

**ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES**

*Statement by Minister for Road Safety*

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Road Safety)** [12.01 pm]: A key factor in keeping the community safe on our roads is encouraging motorists to drive the safest vehicles possible. If all new vehicles had similar features to the safest in their class, deaths and serious injuries could be reduced by up to 40 per cent, highlighting the importance of vehicle safety in reducing road trauma. More Western Australians than ever are driving newer vehicles. This can be attributed mainly to the lower cost of imported vehicles and the fact that older leaded petrol models had to be converted or scrapped with the change to unleaded petrol. Just because a vehicle looks new, though, does not mean it is safe. Conversely, just because a vehicle is old does not mean it is unsafe. With this in mind, the Road Safety Council has developed a simple guide for those considering buying a vehicle suitable for regional driving or the harsher terrain of remote travel. “A Consumer Guide to Safer Vehicles Suitable for Remote and Regional Western Australia” gives people intending to drive in regional and remote areas the facts about what to look for when purchasing a vehicle. It also discusses maintenance and the importance of knowing where and how to access spare parts for the vehicle. The guide is available on the RSC website and will be distributed in less accessible areas by licensing officers who travel to remote communities and by local police. The guide includes information about electronic stability control, auto emergency braking and anti-lock braking systems that can help to avoid a crash by reducing the danger of skidding, increasing braking capacity and reducing the risk of skidding under heavy braking.

We know that the number of fatalities on regional roads this year is disproportionately and unacceptably high. There have been 59 regional road deaths this year, which is a very concerning statistic. Some of the contributing factors to these crashes have been, as is often the case, alcohol, speeding and fatigue. However, another factor that must be considered is how new technologies can help a driver when a mistake has been made. Intelligent speed assist, for example, activates audio and visual warnings when a driver exceeds the speed limit. This is an enormously valuable tool. Western Australia, like many other states and territories, encourages buyers to “consult the stars” when buying a new or used vehicle. The Stars on Cars program urges motorists to look at the Australasian New Car Assessment Program website to find out the star rating for new vehicles and the used car safety ratings guide for information on used vehicle safety. I urge anyone who plans to buy a vehicle for regional and remote travel to look at this publication and I encourage all members to promote this important road safety guide.