

PILBARA ROAD NETWORK — TRAFFIC PRESSURE

1108. Hon ED DERMER to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is the minister aware of the dramatically increased traffic pressure on the Pilbara road network resulting from the growth of the resource industry?
- (2) In particular, what steps will the government take to address the condition of the inland road route north from Newman via Nullagine to Marble Bar?
- (3) Is the minister aware that the poor condition of large unsealed sections of this road is placing road users at considerable risk?
- (4) Will the minister ensure that his government urgently brings forward an upgrade plan for this inland road that meets the current and future needs of this important part of Western Australia?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The normal grading cycle between Newman and Marble Bar on the Ripon Hills Road involved one grader working 24 days on and six days off. The complete length of the road is graded in the 24 days. In October this year Main Roads added an additional grader and a water truck between Newman and Nullagine and an additional grader and water truck between Nullagine and Marble Bar. Both sections are on a 15-day work cycle with five days off. This work will improve the state of the road considerably.
- (3) The minister is aware of the importance of this section of the Marble Bar road to the people of the Pilbara. However, Main Roads has advised that there are no sections of this route that it considers to be particularly hazardous. As with all roads, sealed or unsealed, motorists are expected to drive to the conditions of the road environment.
- (4) Main Roads has plans to undertake works intended to enhance safety and improve the condition of the road. However, as the member knows, the state government does not have an unlimited supply of money to meet the many diverse community expectations in our vast state. Therefore, it is essential that the moneys that are available be directed into those areas providing the greatest community benefit. Notwithstanding this, I will ensure that funding for these works is considered in future budgetary processes. Perhaps if greater attention had been paid to proper funding for important works by the previous government during the boom years, we would not now have the \$800 million backlog on road maintenance that is the legacy of Labor's years of inaction.