

ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVES — WHEATBELT

819. Mr I.C. BLAYNEY to the Minister for Road Safety:

Can the minister please inform the house on how the government is investing road trauma trust account funds into road safety initiatives to help keep the community safe on wheatbelt roads?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied: I thank the member for Geraldton for his continued advocacy in this Parliament on road safety issues.

Members will no doubt remember that I announced the Wheatbelt Highway Safety Review, which is a cross-agency initiative that I initiated, to interrogate crash data and do some on-site statistical analysis of several wheatbelt highways so we can work out what is going on in the wheatbelt. Members are no doubt aware that in the wheatbelt in 2014 there were 26 fatalities. That puts the fatality rate at 49.8 people per 100 000, which is seven times the state average. That is obviously an unacceptable average and an unacceptable level of trauma for those families in the wheatbelt. When we analysed the data, we found that it comes down to speed and unrestrained drivers. Over half of those crashes were single vehicles hitting an object—54 per cent of them—which is inconsistent with the rest of the state.

In the past three years, the state government has allocated \$100 million from the road trauma trust account for our Regional Run Off Road Program. This program involves shoulder sealing and installing wire rope barriers and audible edges. The wheatbelt received 30 per cent of that funding over three years, and that has gone into improving roads in regional areas such as the Williams–Narrogin Highway, the Northam–Cranbrook Road, the Collie Lake King Road and also the Brand Highway and the York–Merredin Road. We are trying to improve the road network, and we are working at that as quickly and effectively as we can. We put \$1.5 million, through the Western Australian Local Government Association, into the RoadWise program. The wheatbelt has a particularly active network of RoadWise committees; there are 14 active committees. We are working with those RoadWise committees at present to roll out the Stars on Cars program, to inform consumers in the wheatbelt about how to make better purchases with respect to vehicle safety.

Finally—I am winding up—we have a local community grants program that is administered through my office. So far this year, the wheatbelt has received 39 per cent of that grant allocation, and that goes into getting road safety messages out to local community events, which are always extremely well attended in the wheatbelt. We funded some road safety messaging to occur at events such as the opening of the Wongan–Ballidu and District Men’s Shed, drink-driving messages at the Avon Rock Battle of the Bands and safer vehicle campaigns at the Wagin Gymkhana.

We are working on the problem with our partners in the wheatbelt—with RoadWise committees, local government partners and other agencies of government—to make sure that we can address the issues that are contributing to that unacceptable wheatbelt road safety fatality record.