should also be an essential part of the education curriculum. I am not talking about practical application in the curriculum, but certainly something along the lines of teachers advocating the responsibilities and privilege of having a driver's licence, such as drivers needing to be courteous and why they should not drink and drive. That has been a mantra for many years, but in my electorate it is not taking place. I do not believe there is any problem in educating children early about their responsibilities. We live in a very large part of the world. Certainly in regional Western Australia, and even Perth, people drive for up to an hour or more to work and back, and probably longer at times. Driving is absolutely essential to us. As I keep saying, the number of deaths on our roads is the highest in the nation. Some steps need to be taken. Education, at a school level, would be a good step forward and would provide a good foundation for future drivers. It would ensure that they understand their responsibilities, if they have the privilege of achieving a driver's licence.

Dr Ulrich Mellinshoff is a German road safety expert who came out here a number of years ago. When I was researching this motion, I looked at his comments and thought a couple of them were pretty good. I am prepared to quote them here. He said that there are three methods for reducing road trauma: better licensing, better roads and safer cars. He was quoted as saying —

“The car companies have delivered their end of the bargain, but you, as a government, have ... failed ... when it comes to the other two,” ...

That is, on more licensing requirements and safer road construction and maintenance. I tend to agree with him. We do have safer cars today. They are far safer than we could have ever imagined. Car companies are doing their best to ensure that the safety of motor vehicles is paramount. But, as I have said previously, governments are falling behind with licensing requirements. We need to tighten those requirements to ensure that people understand their responsibilities. Getting a licence should be made a little harder. People should have some experience before they hit the roads. Part of our licensing program is that learner drivers learn on our roads under supervision. As I said before, I suggest that the Swedish example is a very good one. Of course, the Swedish construction program could be adopted somewhat for our roads. Certainly, road maintenance needs to become a priority in this state to ensure that our roads are as safe as possible; they are not at the moment.

This is a very serious matter. Although there may be some pushback on introducing more expensive licensing requirements, and I understand why that would be politically unacceptable, we need to grasp the nettle here and say that licensing requirements for drivers and vehicles must be tightened to ensure that everybody, or at least most people, have the ability to drive safely. I will finish shortly, but I look forward to other responses on this motion from other members of this place. Unless the things I have advocated here today take place, I cannot see the road fatality figure of 6.09 people per 100 000 declining by much at all, regardless of the wishes of the Minister for Police, the Minister for Transport or the Road Safety Council. It is an outrageous figure. It needs to be addressed in a number of steps and supported by government. We need to ensure that this figure declines or, at the very least, plateaus.

I do not know the ratio of injuries to deaths on our roads; I would imagine it is about four or five to one. For every death, a number of people are injured for life. They carry their disabilities forever, and that is also a tragedy. I also believe that we will never stop accidents from happening, but we must do our best to ensure that our roads are as safe as possible.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.29 am]: I rise to speak to the motion that has been put before the house today by Hon Jim Chown, and I thank him for giving us the opportunity to speak about road safety. Road safety is a very important matter, and particularly very important in my electorate of Agricultural Region, which I share with Hon Jim Chown, given some of the road death and injury statistics he has outlined. It is particularly bad in the wheatbelt in comparison with other regions, and certainly in comparison with metropolitan averages.

This motion is borne out of the “Imagine Zero” consultation paper released by the Road Safety Council. The consultation paper commences a new 10-year road safety strategy for Western Australia to succeed the current Towards Zero safety strategy. In the consultation paper, the Road Safety Council talks about road safety in Western Australia having cost \$20 billion over the last few decades. To put the road safety issue in monetary terms, that is a significant cost. Some 1 800 Western Australians have not returned home as a result of road trauma over the last decade. This road safety strategy is out for public comment, and I think that is a good thing.

Speed is only part of that conversation. I want to quote a couple of sections from the “Imagine Zero” paper. On page 10 it states —

Vehicles that crash at high speeds are more likely to result in death or serious injury. Almost all roads allowing speeds of up to 110km/h are in regional WA.

If regional WA had the same fatality rate as metropolitan Perth, 84 fewer people would have been killed on WA roads in 2018.

Those are pretty stark figures to contrast. On page 20, the paper states —

Outside of urban areas, the default speed limit on unsigned roads remain at 110km/h.

A 1km/h drop in travel speeds across all roads could save 10 lives per year in WA.

These are some of the things in the report that specifically refer to the issue of speed limits. On page 31, there is a breakdown of fatalities by speed zone. Forty per cent of fatalities in Western Australia occur in 110-kilometre-an-hour zones, and 15 per cent of serious injuries occur in 110-kilometre-an-hour zones. I want to point out to members that speed is really only one part of the road safety solution. In fact, 40 per cent of deaths and 15 per cent of serious injuries occur in 110-kilometre-an-hour zones. As the report says, most of those zones are in regional Western Australia.

I agree with some of the commentary about what the community thinks about reducing speed limits to 100 kilometres an hour—a maximum 10-kilometre-an-hour reduction in Western Australia. I do not think we would find any clear community support for such a proposal, particularly when we consider the size of Western Australia and the distances that we have to travel. That would have a very significant impact on those of us who live in regional Western Australia.

Having said that, what makes me uncomfortable about this motion is the suggestion that we should somehow pressure the Road Safety Council to not consider these issues. The Road Safety Council is and should be an independent body of road safety experts who dare to challenge us on policy and solutions for addressing road safety in Western Australia. Much though we might not like its recommendations, and as much as some of its recommendations may not be politically palatable, I think it needs to mix the best science with the best experience to determine the best recommendations for government to consider, keeping in mind that these are ultimately government decisions. The Premier has already come out to discount the notion of reducing the speed limit to 100 kilometres an hour in Western Australia, as is his right, but we should also respect the right of the Road Safety Council to make recommendations, backed by science, that will actually lead to real outcomes.

I want to reflect on a couple of other aspects of the motion, because I am going to run out of time and this is a topic that is dear to me. There is a lot of conjecture about the benefit of training regimes, which is one part of the equation. When my siblings and I got our drivers' licences at age 17 years, my grandfather paid for us all to go and do a defensive driving course. I was a beneficiary of that training, but I am not sure whether that defensive driver training actually contributed to the skills I have and has kept me safer on the road. Nevertheless, there are mixed views on driver training. There is research to show that people do not develop full cognitive function until their early 20s, and therefore advanced driver training at a younger age is of limited benefit.

However, there are other things that need to be considered in the road safety mix. I think fatigue and distraction are major issues that we need to tackle, particularly on regional roads. Our vehicle manufacturers are making it far easier for us to be distracted. It is against the law for people to touch their phones whilst they are driving, yet we now have technology through which people can replicate their phone on the dashboard of their car. For the entirety of their journey, they can play with all their apps and send text messages by using the car touch screen, and that is not illegal. Times have moved on and technology has surpassed our laws, and things like that are increasing driver distraction. Cars these days have wi-fi, people can watch movies, and music can be streamed from the internet. There are all sorts of things that can add to driver distraction.

I want to briefly talk about something that has been of concern for some time. On page 35 of the consultation paper, there is reference to the role that automation is going to play in making our roads safer. I believe we will probably reach a point at which we will have very few or no fatalities on our roads, but that will be at the point at which we have a significant level of automation in our road transport system. Something in the consultation paper that concerns me is what is referred to as the “automation paradox”. I recently bought a new car and I would consider it to be semi-autonomous.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: What type of car is it?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It is a Mazda. It keeps me on the road, it detects the white lines, it picks up traffic signs, it brakes for me. It does a whole range of things that could arguably make things safer, but what does that do to driver behaviour? I think it is contributing to the dumbing down of driver behaviour and making us less responsible in some cases—at least, that is my concern, and that concern has also been outlined in this consultation paper. We are entering a period of increasing technology in our vehicles, which will play a role in reducing driver

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responsibility and awareness on our roads. That is something that we are going to have to grapple with in years to come, as more and more technology is built into our motor vehicles.

The Insurance Commission of WA provides compulsory third party insurance, but it needs to take a far more active role—similar to the Transport Accident Commission in Victoria. A lot of the advertising that we see in Western Australia is developed by the TAC in Victoria. The Insurance Commission of WA, our state insurer, which insures every person on our roads through compulsory third party insurance or no-fault catastrophic injury insurance, needs to play a bigger role in addressing and funding the road safety challenge. It is in its interests. A big part of the \$20 billion that I talked about at the beginning of my remarks probably comes out of ICWA funds. I think that it could play a bigger role in helping the government and the community of Western Australia address the road safety challenge in Western Australia. I thank members, and I thank Hon Jim Chown for bringing the motion to the house.

HON ROBIN SCOTT (Mining and Pastoral) [10.40 am]: I would like to thank Hon Jim Chown for the perfect timing of his motion as we head into winter. Saving lives must be a priority for everyone, whether it be on the roads or in our industries. Lowering the speed limit is not enough to solve this problem. We have to approach it from many different angles. The first thing I would like to say is that raising the speed limit on country regional roads would be a much better idea. Anyone driving from Meekatharra to Perth would cringe at the thought of having to drive at a lower speed. From my point of view, the most important thing that is needed is driver training and education, along with road maintenance.

A huge problem is the mum-and-dad driving instructors that we see on the road every single day, with little Johnny or Mary behind the wheel, with their L-plates displayed, driving in the right-hand lane travelling at 55 kilometres an hour in an 80-kilometre-an-hour zone, holding up other drivers and creating absolute frustration for everyone. We see drivers entering the freeway doing 60 kilometres an hour down the on-ramp, which creates absolute chaos for everybody. Drivers jam on their brakes, worrying whether Johnny is going to pull out or pull over! There needs to be some way of assessing a mum and dad to determine whether they are capable of passing on good driving habits to their offspring. At the moment anybody can jump in a car. Anybody with a full driver's licence can take anyone for a drive, and download all their bad driving skills onto a new driver.

Hon Jim Chown: On that subject, if I may, if you are instructing in Sweden, you have to pass an instructors' course.

Hon ROBIN SCOTT: That is a good idea. It seems that most drivers in Perth do not understand the zipper effect when entering a freeway—letting one guy go and then the next guy. Everybody is bumper to bumper, refusing to let that little bloomin' Mazda squeeze in there, thinking, "You're not getting in front of me!" My day is brightened when I let somebody squeeze in front of me because I think I have done the right thing. I get an even bigger smile when somebody puts up their hand and acknowledges what I have done. We have to look at teaching people how the zipper effect works. It takes away all the stress.

Another problem I have is when I come off the freeway and encounter speed traps and Multanova radars. I have been "done" numerous times coming off a freeway, maybe coming from the farm or down south after visiting my family. When I am sitting on 100 or 110 kilometres an hour on the freeway, I get off at Nicholson Road and the speed limit is immediately 60 kilometres an hour. When we first get on that road, after travelling a couple of hundred kilometres, we realise that we are doing 67 or 68 kilometres an hour, so we start to slow down. Just as we start to slow down, poof, a photograph is taken. That camera is on a road that is straight for nearly one kilometre. I have lived in that area for 49 years and I have never seen an accident there. That camera is put there strategically to catch people coming off the freeway who are just not concentrating and who are just seven or eight kilometres an hour over the speed limit. We do not lose any points. If we lost points, there would be more people without a driver's licence and that would cut the number of fines that go into the Road Safety Council's fine bank, or whatever it is called.

Hon Charles Smith interjected.

Hon ROBIN SCOTT: Yes; exactly. Every single year, \$100 million is raised as a result of fines. We should be using that money to get more police cars on the road. If I see a police car, I am the best driver on the road because I am aware that police are there and I will do the right thing!

I turn to the suggestion to lower the speed limit. A number of people have died while sitting at traffic lights or when they are about to drive through traffic lights after some hoon comes crashing through at speeds up to 120 kilometres an hour. That hoon will not drop his speed by 10 kilometres an hour. These people have no respect for any other road users and they will continue killing people until we find out who they are and educate them.

I suggest that perhaps we could encourage children aged 13 and over in secondary schools to attend virtual reality driving classes for two or three years during which they get to drive a car for an hour using these virtual reality screens. At the end of their two or three years' training, when they go for their learner's permit, the assessors can look back and see how these kids have reacted during the virtual reality driving courses. If they are up to scratch,

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they are granted a learner's permit; if not, they could be taken aside and told, "Listen, Johnny, you're not doing this right. We've got to straighten you out." We need these things to help young people understand the dangers of driving.

Most drivers know that it is a privilege to drive on the road. Unfortunately, the ones who do not will continue killing people regardless of the speed limit. Every accident is preventable. The mining industry has a "near miss" reporting regime. If someone comes close to tripping over something or falling off something, it is reported. Maybe the Road Safety Council could introduce something like that. How many times have members been driving along and are inattentive for just a few seconds when something happens and they think, "Oops, that was close" and then forget about it? The people who are interested in improving road safety could report that to the Road Safety Council. At the end of every six months, it could put out a paper explaining why this happened and how people should concentrate more to prevent near misses.

Hon Kyle McGinn: Is that their near misses or other people's?

Hon ROBIN SCOTT: It is other people's, as well as our own. If someone has a near miss, they could report it. Maybe the Road Safety Council could build up some sort of dossier of near misses and explain how we could cut them out.

I agree very much with Hon Martin Aldridge when he spoke about cars dumbing us down. All I need to do is press the start button in my car and it basically takes me to Parliament House. That really is dumbing people down. I no longer have to look to see whether another car is on my left or right because my car knows and it will not let me go left or right. Hon Martin Aldridge also commented on the number of accidents that occur on a road with a speed limit of 110 kilometres an hour. When an accident occurs, is someone able to tell at what speed the driver was travelling? Were they doing 60 kilometres an hour or 160 kilometres an hour? That is really important. I have driven hundreds of thousands of kilometres in the regions over the last four decades and I know what it is like to drive. I have been driving along at 110 kilometres an hour and somebody has screamed past me doing 180 kilometres an hour. I have been very fortunate; I have not had any accidents. At the same time, I have been driving at 110 kilometres an hour and, all of a sudden, I am right up the bumper of somebody travelling at 60 kilometres an hour. These things have to be investigated. We cannot just say that accidents occur because the speed limit is 110 kilometres an hour. We have to look at the overall picture. Education is the secret to all this.

We encourage people to stop smoking, through education. When I was young, I was told that if I smoked I would get my fingers chopped off! It did not stop me smoking then, but I was able to stop smoking more than 40 years ago. Now I cannot understand why anybody smokes, with all the information that is available. We used to be encouraged to smoke; apparently it made you into a man!

To finish up, I want to say that some drivers do not give two hoots about other road users. They are risk-takers and they threaten everybody else on the road. They are the people that we should focus on.

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [10.49 am]: I am really pleased that we have a chance to speak on this motion today, because I also agree that we should increase the driver training for youth. Four of my offspring have just gone through the training program with various rates of success and instruction from outside as well as within the family. All their friends have also gone through the training. It is a hit-and-miss process as to what skills people come out with after their training. I was a recipient of driver training in high school that was provided to every student at the time. It was really worthwhile. Over the course of a term, once a week students were either out on the road or in the classroom learning the necessary skills. When we talk about driver training in schools, we should be talking about not only the idea of getting into a car and knowing the road rules, but also the whole process of transport from one place to another. We have to look at alternative modes of transport such as bicycles and how drivers should treat cyclists; how drivers should be considerate; the idea of pulling over to the extent that a driver can when they hear a siren approaching; and drivers being able to slow down or get off the road if people come up behind them and they are not comfortable travelling at the speed limit, because, for example, they are driving a vehicle that is best not driven at that speed. Those are cases that we would really like to leave in the past. If we look towards the future, we see that we will have more autonomous vehicles that do a lot of this driving for us. We have to consider how both new student drivers and older drivers will interact with that. We change as we get older. There will be more older drivers on the roads and whether those people will continue to drive will be another issue. We want to make sure that that is managed and handled before there is an accident or a crash of any sort.

If we are going to run a driver training program in an educational setting for all students, we must look at it holistically and include the issues of distraction, mental health and attitude. When a driver gets on the road, what are they actually thinking? Are they thinking: "I was supposed to be there 10 minutes ago so I'm going to drive there really quickly" or "The rain is coming down and everything is a mess so I'm going to drive really fast to get out of the rain"? People can drive on our roads with a bad attitude. At times I have to check myself in that regard, and I imagine many people in this place and throughout the population would have to check themselves at times and ask themselves whether they should be driving.

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Just as a digression, I learnt to ride a motorcycle very early on and did a specific training course for that. It was really worthwhile—stay upright. Every motorcyclist should do something like that because it teaches them that when they go out on the road, they are not as protected as they are in a car. All the safety measures put into cars are there to protect us from our own distraction, inability or bad attitude. But because motorcyclists do not have that protection, we find that a lot of motorcyclists have a greater sense of self preservation. When they go out on the road, they look at the road condition and the traffic around them and they drive more defensively.

It is unfortunate, but we need to drive defensively because at any point another driver could be doing the wrong thing on the road, whether it is done under the influence of drugs or alcohol or as a result of sleep deprivation or poor mental health. We always have to drive defensively. It will be interesting to see how well autonomous vehicles will manage those issues, because, from what I have heard, they are better able to manage them than individual drivers. That is one aspect that should also be included in the driver training course. We might also need to resit the driver training course at a later stage. Back in Illinois where I learnt to drive, every four years, a driver would take another written test and every eight years, another driving test. I believe that people do not have to resit a driving test here until they are 80 years old.

Hon Martin Aldridge: It has been removed.

Hon DIANE EVERS: So a person does not have to resit a driving test at all?

Hon Martin Aldridge: Not unless a medical practitioner requests it.

Hon DIANE EVERS: That might be something to consider if we want to keep good drivers on the road.

We also have to look at the condition of our roads. There has been a lot of talk about road maintenance, but we put a lot of money into roads. Every time we make them a little safer, people seem to take up those safety issues with a little more distraction. In fact, some countries have tried to limit crashes in urban areas by removing all signs and kerbs and the things that are traditionally put in place to separate people from traffic. The drivers there are now so careful that they have, for the most part, eliminated some crashes in those areas. The Swedish model introduced a few other things including the lowering of speed limits in urban areas. Those areas may not have fatalities on their roads, but serious injuries can still affect people and their families just as much as a death. We need to take into account the different measures that can be adopted for different areas. It may be that lowering the speed limit in some areas is part of the solution. I believe that that report said that the limit should not apply to all roads; some freeways and highways would be exempt and continue to have the 110-kilometre-an-hour speed limit—even the report acknowledged that that might happen on some roads.

The other issue is road maintenance. We rely so much on freight using our roads. We need to seriously look toward the future on this issue. In the past, rail was the be-all and end-all to get freight from one spot to another. We need to go back to that because if we could get more freight on rail, it would mean less personal vehicle and truck interaction on the road. That in itself would reduce the wear and tear on the roads and the chance of an accident occurring. If we could increase the amount of rail freight and try to separate heavy transport from individual vehicles, we would go a long way to addressing some of these issues.

I also want to talk about regional roads. We often talk about putting in more passing lanes. I like the idea of the single lane in the middle of the road between Mt Barker and Kojonup. People can travel either way on that lane. We are all still new to that, so we take a lot more notice of it. But in general, a lot of city drivers or metropolitan learner drivers never learn how to overtake a road train, and possibly never should overtake a road train. Given that they are travelling at probably 100 kilometres an hour or sometimes more, perhaps they should just wait until there is a safe place to overtake. Part of the driver training must be about teaching patience as well—that goes for all of us. Perhaps the risk is not worth overtaking in a place that might not be as safe as a driver thinks it is. The opposite also applies to kids who have grown up and learnt to drive in country areas. When they get to the city and enter the freeway for the first time, they might be one of those drivers who is a little bit hesitant about it. We have to be aware of those drivers, accept that and be careful and patient with them. It comes back to our driving attitude.

No single measure will improve our driving skills. A driving course will need to address a range of issues including the physical road network, licensing, training and our culture or attitude. Our attitude is still, “I have this vehicle and I want to get from point A to point B and nobody should get in my way of doing that as long as I’m following the law.” But perhaps there is more to it. When a driver comes up alongside a number of cyclists, rather than becoming impatient and trying to overtake them all, they should take some time. It may set the driver back a minute or two, but it will not be the end of the world. It will encourage those cyclists to continue using that form of transport rather than putting another dozen cars on the road at the same time that the driver wants to travel. Like I said, we need to look at this holistically, and that includes looking at our cultural attitude. The road safety messages advertised half the time are really trying to convey that message and help us to understand and get used to the idea that we are all in this together so we need to look after our loved ones and everyone else. This is a good thing. I am pleased that we are doing this but more still has to be done about it to somehow infiltrate our culture and get us used to this idea. Thank you.

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HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.59 am]: I want to add a few words to this debate, particularly as it applies to the northern section of our state. Many factors, apart from speed, contribute to unsafe roads—fatigue, drink-driving, and livestock and wildlife on our roads, of which there are many up there. In the Kimberley, for example, speed was determined to be a factor in only 6.5 per cent of serious or fatal accidents, despite 55 per cent of those crashes occurring on roads with a speed limit of 110 kilometres an hour. The following statistics relate to the five years from 2013 to 2017 in the Kimberley, but are restricted to incidents in which someone was killed or seriously injured or were in serious crashes, unless otherwise specified. Seatbelts were not worn by 19 per cent of vehicle occupants killed or seriously injured. Speed was a factor in 6.5 per cent of crashes in which people were killed or seriously injured. At least one rider—not a driver—with a blood alcohol concentration of .05 per cent or higher was recorded in 21.7 per cent of crashes in which people were killed or seriously injured. Research indicates that 20 per cent of crashes in which people were killed or seriously injured involved fatigue. Fatigue is one of the biggest killers, particularly in the north. Decreasing the maximum speed limit will be detrimental to drivers in those regions because people driving at less than 110 kilometres an hour become bored and do not concentrate on driving. The road appears as a bitumen pad in front of us. In the Northern Territory, the speed limit used to be open, but, with various changes of government, it was put back to 130 kilometres an hour for a 1 000-kilometre stretch of the Stuart Highway from Alice Springs.

If the speed limit is decreased by 10 kilometres an hour to 100 kilometres an hour, basically that will slow down vehicles, allow driver fatigue to creep in and make things more difficult. On the road from Port Hedland to Tom Price, where many members would have travelled, there is a great many trucks pulling trailers. Although they are not as long as normal sheep trailers, there are four trailers. It is not a matter of passing one lot of four trailers behind a prime mover; it is the next one, the next one and the next one, which are all following bumper to bumper. It is very difficult and quite dangerous, especially, I imagine, for someone towing a caravan. These trucks all do 100 kilometres an hour. I would like to increase the speed limit of between 100 and 110 kilometres an hour to 120 kilometres an hour, or have the trucks reduce their speed limit by 10 kilometres an hour when a driver is passing them, in which case the speed limit can remain at 110 kilometres an hour. That would give drivers the ability to pass a truck, because currently they do need to increase their speed to over the speed limit in order to pass trucks. We can make the roads wider and do all we like, but, eventually, drivers will encounter more than one of those vehicles. I have done that a couple of times and it is a pretty hard task. It is pretty hard for a driver sticking to the speed limit of 110 kilometres an hour to pass a truck with many trailers that is travelling at 100 kilometres an hour. It cannot be done; the driver needs to fly past at about 130 kilometres an hour to do so safely—and we are talking about safety.

Lowering the speed limit would also increase, of course, the time it takes to go from Port Hedland to Broome. It would add about an hour and a half to the trip. The other problem is that there are not many rest stops on that road. It is a fairly, dare I say, barren piece of country, although with water, it can turn into anything! There is the Pardoo Roadhouse, and the Sandfire Roadhouse, which is about 380 kays from Broome. There are not too many places where people, including truck drivers, pull up to rest, stretch their legs and have a coffee and relax. As I mentioned, fatigue appears to be the most common reason for serious crashes. In 19.2 per cent of accidents in the Pilbara, 20 per cent in the Kimberley and 23.7 per cent in the goldfields–Esperance region, the cause was due to fatigue. I do not believe keeping people on the road longer with slower speed limits is the right approach.

Driver education has been mentioned. I am very much a believer in driver education. I was very pleased to see in this budget, minister, that there is \$3.8 million to enhance driver training. In May 2011, I put out a press release after one of our budgets had come down, interestingly, when we had a surplus of \$442 million. I was in Halls Creek where I met with the magistrate attending to cases. She said that most of the people who came through there were Indigenous people who did not have a driver's licence and had been picked up for drink-driving and driving without a licence. They had been given community service rather than being sent to jail but had not turned up, so they were arrested and the cycle continued. In 2011, I was successful in getting \$6 million to enhance driver training in regional Aboriginal communities so those Aboriginal people could get a driver's licence. The magistrate did not want them to come out of jail until they had their licence, which they had to pass while they were in jail. Interestingly, I approached some of the jails, such as Roebourne and Broome, which were all in favour of it; it was just a matter of getting the funds to make it happen. In the budget handed down the other day—I congratulate the minister—there is \$4.8 million to enhance driver training and education in regional and remote communities. I am pleased that that funding is seen as necessary for people in remote areas where people need to drive. There was even talk of a Kimberley licence that covered the whole north to make it a little easier for people to obtain a licence. As I think Hon Jim Chown touched on, as much as a licence is a privilege, it gets us into the workforce. These days, no-one can employ someone without a driver's licence because they cannot claim workers' compensation, so it is really important for the pastoral industry and any other industry that employs people up there.

I think we need to tackle this issue by looking at the discrepancy between the travelling speed of the road trains that work up there and that of normal light vehicles. I think the speed limit on passing lanes could be increased to 120 kilometres an hour. I know people who have driven a bit faster in the second lane to pass a vehicle, but at the top

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of the hill, what should they see coming the other way but a vehicle with the blue-and-red lights, and they have been booked. There is no leeway to allow drivers to speed up on the passing lane. When a truck is going 100 kilometres an hour and a car is travelling at 110 kilometres an hour to pass the truck, it can take ages and increases the danger.

I think a driver's licence test should be more than just a test. When someone sits for an aircraft licence, they have to know how the carburettor and everything else works. When we sit for our motor vehicle driver's licence, we know nothing about the vehicle; we do not even know how to change a tyre or roll a tyre, or even what will happen when a car skids in the gravel. All those things should be taught.

Hon Simon O'Brien: We were.

Hon KEN BASTON: Maybe Hon Simon O'Brien was. It is extremely important that drivers are educated to know more than what a Stop sign or a Slow-down sign is.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [11.08 am]: I waited for as long as I could because I wanted to give as many people as possible the opportunity to comment. I want to compliment Hon Jim Chown for bringing on this important topic to be discussed in the house. It is quite clear that there is great interest in this subject right across the Parliament, as one would understand. Each and every one of us uses the roads each day and, of course, each and every one of us is deeply concerned by the number of fatalities and injuries that occur on a daily basis. I will get into some of the detail of the issues that have been raised, but I particularly want to compliment Hon Martin Aldridge for setting the context very well.

Of course, the job of the Road Safety Council is to come forward with options. Notwithstanding *The West Australian's* need to have very flamboyant headlines, it is important that an options paper such as this is allowed to be aired and that we have a rational and sensible discussion about those options. The Premier and the Minister for Road Safety have made it clear that we do not see community support at this time for a wholesale reduction in speed limits. However, we recognise that we need to have a discussion about this. We also need to acknowledge that speed is an issue in road safety. There is clear evidence that the risk of being involved in a crash resulting in serious injury doubles if the speed limit is increased from 60 kilometres an hour to 65 kilometres an hour, and for every five kilometres after that. That is what the data tells us. However, that does not mean that we should embrace a reduction in speed limits. That is because other factors are involved. One factor is the practical issue of how we can continue to make our lives workable and can effectively move people and freight around this vast state. As Hon Martin Aldridge has said, it is very important that we allow the Road Safety Council to put forward ideas and options, and at the same time have a sensible discussion and ultimately make a political decision about where we want to go on this issue.

I need to correct some of the problems that are embedded in this motion. I refer in particular to paragraph (c), which asks this house to urge the government to fund the \$900 million maintenance shortfall for the state's roads. I cannot let that go unaddressed. A serious effort has been made under Minister Rita Saffioti, in a constrained budget environment, to deal with this issue. As of June 2018, the total maintenance backlog was not the figure of \$900 million quoted in the motion, but was \$657 million. That is a 43 per cent reduction on the 2012 figure. In 2012, the maintenance backlog was in excess of \$1 billion. Since we have come into government, we have increased the regional road budget each year by 20 per cent on the previous year. In that way, we have been able to bring back the maintenance backlog. We understand that we cannot deal with this overnight. However, that represents an incredibly serious effort to reverse the peak in the backlog in 2012.

Some very interesting ideas have been put forward in the debate today. Hon Jim Chown suggested that we should increase significantly, by a factor of some 600 per cent, the cost of a driver's licence. He said that this approach has been taken in Sweden and has had a significant impact on getting people to understand the seriousness of holding a driver's licence. I would urge Hon Jim Chown to listen to some of the comments of the gentleman who sits next to him, Hon Ken Baston. One of the very real problems is that under the existing regime, many people in our community do not have a driver's licence and are ruled out from ever getting a driver's licence because of the cost. Although it is true that we need to improve our cultural values around driving, increasing the cost of a driver's licence would put it out of the reach of many more people in our community. Not just Aboriginal people in remote communities, but also many, many young Western Australians would be priced out of the opportunity to hold a driver's licence. Therefore, I would urge members not to go down that path.

I understand Hon Robin Scott's comment that we should require parents who want to teach their children to drive to undertake a training program. He said that he gets very frustrated at driving behind people with L-plates. We were all L-platers at some time. I believe we need to exercise a bit of patience. As members of this place, we should be careful that we do not live in a bubble and fail to understand the detail of people's lives. The idea that parents should not be actively involved in the driver training of their children fails to understand the limited means of many people to undertake driver training from trained professionals.

Hon Robin Scott interjected.

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Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I would certainly encourage people, if they can afford it, to have that initial training. However, we need to understand the financial means of many people in our community. As I have said, we in this place should be careful that we do not live in a bit of a bubble and do not understand the financial pressures that many people are facing.

Hon Robin Scott interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I know what the member's point was. It was that parents should be trained —

Hon Robin Scott interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): Order! The honourable minister has the call.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Certainly, the member could put that idea forward. Many parents very much want to be engaged in their children undertaking driver training. Many parents have had many years of driving experience. We should encourage parents to be involved.

Hon Robin Scott also suggested increasing the speed limit on some country roads. I am not sure whether that is a good idea. He also spoke about having virtual reality training programs. That is very interesting, and although that is quite expensive at the moment, it is certainly an idea that we should look to develop. I am acting outside my ministerial area when I say this, but that may well be something that is currently being looked at.

Hon Martin Aldridge, Hon Robin Scott and Hon Diane Evers talked about the impact of automated vehicles. Indeed, that has come with some massive safety improvements. However, the concomitant problem is that drivers will become less attentive, because they have less need to focus and concentrate on the driving task, and we accept that. My personal view is that, by 2040, our roads will look very different. We see the convergence of a number of different factors. The younger generation is very much into ridesharing, where we see a merger of private and public transport. Clear statistics across the world show that fewer and fewer young people are getting drivers' licences, and their behaviour is changing. At the same time, the technology is emerging for autonomous vehicles. We will see a move towards fully autonomous vehicles and there is no doubt that that will ultimately lead to a much safer system. It will not be fail-safe or without challenges, but by 2040 we will have moved quite far down that path.

In the meantime, as all members have said, driver training is an important part of the process and we should be constantly seeking to upgrade it. In 2017, we made a number of changes to improve the provisional licence process to enable novice drivers to develop the necessary skills to drive a vehicle safely and build the experience they need to cope with potential hazards and distractions while driving. We have re-sequenced the hazard perception test and the practical driving assessment, so that the hazard perception test must be completed before the practical driving assessment. That will result in driver's licence applicants having greater driving experience when attempting their practical driving assessment. I very much like Hon Ken Baston's idea of requiring many of our prisoners to complete their drivers' licences while in prison. That would be a very practical and interesting measure, and we will take it forward to the Minister for Road Safety and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

I thank all members for their participation today. This is an area in which we need to bring to bear ideas from across the Parliament, to resolve the complex issues of road safety.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [11.23 am]: I want to make a little contribution, and then maybe give Hon Jim Chown a chance to finish off. In the early 2000s I spent a couple of years living in New Zealand, and during that time defensive driving courses were part of the school curriculum. New Zealand's figures and details show a much better record on road accidents. A captive audience, such as in a school, provides the perfect opportunity for participation in driver training. It is supported by the schools, to make it available to people who do not have the resources. Drivers in New Zealand start at the age of 15, not 17, as it is in Australia. I am not saying that that is a great idea, but this is why it was brought into the schools. It is important for students, from the moment they get into high school, to learn how to drive. It has made a difference.

A few months ago, I moved a One Nation non-government business motion on roads, and I produced a lot of figures about the wheatbelt. Statistics show that Western Australia's wheatbelt has the most unsafe roads in Australia. I gave the statistics in that debate, but nothing has changed, even though we have spent a lot of money on roads. The previous government and this government have spent many dollars on the roads, and we need to continue to do that. One of the ideas we talked about in the previous debate was to get some of the giant trucks off the road, and some of our cargo onto rail. However, that is a debate for another day. Better education is needed. People get very frustrated with merging. Hon Robin Scott mentioned improving the roads in the wheatbelt, getting the mass of trucks off the road, and starting driver education in high school. I commend Hon Jim Chown for bringing this motion to the house.

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural) [11.26 am] — in reply: I thank all members for their contribution to debate on this motion today. A number of ideas have come forward that I hope the Road Safety Commission will entertain, if it is not already entertaining them. I also thank the minister for her contribution on the matter. As a matter of

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clarification, I have a real issue with parents training their children under the learner driver scheme. All of us, and I include myself in this, pick up bad driving habits as we get older. It is absolutely essential that learner drivers get the best possible tutoring from somebody who understands the requirements. That gives a very good grounding. If parents train their own children as learners, it has been proven beyond any doubt at all that the children just pick up the bad habits the parents have accumulated over many years. In the Swedish model, parents can teach their children, or someone else, how to drive, but the parents must first attend and pass a driving instructor course. The parents learn as well, drop all their bad habits, and then pass the proper procedures on to the learner drivers.

I am also a little surprised at the minister's response about costs. Costs are important in everyday life, but what is a life worth? I think it is worth more than \$185.

Hon Colin Tincknell: It is our number one resource.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Absolutely. A life is worth whatever we want to pay to ensure that our children, when they learn to drive, will enter the road system of this state with the best possible education behind them. That is what the European models are saying. We need to legislate for people to undergo serious driving training in various courses, so that when they enter the traffic with their learners' permits, they have an education behind them about how they need to act and react, culturally and in driving experience on the road. We do not do it in this state. I think this is worth a lot more than \$185. This is worthy of serious contemplation by government and the Road Safety Commission, to ensure that training is the best possible, and looking around the world to see where real results have been achieved by implementing this.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.