

ROAD TOLL — MINISTER FOR ROAD SAFETY'S COMMENTS

620. Mrs M.H. ROBERTS to the Minister for Road Safety:

I refer to the state's alarming road toll, recent car crashes, and comments by psychologist Dr Lauren Breen that, and I quote —

“Apportioning blame before the investigations are done can actually add to the grief of the families of those who died.”

- (1) Why, after another horrific weekend of deaths on our roads, did the minister say that if people made “better choices”, they would not have been killed?
- (2) Are not the minister's comments insensitive to the loved ones of those killed, and at best premature given that the investigations have not been completed?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for Midland for the question. The state's road toll is appalling. We are sitting at over 100 people now who have died as a result of road crashes in Western Australia so far this year. To clarify my comments, when we have a look at the causes of fatal and serious injury crashes in Western Australia, it comes back to the same things. It comes back to people not wearing seatbelts, people driving when they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, people speeding, —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: — distracted drivers, and people driving while fatigued. Those are the causes of our car crashes. The sad reality is that if drivers made better choices, we would not have the road toll that we have.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Were some of the people killed on the weekend innocent? Did they make bad choices? Do you actually know?

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The fact remains that if we can change driving culture in Western Australia, we will drive down the road toll. Every time I get an opportunity to speak on road safety, I will remind motorists that most of these fatalities —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: How would you feel if it was one of your loved ones?

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Member for Midland, who is politicising those deaths now? Have some respect for the families.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member for Midland should have some respect for the families.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: To clarify my comments, I was making broad comments about the causes of fatal and serious crashes in Western Australia. Those causes come back to the same issues—people speeding, people driving while under the influence of alcohol, people not wearing seatbelts, people disobeying the road rules, and people driving while fatigued or distracted. That is why these car crashes are occurring. That is the difficulty that we have as a government.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Hillarys, I call you to order for the first time. A quick answer, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have great empathy for the people who have lost loved ones on the roads. I have lost a family member myself. Most people know somebody who has died as a result of a road crash. To say that I do not understand the suffering that those people endure is entirely inappropriate and incorrect. I drive past a memorial every day that reminds me of the loss that families suffer when someone dies needlessly on our roads.

Mr R.F. Johnson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Hillarys!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I do have empathy for these families. I am committed to driving down the road toll, and we are doing that with a range of strategies that the member for Midland is well aware of.