

BETTER DRIVING HABITS

Motion

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [11.32 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house encourages the government to make greater efforts to inculcate better driving habits in Western Australian motorists.

We are told that there is a traffic congestion issue in Perth, particularly at peak times, and our freeways are liable to exhibit symptoms of congestion with dysfunctional traffic stop and go, greatly extended transit times and so on. Plenty of people will say that our peak hour hold-ups are nothing compared with Sydney or Melbourne. Nonetheless, we do have congestion, and it costs time and money and we all want to make it better. Are we useless drivers here in Western Australia or is it that we have never established the ground rules—the societal norms—of how to drive on a freeway? People put forward all sorts of solutions that cost squillions of dollars, such as wider roads, the Northbridge tunnel and super-duper transport systems. We need a lot of those things. Some brave souls even advocate some imaginative solutions to directly target peak hour road use such as rewarding carpooling or congestion charges. I will not go there. Perhaps we need something simpler and a bit more fundamental. I contend that we can ease traffic congestion in Perth without spending vast amounts on engineering solutions. I want members and people at large to start talking about that.

Geoffrey Thomas has been running a series of pictorials in this week's daily paper showing aerial views of Perth in the early 1960s, and it is very nostalgic. I was born in Perth in 1960 so this is the world that I was born into—an overgrown country town with all of the delights and the benefits that went with it, plenty of wide, open spaces, with personal mobility and cars and roads coming to be seen increasingly as a basic entitlement. Increasingly, we got them. As I travelled, standing in the back of cars, leaning on the back of the driver's bench seat or watching flickering black and white television programs, life seemed very simple indeed. One program I recall was an educational cartoon by Walt Disney on how to deal with these newfangled freeways. It was intended for an American audience. I had no idea what it was on about because there were no US-style freeways in Perth. As one would expect from a Disney production, it presented its message in an amusing and entertaining way, using its characters. Members can imagine what it was like if they have not seen it. Mickey Mouse was the responsible family man, Donald Duck was the road rage driver and that sort of thing. It was very engaging. It had messages like "Freeways work when they keep lots of people moving but you need to avoid causing pile-ups"—bang, bang, bang, bang. "When you are joining a freeway, do not slow down or stop because people behind you will pile up"—bang, bang, bang. "If you join a freeway too slowly, people will brake and there will be a pile-up"—bang, bang, bang, bang. "Look out for cars joining your freeway space because if they are not quite up to speed, you will have to brake suddenly and everyone will pile up behind you"—bang, bang, bang, bang. "Do not get impatient and constantly change lanes; you won't get there any quicker but you will risk a pile-up"—bang, bang, bang, bang. Later in life, I remembered that old program and I then understood its message. I also think it was about getting an entire population of millions to understand the same message at the same time. That is something that we need.

As I got older, I started to encounter people in Western Australia who had returned from overseas and declared that Western Australians do not know how to drive. I did not know what they meant, and I was mildly offended on occasion. Then in 1999 I went to the UK with the estimates committee for the first time. We found ourselves in a small people mover on the M1 with all our luggage. We were doing a 100-mile journey. For the youngsters here who do not know who The Hollies are, that is 160 kilometres. There were three or four lanes chock-a-block, bumper to bumper with all sorts of vehicles—cars, coaches and lorries, as the Brits call them. They were all cruising at 120 kilometres an hour all the way, and no bang, bang, bang, bang. I came back here and declared that Western Australians do not know how to drive. It is true. After a week driving the highways and byways of Britain, one will learn how to drive; they simply must, by the pressure of the example of other road users.

I return to that question: are Western Australians useless drivers who cannot merge? Is the situation hopeless? Are we beyond redemption? It has been my lifelong experience that Western Australians are smart. They are adaptable. They are capable of adopting new skills. Some even go to Europe and learn how to drive. We are not useless drivers; we are spoilt. We are constantly given more and more road to drive on in our wide, open spaces. WA road designers use as a rule of thumb 1 800 vehicles a lane an hour. Overseas, they design roads for 2 200 to 2 300 vehicles a lane an hour. We are spoilt but we have not learnt or been enabled to learn what to do. All of a sudden in our wide spaces we are confronted by heavy traffic density. What I am trying to do today by raising this issue is to get members thinking about it, talking about it, for us all to work out —

Hon Ken Travers: Inculcating people about it.

Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Phil Edman; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon James Chown

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Yes, inculcating people about it. How might we educate Western Australian drivers to make better use of their freeways and start enjoying the benefits? Perhaps we ought to track down that old Disney show and ask television stations to show it a few times as a community service. The government can run some ads on drivetime radio when everyone is sitting in traffic jams, and put ads on TV identifying what a good driver does and what a poor driver does and invite all drivers to identify with the former. Would it not be fantastic if we had a day when, if someone out on the road displayed poor driving skills, the rest of us would just smile indulgently and say, "They must be from the eastern states"? We have a way to go before we achieve that. I want to see Western Australians at long last start to think we ought to strive for that. We should adopt, as an understood ethos, a central message of "keep moving at the speed appropriate for the conditions", as opposed to what seems to be the state's psyche now, which is to go fast, get in front and then stop. That is what infuriates people and that is what I want to relieve. Let me conclude and, hopefully, sit back and enjoy others engage positively with this, by identifying three things that government could do right now to help kick off this process without costing vast amounts of money. The three things that I suggest we do relate to merging lanes, on-ramps and speeds on freeways.

The broken line—we call it the dotted line—between merging lanes simply disappears. That gives sandgroper drivers full rein to demonstrate their inability to merge. Everyone can identify it, so let us do something about it. What do we do about it? We continue that broken line with smaller and more frequent dots until it hits the kerb on the left to demonstrate that the left lane finishes as it narrows to nothing. In the last 100 metres or so of the lane, as it narrows there should be several large white arrows sweeping to the right with the points of the arrows extending into the adjacent continuing lane. This clearly communicates to motorists two messages that they need to understand but do not seem to get. One is that the left lane is ending, so they need to indicate and change lanes. I do not think a lot of Western Australian motorists understand that. The second message is that if someone is in the continuing lane, they should expect vehicles to be merging from the left and be prepared to ease off and let them in or move to the adjacent right-hand lane to allow them to come on. It works everywhere else in the world. It ought to work here but we do not accept that as a norm.

The second thing that I want to suggest—I am hoping the parliamentary secretary will run out of here to put these matters in train as soon as he can—concerns on-ramps. This is a bugbear for a lot of people. The speed limit for a freeway on-ramp—for example, where Canning Highway goes onto Kwinana Freeway north—is typically 60 kilometres an hour until a 100-kilometres-an-hour sign appears. That 100-kilometre sign might be as little as 50 metres before the merge section begins. How on earth a motorist can be expected to easily come up from 60 kays to 100 kays and enter at freeway speed, I do not know. We put someone with a speed camera on that on-ramp to make sure that motorists have no chance of doing it. What should we do instead? We should have a sign that reads "Merge ahead: Come up to freeway speed". It should not read "60" or "80" or "100". It should read "Come up to freeway speed". If the traffic on the freeway is moving at 100 kays, that is the speed that motorists should come up to without having to worry about someone with a traffic camera stopping them from doing it. We can see the traffic we are going to merge with and if they are going at 40 kays because it is the middle of peak hour, that is the speed we go. It is simple stuff. Let us adopt it as a standard.

I am going to challenge some people. I never would have raised this if Hon Norman Moore were still here. This was something we used to fight about when I was Minister for Transport and he had been on a country journey; I want to talk about variable speed limits.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It is revelation time! Our freeways have a standard speed limit of 100 kilometres an hour. There are arguments from different quarters about whether that should be less or more, but that is what it is. Quite clearly, there are times, particularly in peak times, when that is not the speed at which traffic should be moving and indeed cannot move simply because of the crush and the density of traffic. But if we remember the rule I earlier identified and recommended we adopt, we know the whole point of a freeway system is that it keeps flowing. Therefore, we need to drive at the appropriate speed for the conditions. We have electronic signs, which cost a lot of money, on the freeways displaying useless messages such as, "Easter coming: Double demerit points from Thursday". Why not have a sign that states, "Road conditions indicate do 60"? Then if everyone does 60 kilometres an hour, we will all keep moving rather than the stop-start function of a crowded freeway system. That will take some doing culturally to sell that message. I do not have the time to fully explain it now, but I hope everyone can start to think about whether that radical idea has some merit.

Let me get the other thing off my chest. With all due respect to my dear friend and recent colleague Hon Norman Moore, I remember him saying to me when I was in charge of Main Roads that it was hopeless on such and such freeway because the speed limit goes from 70 to 80 to 100 then back to 80. "What the hell are you meant to do?" I could resist it sometimes. I said, "Where it says 70, you do 70. Where it says 80, you do 80. Where it says 100, you do 100. It is not that hard. If it is too hard for you, do not drive."

Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Phil Edman; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon James Chown

Hon Sue Ellery: I bet you didn't say that.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No, I did not, but I thought it! I hope that when he reads this *Hansard*, because you are all leaking it to him, he gets in touch with me and says, "You have a point there. Let us sit down here and talk about it."

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [11.46 am]: I am pleased to indicate that the opposition will support the former minister's motion, although it took us a bit of time to work it out. I noted that in his comments he wanted a simpler way of doing things and then used a long word to describe what we needed to do. I had to look up the meaning of "inculcate". When I read that it means "to impress by repeated statement or admonition", I realised it was the perfect word to describe Hon Simon O'Brien's approach to life!

Hon Simon O'Brien: Do you know the difference between you and a personal computer? With a personal computer you have to punch in the information only once!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Very nice! If members have to look up this word, I advise them to make sure they spell it correctly, because I looked it up, with someone else, without the second C, and it is not a pleasant experience, I can assure members!

As Hon Phil Edman said, we can always do better. I do not come from the position that WA drivers are bad drivers because I support the view that we need to talk up WA. I will not go out there and talk down WA drivers. I talk up WA. We have good drivers but we can always do it better. I suggest to Hon Simon O'Brien that Disney movies are great, but there are more modern television shows that we could look at. "Britain from Above" did a fantastic series on how traffic operates. I reckon Hon Simon O'Brien should buy a bottle of red wine, get Hon Norman Moore—after the steam has stopped coming out of his ears—and have a sit down and watch some of those "Britain from Above" episodes that explain how traffic works. The other thing I suggest Hon Simon O'Brien does is get a copy of a book written by Tom Vanderbilt called *Why We Drive the Way We Do (And What it Says About Us)*. One of the excerpts from that, which can be picked up off the internet, is "Why I Became a Late Merger (And Why You Should Too)". It is quite a serious book, although it is written in a light-hearted way. I attended an RAC breakfast at which he spoke. There is a range of psychologies associated with the way we drive. The best way to merge is to leave it until the last moment and bring the two lanes together; not trying to get drivers to drive all the way along. The other question I had when preparing for this motion was: what is the problem in Western Australia? My argument would be that we take responsibility off people. I do not know if Hon Simon O'Brien was the minister who introduced red filter turns at lights. I hope he was not because I think they are one of the worst things to have ever happened in Western Australia.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Not guilty. It should be turn left when safe any time of day.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Simon O'Brien is stealing my speech!

I wanted to quote a few words that I thought summed it up perfectly. I found a letter that was recently written by Hon Greg Hunt, the federal Minister for the Environment, to the Premier of Western Australia. Whilst it talks about sharks, I seriously think that it sums up how we should be thinking about some of these matters. The federal minister is talking about shark mitigation when he says —

... it is an accepted and desirable part of the Australian culture and way of life that each person and each family understands the risk of swimming, surfing and boating in the open seas.

I think we should replace those words, for the purposes of this morning, with "driving on our roads". The letter continues —

Government cannot take away that risk at the general level. Individuals must take responsibility for their own water safety both as a matter of culture and practice. If we diminish that sense of self responsibility then we may create greater risk of misadventure, accident or tragedy.

I reckon those red left-hand filter turn lights take away a responsibility. If there is a green light, even if pedestrians are walking across the road, drivers can still drive around and ignore them. We are taking away the responsibility to drive safely and to understand the environment. If we have a problem with drivers not giving way at an intersection, send a couple of coppers down on police bikes for a few days. Within a couple of days I reckon drivers will give way to pedestrians walking across the road. Do not put a red filter arrow on which will actually bank traffic up the road for three kilometres. In trying to minimise the perception of risk, we in fact are significantly increasing the risk. That driver then gets to the next intersection, which has no red arrow, and thinks that means he has the right to go around even if there is a pedestrian walking. I actually come from a school that says we should adopt the rule that to keep traffic moving, only if it is safe to do so—that is, they have come to a stop; treat it like a Stop sign—let drivers turn left at a red light.

Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Phil Edman; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon James Chown

Another one that drives me batty is when I can sit in my car and look down the road a few kilometres; I think 12 kilometres is the horizon. I am at a red right turn arrow. I can see that no cars are coming for love nor money but I have to sit there and wait, and just as the first car finally turns up, the lights turn red for them! After waiting a few more cycles I then get to drive across the road. I completely agree with Hon Simon O'Brien—I do not know that we need to inculcate people—that we need an education campaign. We can get the Minister for Transport to realise that some of the things we end up doing have the complete opposite effect.

I do not often come to this place and read letters from federal Liberal ministers, but in this case I actually agree with his point that when we try to sometimes take away risk, we actually end up increasing the risk. I have just spoken about two of our road rules; I suspect we could go through a heap of others —

Hon Phil Edman: It would be good to get a copy of that letter.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will pass it to one of the attendants. Would the member like me to autograph it for him as well so he can have it as a full record? It is an important record. It is about Hon Phil Edman's statement of life: we can always do better! We are told that is one of his favourite statements. We are not bad drivers; we can always do better. There is always a need to educate people. We now need to get a bit of money out of the road trauma trust fund, which is supposed to be spent on road safety, not to inculcate people but to occasionally educate people about how to do it better. One thing we need to do is buy every member of cabinet, starting with the Minister for Transport, Tom Vanderbilt's book *Why We Drive the Way We Do*. That might help start to get things better. It is government private members' time, so over to them.

HON LIZ BEHJAT (North Metropolitan) [11.55 am]: I am very pleased that Madam Deputy President (Hon Adele Farina) gave me the nod on this occasion because I think in a debate such as this it is very important that both genders get to speak on this motion. For those members around the chamber who are lovers of stage musicals, in particular *Annie Get Your Gun*—I am not talking about anything to do with the Shooters and Fishers Party!—they may remember the song from that titled *Anything you can do I can do better*. What is it that women do better than men? Drive! Absolutely! The statistics bear that out in all insurance claims and in speeding violations and things like that. We are the better drivers!

Several members interjected.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: It is only appropriate that a woman speaks on this motion today.

I am very happy to jump up in support of this motion moved by my colleague Hon Simon O'Brien to say that yes, "inculcate" is a fabulous word; it is one that I think we should use more often. It means "by repeated admonition"; that is, to get better driving habits into people. I am sure if the parliamentary secretary has an opportunity to contribute to the debate today, he will outline that there are some very good programs now in place that do just that.

Another reason I feel fairly qualified to speak on the motion today is that I am the mother of a 16-year-old boy who is currently going through the driver training program in Western Australia. I am hoping that through that he will be inculcated with some very good driving habits. I am of a similar age to Hon Simon O'Brien, although, unfortunately, I think I have a couple of years on him even. We got our drivers' licences at a time when the day you turned 17 you turned up at the local police station. If lucky enough, you might have headed up to Northam because I think the Northam copper was pretty good at giving out drivers' licences without too much problem! There was not a lot in what we had to do to get our drivers' licences. These days of course there are programs taught in our schools such as the Keys for Life program, which is a very good program. Children are taught from a very early age about good road usage. At the moment, learner drivers have to go through a very strict regime. Once they have sat for their learner's permit, a 25-hours driving log has to be completed in order to sit the practical assessment, which gets them through to stage 1. That can be done at 16 years and six months of age. After that period, another 25 hours of supervised driver training has to be completed. They can then do the hazard perception test. They get their driver's licence with green P-plates and so it goes until they end up with three years' probationary driving. That is all very good except we have to remember that those people who are supervising our children during that time should themselves have very good driving habits.

Since I have been supervising my son's driving, I have become more attentive to those habits. Merging really is one of the issues that people have talked about as being a huge issue in Western Australia. I do not know why that is. When I drive in other countries or in the eastern states, it seems fine. When my brother was living in Sydney he told me that when a new lane had been put across one of the bridges, the advertising campaign for it was "Merge like a zipper". It is really easy. If members think about it, that is exactly what we do—as the zip goes up, one car goes that way and one car goes behind and the traffic carries on quite nicely. It seems that Western Australians cannot seem to get that in their minds.

Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Phil Edman; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon James Chown

I recently returned from a trip to the Middle East. Some of the traffic issues I saw there were quite interesting. I came away, especially from Beirut, with a feeling that road lane markings are for decoration only! They do not actually serve the purpose of indicating which lane a driver might stay in because there might be three lane markings on a highway but there are eight lanes of traffic! However, there were no accidents. Cars were merging and drivers would let people walk across the road. They seemed to be courteous to each other. Once a person gets behind the wheel of a car here the enemy is the pedestrian and when a person is a pedestrian, the enemy is the driver. We cannot seem to get the message across to people to just take a chill pill and relax. Our journeys on the road would be safer if people were a little more courteous and followed the road rules.

Hon Simon O'Brien has some great suggestions for what could be adopted here for safer driver habits. I wholeheartedly support the motion. It is another great example of why Western Australia needs to become a multicultural state. If more people come to live here from countries where there are good driving habits, such as merging, that might rub off on all Western Australians. This debate has allowed me to mention two of my pet subjects—multiculturalism and safe driving for students. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this matter to the house. It has allowed members to have one of those great debates we have from time to time.

HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral) [12.01 pm]: Some good stuff has been said today. Thanks to Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing it up. Even Hon Ken Travers had a couple of interesting things to say. The suggestion about turning left and giving way to pedestrians is actually in the Road Traffic Code. If members get themselves a copy of the Road Traffic Code, they will find those things are mentioned there. The code also includes the rule that turning vehicles should give way to pedestrians. All of those rules exist. The ideas we have are good ideas. The thing that does not happen is driving at the speed limit. I can attest to that because in half of the country crashes I went to when I worked with the major crash investigation section of the police force for three and a half years, drivers would say, "The bloke in front of me was doing 100 kilometres an hour and I wanted to overtake because the speed limit is 110 kilometres an hour. I didn't make the best decision to overtake in the right place. I overtook in the wrong place. I had a crash; people died." The whole point of the road traffic rules is that if people do the right thing by the rules, it should all work. What has happened is that we have forgotten to teach people how to drive and people have forgotten how to drive. People have forgotten how to have a work ethic. There are lots of things around like that and it continues.

Members have mentioned Keys for Life. I am a great supporter of Keys for Life because I also worked for three years in the police road safety section before the Commissioner for Police was told by the government to shut it down. We stopped that. We used to teach bike ed. I used to travel around the countryside to teach bike ed. Kids would learn how to ride bicycles. They would learn how to give way, zipper and all the things people need to do in a car; but that was stopped. Why?

Automatic vehicles are the worst things since sliced bread. Members have talked about when they sat in the back of their dad's car. I used to sit in the back of my dad's EJ station wagon with the tailgate open, sucking in all those fumes. Manual cars have first, second and third gears. In third gear, the car is going flat out; in first, it is crawling. What stops the vehicle in second gear? The engine. People do not do that now; people drive in their automatic cars. I was driving on the freeway this morning and I noticed a police car trying to get through the traffic. I do the right thing and get out of the way. All of these other drivers look like they do not know what to do. I see people driving using their phones or eating toast in their automatic cars. They accelerate because the car in front has moved up and I see them thinking, "I'd better get in there before someone else gets in," and they drive up and stop and the freeway goes like the old squeeze box. That is not how to drive. When people are taught how to drive, they should be taught good habits.

Members have talked about learner drivers driving 25 hours in the country. If I were to drive for 25 hours around Leonora, I would have to drive around the town six million times. That will not work in the country necessarily because it takes two hours and 20 minutes to drive from Leonora to Kalgoorlie. If kids are to get 25 hours' worth of driver training in the country, their parents would have to chuck them in the car and drive from Leonora to Kalgoorlie! How much fuel would that cost?

Hon Stephen Dawson: Not if you're doing 100.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: If a driver does 110 kilometres an hour, it takes two hours and 20 minutes.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Don't forget that learners can only do a maximum of 100.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Hon Stephen Dawson is dead right that learners are limited to 100 kilometres an hour, so that journey will take two hours and 40 minutes, but members must get the general gist. My point is that the training does not work the way we want it to work. Members have spoken about constructing roads. I am a qualified road safety auditor. When I was a police officer in the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder I used to go out and audit roads. We would audit roads and figure out how to make roads work and how to make black spots better.

Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Phil Edman; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon James Chown

Black spot funding is a great thing. Kalgoorlie has huge intersections. We would sit there, watch and say, "There's going to be a crash here." Nine times out of 10 there was a crash because it would take people three weeks to get across the intersection, especially for pedestrians! How did we stop that? We put in roundabouts. The bad thing about roundabouts is that everybody stops at a give-way sign at a roundabout.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Don't have them. Don't have give-way signs.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: The whole point is that people should be giving way to the right for any vehicle on the roundabout. Unless a person is crazy and they are driving around the wrong way, they have to give way to the right. It just works. We have lost the natural ability to say, "It works because." Driving abilities are exactly the same.

I have also taught people how to drive armoured personnel carriers in the army—13 tonnes of compressed aluminium flying around the countryside in battle conditions. It is the same. There is no difference. How we drive is how we do it. The conversation today has been really good. It has been entertaining and great, but we should be looking at how to make people better drivers. Lots of people will tell us one thing or another, but we should be going back a bit. We should be looking at not only road safety but also crime prevention. I am really big into that now. We should be going back to the basics. Let us go back to bike ed. Why does the Minister for Police not say to the police commissioner that she wants bike ed back? Why does she not say, "I gave you X amount of dollars last year, let's put that back in."

Hon Ken Travers: One of the problems with today's kids is that they don't get exposed to traffic until they get into the car for the first time. They sit in a car and never have to judge perception and distance.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Exactly, Hon Ken Travers. There is the perception test. I know I have been bragging a bit, but I am a qualified police pursuit driver. My expertise of stopping in a situation of driving would be far different from that of everyone else, because I go hard, brake early and accelerate through the corner, because I can drive. If I were to sit down to do the perception test, I would fail, as would lots of other police officers. We all fail because our perception of that is different from the perception of what is on the computer. Hon Ken Travers is dead right. We do not give people the opportunity to judge perception. I think—it is just one of the things I think—we should go back to teaching bike ed. It is a great thing. Why would we not take kids out on pushbikes and teach them the road rules so that they can use this experience later when they have a motor vehicle that goes fast and kills people?

Hon Ken Travers: And they learn to judge speed.

Hon DAVE GRILLS: Absolutely; and they will. What about hardwired headlights on motorcycles? I have been to a number of accidents involving motorcycles and the drivers would say, "I didn't realise he was so close." People focus on headlights; it is good to be seen. Go out and do it and count 1 001, 1 002, 1 003. At 60 kilometres an hour a vehicle is travelling at 60 metres a second. The vehicle regulations say that if a person stamps on the brakes really hard, the vehicle should stop within 30 metres, which they do. A certain amount of skid mark will be left behind; that is how we usually worked out the crashes. Nine times out of 10 there would be the comment, "I didn't see them." I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this up because it is really important.

Let us ask the minister to get onto the commissioner to use some of the money he gets to work with other people, such as Constable Care and the driver trainer school that they want to build in Maylands. She should be saying, "This is where your money should go. This is where we should put the money. This is where royalties for regions money should go if you're going to do it in the regions. This is where we want to put the money because we want to teach our kids to be better drivers in the future." We could build the best roads or the slowest roads, but at the end of the day people need to be taught how to drive cars.

HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [12.08 pm]: I would like to thank Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this motion before the house. It is a good debate in which all members can make a contribution and to get some of their frustrations off their chests. I would like to thank Hon Ken Travers. I never said that we need to get better; I said that our government is not perfect and that there is much room for improvement.

In my experience of going backwards and forwards to Rockingham on the Kwinana Freeway, I cannot understand why, just after Armadale Road, going up towards Berrigan Drive, for some unknown reason, people have to stop and put on their brakes. There is an electronic sign there and I do not know if that is what people are reading.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Where is it?

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Just before Berrigan Drive, as people go up that hill, there is an electronic board on the left-hand side, going towards the city, and people just decide to stop. It is weird; I do not know why it happens or what the energy is behind it.

Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Dave Grills; Hon Phil Edman; Hon Peter Katsambanis; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon James Chown

Hon Ken Travers: It is often caused by an event happening further down the road. *Britain from Above* will explain it all to you.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: That is what I thought, but as soon as drivers get to the top of the hill, off they go doing 100 kilometres an hour straightaway. I am not talking about the peak hours; if members came down to Rockingham on a Sunday and then shot back home at two o'clock in the afternoon, they would experience it as well. I am not too sure why it happens. Maybe it is because that section is uphill or the electronic sign is a distraction, but I cannot understand why drivers want to put on their brakes and stop; there is no reason for it.

There are a lot of Western Australian drivers out there who do not understand the simple rules for indicating in and out of roundabouts; I do not think they have a clue. Our government has a responsibility to go ahead and maybe do some driver education through some advertisements. I do not know who was in government at the time but I remember some time ago there were ads to explain to drivers in Western Australia how to indicate in and out of roundabouts. I think it is time that that is addressed.

Why do drivers have to stay in the right-hand lane? Fair enough if they are going to be turning right, but if it is just a long stretch of the freeway or highway, why do they need to be in the right-hand lane doing 90 kays an hour in a 100 zone? I find that very frustrating and I am sure others do too. I have found that driver behaviour in Western Australia has got worse in the last six or seven years. I do not know whether it is because of the number of people who have emigrated to Western Australia or that there is not enough driver education on the TV, but it is time to now take this seriously and to educate people about our roads.

When I started my business in 1991 there were no mobile phones. I think I was one of the first cabinetmakers to actually have a Motorola brick. I used to take that with me nightclubbing and everywhere else. It was huge. It cost me about \$1 800 a month for a Motorola brick.

Hon Liz Behjat: Did you have a shirt and gold chain?

Hon PHIL EDMAN: No, I did not have a shirt and a gold chain, Hon Liz Behjat; I do not like wearing jewellery!

Hon Jim Chown: They let you in!

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Yes, they did let me in, Hon Jim Chown—many times. Hon Jim Chown is interjecting and making me laugh; I am trying to get this finished.

Texting and talking on mobile phones is also a distraction for drivers. I do not know how many times I have seen people holding their phones up to their ears—I am not talking hands-free—or texting while driving. The situation is getting worse with iPhones now as well. That is a real problem. I see it time and again on the roads.

I would like my government to actually spend some money on driver education. It could maybe produce some ads about using the correct lane. If people are going slow and do not want to go 100 kilometres an hour or whatever the speed limit is, they should get out of the right-hand lane and stay in the left lane so that people can pass. Bring in the ads that we used to have about simple things like indicating in and out of roundabouts; it is not rocket science. The ad that frustrates me the most is the one that our government has made about enjoying the drive. It has that nice music and everything and tells people to calm down as they are driving along. They want us to do this even though we are in traffic trying to get to Parliament and running late—calm down and enjoy the ride! That ad was a complete waste of money. I would rather see something spent on driver education than on telling me to calm down and enjoy the drive in the city of Perth. That is my little dig.

I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this motion to the house. I hope that our government has listened to the debate or reads *Hansard* to find out what has been said and can make some informed decisions on driver behaviour.

HON PETER KATSAMBANIS (North Metropolitan) [12.13 pm]: It is a pleasure to speak on this motion. I congratulate Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this issue to the chamber. It is an issue that is often discussed by Western Australians. We could call it one of the barbecue stoppers in WA: are WA people good drivers or not? I fall into the category of people who believe that Western Australians are generally good drivers. However, what has already been borne out from the discussion today is that Western Australians have unfortunately been lured into complacency when driving and in many ways have been cottonwooled or nannied into that complacency by myriad conflicting and often ridiculous laws, approaches, advertisements, discussions and the like. In that respect, it is sometimes the authorities that make the rules and the regulations and are culpable for creating that nannying of, and complacency in, a lot of drivers. Some drivers are worried and scared. In the case of on-ramps to freeways, I witness almost daily on the Mitchell Freeway people looking over their shoulders and around trees for a Multanova or a policeman on a motorcycle that might be zapping them as they accelerate to 100 kilometres an hour so that they can merge onto the freeway.

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The point Hon Ken Travers rightly made was that drivers should have a sense of personal responsibility for what they are doing. They should take it upon themselves to make the right decisions and to do the right things for both themselves and all other road users. That is the premise from which I will speak today. I agree with some of the solutions that have been proposed by other members that have been directed at the authorities or the government. I agree with Hon Simon O'Brien's point about merging lanes and how the markings in Western Australia are unique; they do not occur anywhere else in the world. The markings die out about 200-odd metres before the merging lane finishes and that confuses everybody. I have driven in every other Australian state and in America, Europe and Asia; everywhere else has those markings that Hon Simon O'Brien described—I will not repeat what he said—to assist people to understand whether it is a merging lane or a non-merging lane and to help them automatically kick into gear to work together to make it work. That would be a great idea.

Hon Ken Travers talked about the left-hand arrows that seem to have proliferated in the last few years. Certainly in the time that I have been in Western Australia, they seem to have mushroomed.

Hon Ken Travers: Apparently it is since Troy Buswell became minister.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Again, we can ascribe blame, but the fact is that they are there. I tend to think that with a lot of these things, the bureaucrats who advise government have a particular bent, and irrespective of the political party in government or the minister in government, sometimes these things have a life of their own. The left-hand turning arrows have proliferated. I think they have done two things, both of which Hon Ken Travers pointed out; the first is that they have created frustration in drivers and delays, and the other is that they have taken away personal responsibility from drivers to watch out for the safety and security of pedestrians and other drivers. The sooner those arrows are removed, the better. It is the same with right-hand turning arrows. There are a couple of intersections in Perth—one is on Balcatta Road—where the right-hand arrow turns green to allow cars to turn, then turns red for about 10 seconds or so to indicate quite clearly that cars no longer have priority to turn right, and then the red arrow disappears and leaves it up to the discretion of drivers as to whether it is safe to turn right or to wait for the traffic to come the other way. That is an example of something that we could move to rather than having fixed right-hand turning arrows that bank up the traffic. Hon Ken Travers described quite well the problem that arises with these arrows—drivers are left sitting at traffic lights on a red arrow and they watch the road and see that nothing is coming, but when a car comes from the opposite direction and should be able to go through a green light, the lights for it turn red.

Hon Ken Travers: We used to have them go off but they won't allow that on any road with a speed limit of more than 70 kilometres an hour, no matter how far you can see.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Speed limits are another issue. I might not get the time to speak about speed limits today.

There are things drivers can do; there are lots of road treatments and there is education, as Hon Dave Grills said. How about drivers driving at or near the speed limit? That is a choice in Western Australia that is often not made. I see dozens of examples on a daily basis such as on a 100-kilometre-an-hour road where cars travel in both lanes at 80 or 85 kilometres an hour. Sadly, even worse, I see cars on a 100 kilometre stretch of freeway driving variably between about 70 and 90 kilometres an hour within a two or three-kilometre stretch. They are driving not only under the speed limit but also very variably. It is almost as if they cannot keep a constant speed. With a bit more concentration, I am sure people would drive at the speed limit where it is safe to do so.

Hon Phil Edman talked about drivers hogging the right-hand lane, which is even more frustrating when cars in both lanes are travelling, as I said, about 10 kilometres below the speed limit. They should get out of the right-hand lane and get into the left-hand lane and allow traffic to flow. That will take away a lot of the angst and the rage that can come with driving. They are some of the things drivers can do. Hon Phil Edman touched also on roundabouts. I am a relative newcomer to Western Australia and I can tell members that almost anyone who comes here is frustrated beyond belief at the way Western Australians seem to have been educated. I am told that an education campaign was aimed at indicating at roundabouts in a way that does not occur anywhere else in the world. On any day that I am driving and I am intending to travel through the roundabout—I am not going to turn left into a street; I am going through the roundabout along the same street I am driving—I see some cars performing the same task as I am but indicating with the left-hand arrow. I see other cars travelling through the roundabout, indicating with the right-hand arrow. Others, like me, because I was not trained to drive in Western Australia, show that they are driving through the intersection by not indicating. That is exactly how it works everywhere else I have been in the world. People driving through the intersection do not have to indicate to exit.

Hon Ken Travers: In WA you are required to indicate at the exit before.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: That is right. People have the American perception of exits. In relation to indicating at roundabouts most of the rest of Australia teach people to imagine the intersection without a

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roundabout and to indicate in the same way they would if they were approaching the intersection and the roundabout is not there. People turning left at the first exit, as the Americans and our GP systems call it, should indicate left. If they are turning right, at the third exit as the GPS tells us, they should indicate right. If they are proceeding straight through along the same road, they should not indicate, and that will avoid confusion. Here in WA some people indicate they are going left and some indicate they are going right. Definitely some concentration, and possibly some education, on getting it right will avoid roundabout accidents, which happen far too frequently.

The other thing I think drivers can do is stop rubbernecking. We talked a lot about the meaning of inculcation. Rubbernecking is when drivers see something on the side of the road and decide, all of a sudden, to drop anchor—to stop. It happened to me this morning on Hepburn Avenue almost directly opposite the Duncraig Fire Station—some members will know exactly where that is. A man with a whipper snipper was on the median strip, which is a very large plantation, and there was no need for the traffic to slow down; there were no cones or traffic signallers slowing the traffic—but one driver decided to stop and look at what he was doing, and all the drivers behind him had to slam on their brakes. It was frustrating and extraordinarily dangerous. If we can think about those few things, the good drivers of Western Australia will get even better.

HON ALYSSA HAYDEN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.24 pm]: I rise to put a couple of comments on record. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for raising this debate in the house today. When I got my driver's licence, my father taught me that a driver's licence is a privilege and when we get behind the wheel of a car we are in charge of a weapon and that one simple mistake by ourselves or another driver on the road could take a person's life or affect many other people's lives in the future. I think we have lost the basic understanding of how important it is to take our driver's licence seriously. We take it as a given that we have the right to get into a vehicle any time of the day we wish to get to wherever we want to go, generally, as quickly as possible.

I want to put on the record that, unfortunately, I disagree with my very honourable colleague Hon Phil Edman about the Enjoy the Ride campaign. That campaign makes us all stop and realise that it does not matter whether we get to our destination five seconds earlier or five seconds later than the person next to us at a set of lights. We all see drivers zigzagging in and out of traffic and nine times out of 10 we catch up to them at a set of lights, a roundabout or a parking spot. It is our choice whether we turn up cranky and angry to a destination or turn up relaxed, cool and calm. Driving a vehicle is not meant to be a race or a competition or to cause stress. The Enjoy the Ride campaign will, hopefully, teach people such as Hon Phil Edman that it is about getting in the car and taking time out to relax and enjoy and not be too stressed when we get to work.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It is designed to make people believe there are no traffic jams; we know that is the case.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: I am sure Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich had her turn, but if she did not, I am sorry.

A couple of years ago the RAC held a driving test for a number of people. A pitcher from Perth Heat and Russell Woolf were there. I was also there as I think were Hon Ken Travers and a couple of other people. I believe we all failed our driving licence test. Was Hon Ken Travers part of that?

Hon Ken Travers: No; I didn't get to do what you did, but I wouldn't have failed. I think it was the member for Mirrabooka who failed, if I remember correctly.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: Okay. We all failed our tests. We realised that we had been driving for so long that we had forgotten the basics. WA drivers do not indicate while merging and that was one test we lost points for. All I quickly want to say, so that Hon Jim Chown can respond, is that we need to understand that driving is our own responsibility; we must take responsibility, and I think the government is doing a great job with Enjoy the Ride campaigns and I encourage Hon Phil Edman to take note.

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.27 pm]: I have sat back a bit this morning to let responsible drivers of this house make their contributions and suggestions on how improvements can be made to alleviate traffic

Hon Simon O'Brien: Have you ever lost your licence?

Hon JIM CHOWN: Yes, I have.

Hon Simon O'Brien: One day you'll be a Minister for Planning and Infrastructure!

Several members interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I have three minutes left. All members' contributions are in *Hansard* so I am sure they will be noted with great interest by the ministry. On a point raised by Hon Ken Travers about turning left, I inform

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him that this is something that has been entertained in the ministry. There has been a bit of push-back from the department but watch that space.

Hon Ken Travers: Now you can say you have bipartisan support for it!

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you very much; a very rare thing coming from Hon Ken Travers on traffic issues.

For the information of the house there is a cost to congestion. It is estimated that in 2012 the cost of congestion to the metropolitan area was approximately \$1.4 billion and that, unless congestion issues are overcome, the cost is likely to increase by 2020 to around \$2.1 billion. We all think we have a right to drive on the road but it is a privilege. From my perspective, education is the key to good driving. People need to relax a bit. We have too many aggressive drivers and too many people not concentrating on what they are doing when they are in a motor vehicle. Members may have seen the program from the Minister for Police over the Christmas period showing unmarked police motor cycles and police officers with cameras on their helmets targeting people undertaking a simple action that they do all the time—just as Hon Phil Edman is now and which he does constantly, I might add—which is texting. These people were identified and found to be losing concentration while they were texting at stop signs, traffic lights or whatever. There are enough university studies that prove that texting when driving is equivalent to drink-driving.

Hon Kate Doust: Which studies are they, parliamentary secretary?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I do not have enough time to go into the detail for the honourable member but studies prove that using a hand-held mobile phone while driving is as dangerous as drink-driving. Members may have seen a news flash a couple of weeks ago in which the RAC tested drivers' concentration. The drivers wore a helmet that was fitted with a computer system that recorded that when a driver lost concentration the car slowed down. A number of responsible drivers who drove in this RAC car were amazed at what happened and a how often they lost concentration while driving. When we are driving, whether in traffic or on a country road, concentration is essential. I implore everybody, including members in this house who think they are good drivers, to recognise that when they start to lose concentration the best thing they can do is pull off the road and have a break or a walk before getting back into their car. We should not get angry when traffic is congested on the freeway. Traffic congestion will occur regardless of how government tries to mitigate the problem. Traffic congestion is a part of life when driving in built-up areas, regardless of where one lives. Concentration, remaining calm, being courteous, obeying the traffic laws and being aware of our responsibilities are the keys to ensuring people arrive safely at their destination and also that the people around us will be able to continue with their safe driving habits. Dobbing in is not un-Australian and I encourage anyone who sees someone misbehaving or hooning on the road, or breaking the traffic laws, to take their number and inform the police, who will follow it up.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.