

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Service 7, Support for the Implementation of the State’s Road Safety Initiatives, \$2 372 000 —

Ms D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr J.C. Kobelke, Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Mr I. Cameron, Executive Director, Office of Road Safety.

Mr S. Ruparella, Principal Finance Officer, Office of Road Safety.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

The estimates committee’s consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. This is the prime focus of the committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program, or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairman to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister’s cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by 6 June 2008, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and accordingly I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk’s office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by 6 June 2008.

It will also greatly assist if when referring to the program statements volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, item, program and amount in preface to their question.

The member for South Perth.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I refer to page 101, the table headed “Key Efficiency Indicators”. There have been two sharp increases between the 2007-08 budget and the 2007-08 estimate. The first is that the average cost of awareness-raising campaigns has increased from \$477 000 to \$706 000. The second is that the average cost of road safety initiatives has increased from \$756 000 to \$1.15 million. Can the minister please elaborate on those significant increases?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Certainly. We are dealing with the average cost of road safety initiatives. If a smaller number of initiatives is undertaken, the average cost per initiative will be higher, whereas if a larger number of initiatives is undertaken, the average cost per initiative will be lower. The reduction in average cost of awareness-raising campaigns is due in this case to an increase in the number of campaigns in 2008-09.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: No. I am referring to the increase in the average cost of awareness-raising campaigns from \$477 000 budgeted to \$706 000 estimated.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Sorry. It is the reverse of what I was saying. I was talking about the difference between the estimated and the target; the member was talking about the difference between the budgeted and the estimated. Fewer campaigns were run; therefore, the average cost per initiative increased.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Given the increased expenditure on those campaigns, is the minister satisfied that those campaigns have been effective, and does the minister have any evidence to support his view?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is certainly a very important question. We want to make sure that we are getting value for the money that is spent. I certainly do query, through Mr Cameron, particular campaigns and how they are going. The Office of Road Safety takes a very evidence-based approach. It tests all its campaigns beforehand. If it is using a type of campaign that has been used in other states, it looks at the evidence in those states to see how that campaign might work in Western Australia. It also does follow-up after the campaign. To be more specific, I will ask Mr Cameron to address that question.

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr I. Cameron: As the minister has indicated, we are relatively unique compared with other states. We prepare every campaign and test it in the market. Every new concept and every new campaign is put before focus groups. We then monitor and track those campaigns. Therefore, we know for each campaign the level of awareness in the community, and whether the key messages are getting through to the community. Those results are available for all our major campaign areas.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Can either the Office of Road Safety or the minister supply figures for the number of fatalities and major crashes, to shed any light on whether these awareness-raising campaigns are having an impact on the number of fatalities and major crashes?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Again, that is a very good question. As was touched on partially by Mr Cameron in his earlier response, we are looking to change attitudes and raise awareness. However, there is an important next step between changing awareness and driver behaviour, and achieving a reduction in the number of serious accidents and fatalities. That is much more tenuous and difficult to show. The whole purpose of our awareness-raising campaigns is to provide a basis on which we can improve road safety. For instance, we have been running a campaign in recent months to encourage people to buy safer cars. That campaign has been conducted with the support of the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia. We are measuring—or, if we are not, we will be—to see whether people who are purchasing a car are now thinking about the safety factors of that car. Evidence is available on that matter. To then follow through and say that, because of that campaign, a certain number of lives have been saved is a more complex matter that cannot easily be investigated.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Last year, the Office of Road Safety spent more money on campaigns than had been budgeted for. Did that have anything to do with the fact that last year was a terrible year for road fatalities and crashes in Western Australia? Also, did the minister have to sign off on that extra expenditure?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We certainly look at the effectiveness of campaigns. An overview is done by my office, and government generally, of all campaigns. That is done for many reasons. One important reason is that if, for example, the Office of Road Safety, the Water Corporation, the Department of Education and WA Police were all seeking to advertise at the same time, they would crowd each other out. Therefore, we try to ensure that government advertising is spread out in an effective way. We also look at what will be achieved from those campaigns.

[2.40 pm]

The member is trying to find that extra connection between advertising and results. I will ask Mr Cameron to give some further explanation about the fact that the effectiveness of the awareness-raising campaign is a step or two removed from what actually happens on the roads. I am happy to come back to the specific issue that the member asked about relating to the huge rise in figures in 2007. It is connected with that because other matters have shed light on factors that contributed to the huge increase in 2007. I think the point of the member's question was the flowthrough of the effectiveness of the campaign and what that means for fatalities or serious injuries on the road. Mr Cameron should help to answer that.

Mr I. Cameron: Adding to that point, the research generally indicates that campaigns are an important part of the mix. There would not be evidence to strongly indicate that a particular campaign will reduce crashes or anything like that. The main thing is, we use education in combination with enforcement, and then safer roads, speeds and vehicles are built around that. To provide some information: in the area of drink-driving, for example, we would look back on campaigns overall and the community's attitude and how that has shifted over time. Campaigns have been a contributing factor to that but we would never, for example, make a link between the campaigns and any change in drink-driving crashes. However, we would track things such as the number of drinks people report having had before getting behind the wheel of a vehicle. That is a behavioural indicator that we have been tracking for a number of years that tells us that in our target group there has been a pattern of general decline over a number of years in the number of drinks that people report having consumed before getting behind the wheel. Someone who said five drinks a few years ago would be more likely to now say three or four drinks, or 3.5 drinks or something like that. We can never go that extra step and say that this campaign caused that reduction in crashes with confidence; I argue that anybody who does that is on very tenuous ground.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: My question refers to the ninth dot point on page 102 of the *Budget Statements*, which refers to a state grant for a road safety research centre. Will the minister comment on the progress of the centre and inform the committee how much funding has been allocated to that?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will throw this to Mr Cameron. We have been seeking to have a road safety research centre established in Western Australia. Clearly, the Monash University Accident Research Centre is not only the Australian leader, but it is also recognised internationally. Given that we take a scientific approach and are

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

looking for evidence-based approaches to road safety, we need that type of research and we are examining to what extent it can be established in WA. It is not that we will not then refer to other national bodies, but we would like to grow some of that expertise and have it on tap in Western Australia. Mr Cameron can add more detail to that answer.

Mr I. Cameron: Certainly. I cannot pre-empt what the outcome will be, but I can say that at the moment we are in the final stages, I hope, of contractual negotiations. We have partners—the government and two tertiary institutions—that have come together over the past few months, and we are in the contractual and legal negotiations stage of finalising an agreement.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: How much funding is allocated, minister?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will ask Mr Cameron to indicate that.

Mr I. Cameron: The initial funding is in the order of \$500 000.

The CHAIRMAN: Any further questions, member for Carine, because I know two members need to go?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Mr Cameron said “initial”; obviously, there is further funding. Through the minister, is there a figure for that?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: What we are seeking to do is not just contract out specific areas of research that we want to have advice on; we actually want to establish a research centre, which means there would be academics in WA specialising in matters relating to road safety, and therefore the \$500 000 is a starting point. However, as we want it to continue, we are certainly looking at the ongoing funding. The ongoing funding would depend on the level at which that research is handed out. It is too early at this stage to anticipate what that level of ongoing funding will be, but there is a clear expectation that we will need ongoing funding to maintain the centre.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the member for Stirling bear with me; I know that both the member for Carine and the member for South Perth have to be in another chamber at three o’clock, so with the member’s concurrence I am happy to try to give them a bit of leeway, but make sure everybody else who has questions gets to ask them. Has anybody got a problem with that if I do that? We tried to organise that road safety would be dealt with first for that reason, and I know the member for South Perth has another question.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I am all right.

The CHAIRMAN: The member is okay?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Very good. Does the member for Stirling mind if I go to the member for South Perth, and then come back to him?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: As long as he does not ask my question!

The CHAIRMAN: The member had better check with him first. The member for South Perth is on notice not to ask the member for Stirling’s question.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: It is nothing to do with the great southern!

I refer the minister to the first bullet point under the heading “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 101, which discusses the road safety strategy for Western Australia. I refer to an article in *The West Australian* on 12 April 2008 with the headline “New speed camera blitz will reap \$200m in fines”. Will the minister confirm whether the government has a plan to greatly increase the number of speed cameras on police cars; increase the number of mobile radars to 88; and add 24 fixed cameras along Perth’s freeways, an initiative that would increase the number of infringements each year from 440 000 to more than two million?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: No.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I have a further question. Is the minister aware of a report by Monash University, completed in 2006, that made those recommendations?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes. I am happy to elaborate on that. The situation is —

Mr J.E. McGRATH: It has been given a lot of publicity and a lot of people in the community are frightened to get behind the wheel of their cars.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: If they are frightened to get behind the wheel of their cars and speed, that is not necessarily a bad thing. The dot point the member referred to is the new road safety strategy. I thank the member for South Perth, and members on both sides of the house, for their engagement in that. Various dot points in the budget papers relate to it.

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

As the member is well aware, “Towards Zero” is a 12-year, high-level strategy that does not come down to specifics in many areas; however, it examines four key areas, one of which is enforcement. That is linked to the issue of speed enforcement and what cameras we may have, but it is not, in that detail, part of the road safety strategy. It is a very important connection, but it is a follow-on from that.

The report which the member alluded to, and the new one which, I think, will be made public in the near future—another one was done by the police, which has also had some media coverage relating to WA’s speed camera system—are all part of a current investigation that Mr Cameron is chairing, involving the police, Main Roads Western Australia and other government agencies, to examine the use of speed cameras for speed enforcement in WA. That report will be coming to government. There will be recommendations in that, but my answer of no to the member’s first question was because the government does not have a plan to do it specifically as the member stated. All those matters will provide input to government and we will then make a determination as to what our type of speed cameras will be and the size of the build. It is initiated, in part, by the fact that our current Multanova speed cameras are becoming obsolete and they have to be replaced. It is not a matter of then just replacing like-for-like with the same number and type of cameras; it is a matter of taking a much more comprehensive view, which will ensure better road safety outcomes by putting in place a speed camera build for that enforcement.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: A further question, minister —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: When I say “cameras”, I do not mean in the limited sense of the current cameras; there are a range of different technologies, such as the police handheld—it is the total package being worked up.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Is the minister aware that in New South Wales, which had the best road safety record of any state last year, Multanovas are not used? Has any crash-based evaluation of WA’s Multanova program been carried out?

[2.50 pm]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: In answer to the last question, yes, but it was some years ago—1998 in fact. In answer to the first question, I think the member is under some misapprehension. The member for South Perth is correct that New South Wales does not have Multanovas, but that state does have speed cameras. Multanova is a brand. New South Wales has a speed camera system. My understanding is that it has cameras that operate out of the back of vehicles as well as fixed cameras that are part of the road system. A vehicle could be placed on the side of the road, with a camera operating out of it. New South Wales has a slightly different mode of operation, a different brand, but those cameras perform the same role as do our Multanovas.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Do they put signs up ahead to let people know that they are about to pass a speed camera?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am informed by Mr Cameron that the fixed cameras in New South Wales are on towers or poles situated near roadways. Those have notices advising people, but we are not sure about whether New South Wales’ mobile cameras, which are equivalent to our Multanovas, use signs.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I refer the minister to “Major Initiatives For 2008-09” on page 102. This will probably be a dorothy dix question for the minister!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I appreciate that!

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The first dot point refers to the introduction of the road safety strategy and the follow-up road safety action plan for 2009-11. I have not seen anything within the budget papers that reflects funding support for the road safety action plan that will be put in place, given that it is predicted to run between 2009 and 2011. Can the minister tell me whether provision is made for that? The reason that there is no funding may be that the plan has not been produced, but I would have thought it very appropriate that as soon as an action plan was in place, funding would be allocated to make it happen rather than waiting for another budget cycle.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: As soon as we have an action plan, we will seek to implement it; but we do not have an action plan and therefore cannot put money into the budget. Keep in mind that we are still pursuing the existing road safety plan, which I think has resulted in us saving a huge number of lives. It has not been anywhere near as successful as we wanted, but it has resulted in a very marked reduction in fatalities on our roads. The current plan is not yet fully implemented. We are still pursuing that. When we receive the recommendations from the Road Safety Council on the new road safety strategy, it, along with the action plan, will go to government. The government will make a decision on that and when that decision is made, the government will put the money and requirements in place to implement the action plan.

I remind the member that roughly 90 to 95 per cent of the recommendations for the last plan that I was involved in—not as the minister, but as a member of cabinet—were taken up. Government is not obligated to accept every

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

single recommendation, but the government will take the recommendations from the Road Safety Council, which members of Parliament have helped to formulate. It will then make a determination on the action plan and how it will be implemented, and money will be provided to do that. We cannot put money in the budget if the safety plan and the action plan have not yet been handed to government.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: When does the minister expect the action plan to be put out for public comment and to be finalised?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is hoped that the Road Safety Council will consider that in July, and then, or soon after, pass that through to government.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Do we need to wait for another budget cycle for funding to support that plan?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We were criticised by the opposition in the past year because we committed funding to a range of programs outside the budget cycle, so it is not unusual that matters come forward to government outside the budget cycle and receive funding.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer the minister to the fourth dot point on page 101 regarding the roadside drug and alcohol testing from a newly equipped drug bus that commenced in October 2007. Can the minister give me an indication whether that has proved to be effective or successful?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I certainly think it has made a good start. Before I give specific information about what has been happening so far, I am hopeful that over coming years the random roadside drug testing of drivers will cause the same cultural change that our random roadside alcohol testing did. The member for Victoria Park perhaps is a bit young, but I can certainly remember when people at clubs and pubs would regularly drink too much and then drive. That was certainly very irresponsible when one looks back at that now, but most of us did it at various times. That whole culture has changed. When we go to clubs in our electorates, people often tell us that it has hit their bar sales and has changed the whole dynamic of sporting clubs etc. There has been a huge cultural change in people accepting their responsibility that if they are driving, they should not drink. I hope we will get that out of this system. It is still early days.

There were 3 197 roadside screenings to the end of March, with positive tests resulting in 110 charges. That is a one to 29 ratio. Eleven people tested positive to tetrahydrocannabinol; 54 to methamphetamine; seven to methylenedioxymethamphetamine; 31 to a combination of THC and methamphetamine; and five to a combination of THC and MDMA. A figure of one in 29 indicates that we have a problem on our roads; that is how I read it. The booze and drug bus has been operating not only in the metropolitan area, but also out in the regional centres. The deployment of police is intelligence based. There may be times when police stop a large number of people and put them through the testing, but their approach at the current time is very much targeted and intelligence based. They target areas that they believe might be hot spots; that is, places where there is likely to be a higher predominance of people using drugs and potentially driving.

The actual figures of our hit rate may vary depending on the operational practices of police from time to time. Unfortunately, those figures reflect that we have a problem. Putting drug buses out on the road is a way of trying to effect that change in behaviour and send a very clear message that people run a chance of being detected if they use drugs and drive. If we can increase that fear in the community that people are at risk of being detected when they use drugs and drive, we will be more likely to change that behaviour and be successful in reducing the problem of drug-drivers on our roads.

Jurisdictions around the world are looking at WA, along with some of the other states in Australia, very carefully because this country is the first to try this. We need to make sure that we are putting in place a scientific-based system to tackle the problem of people using drugs and getting behind the wheel of a motor vehicle.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer the minister to service 7, "Support for the Implementation of the State's Road Safety Initiatives", on page 101 and the second dot point under "Major Achievements For 2007-08". That dot point refers to the extensive consultation undertaken on options for the new road safety strategy. I was also involved in that consultation. I am aware that the minister refers to "stakeholders". Am I correct in saying that the Royal Automobile Club represents road user groups?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have been approached by several groups, including the Motorcycle Riders Association of Western Australia and a number of cyclist groups, suggesting that they are dissatisfied with the representation received from the RAC. Can the minister advise whether consideration is being given to expanding the stakeholder representation to include other key users, including cyclists, motorcyclists and potentially even pedestrians? I do not know whether there is a group representing them, but I generally mean other groups of that nature.

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thank the member for the question. Two slightly different parts are referred to on page 101. The dot point that the member alluded to is the new road safety strategy. That has involved wide consultation during which all those key groups were invited in a range of ways to submit their views. Those ways include individuals through the system reporting back at various stages, going to public meetings or the groups acting formally through their own structures. As far as I am aware there is very good engagement.

The other matter to which I think the member is alluding is that motorcycle riders, through their association, do not feel adequately represented on the Road Safety Council.

[3.00 pm]

The Road Safety Council is a statutory organisation. Although I want the voice of motorcycle riders to be heard clearly by the Road Safety Council, I do not think it is practical for every interest group to be a member of the Road Safety Council. The representative of road users on the Road Safety Council is the Royal Automobile Club of WA. The RAC gave a very clear undertaking when we renewed its membership some months ago that it would be active in representing all road users, not just its members. Of course, some motorcycle riders are members of the RAC. However, we have asked the RAC to be much more proactive in getting out there and hearing the views of people who are not a significant part of the RAC membership and to bring those views to the Road Safety Council, and it has undertaken to do that. I understand that it is looking to hold a forum with the Motorcycle Riders Association of Western Australia as part of that process. I hope it will hold more than just one forum. I certainly see that as a very positive step. The Office of Road Safety has also engaged with the Motorcycle Riders Association; in fact, it provided funding for its president to attend a conference in Canberra only a few weeks ago to make sure that the association is part of the consultation and has input.

There are two parts to the story. On the overall strategy development, there are several opportunities for engagement and the association has been engaged. On the matter of ongoing issues with the Road Safety Council, I gave an undertaking in reply to a grievance that we would try to ensure that there was a clearer and more open channel for the Motorcycle Riders Association to put its view. However, I do not think it is practical for the association to be a formal member of the Road Safety Council.

[Mr P.B. Watson took the chair.]

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the second dot point on page 102, which relates to the strategies embarked on by the Road Safety Council, and specifically the strategy of a star rating system for vehicle safety. I note that there has been a considerable amount of television advertising. Can the minister advise what the budget is for the promulgation of that particular strategy?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am happy to provide that by way of supplementary information. We do not have the breakdown with us. I will provide the member with the amount of money that is going into the campaign to raise community awareness of the safety of vehicles and to hopefully encourage people to opt for safer vehicles. If I am interpreting the member's question correctly, I am happy to provide by way of supplementary information the amount of money for that campaign.

[*Supplementary Information No A34.*]

Mr M.J. COWPER: Given that a considerable amount of money will be spent on advertising, and that will be determined when he provides me with that information —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There already has been and it will be judged as to how it continues.

Mr M.J. COWPER: For the information of members, the minister has basically said in a press release that by using the safest class of vehicle, we can save up to 40 lives per annum on Western Australian roads. Given that that is the case, why is the state government not adhering to its own policy on these matters with the state vehicle fleet?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I understand that we are moving to ensure that we have the same standards. I am not saying that we are there yet, but we have certainly had discussions with the Treasurer about the purchasing requirements for government vehicles. I think the member will find that that has been taken on board.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I know that it has not been taken on board. I am interested to know what the Road Safety Council thinks about the fact that the government has not been very diligent in getting on board with this very good initiative.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Hillarys.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I am still waiting for an answer to the question.

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thought I had answered the question. We have a difference of opinion. My advice is that the government is moving to ensure that part of the criteria for the purchase of government vehicles is to assess their safety rating according to that five-star system.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I have a further question about another strategy to deal with the number of deaths from accidents involving off-road motorcycles. Can the minister advise what strategy the government has in mind to deal with the tragedies that are occurring on a regular basis?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Certainly, it is very concerning that so many people have been killed in motorcycle crashes. Quite often the motorcycle is the only vehicle involved, although in the most recent accident that I am aware of, a motorcycle hit a car. It is of great concern. The figures for the past few years show that there is a new phenomenon, with blokes our age or thereabouts deciding that they want to enjoy the thrill of a motorcycle and getting on machines without having had a lot of experience. That has been suggested as one of the contributing factors to that increase. We still need to analyse that information. I will ask Mr Cameron whether he has any more up-to-date information, because it is an issue that causes real concern. I do not know whether we have a full answer to the cause of the large increase in the number of deaths from accidents involving motorcycles.

Mr I. Cameron: I have a couple of brief comments. As the minister indicated in his answer, it is part of a national trend. There is certainly an exposure factor, as the minister indicated. There has been an increase in uptake due to other factors in the community, such as high fuel prices and the like. There has been a widespread uptake, and older males tend to be more exposed. We are looking at a raft of things in WA, including rider training and licensing and those sorts of factors. That does not directly involve the minister's portfolio, but it comes under the responsibility of the Road Safety Council. The Department for Planning and Infrastructure is working with the Office of Road Safety to look at those issues, particularly rider training and licensing.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Is the minister concerned that the number of traffic patrol hours fell by 851 hours in the last financial year, the number of drivers tested for drink-driving fell by more than 22 000, and the number of vehicles monitored for speeding fell by 7 800? Does the minister have concerns about those matters?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I would appreciate it if the member could ask that question when we deal with the police portfolio. I am sure that the police will be able to provide more details. However, I know part of the answer. The police have used intelligence to target their operations. In fact, fewer vehicles may go past a camera, but it might be in an area in which a much higher percentage of vehicles are caught speeding. The increase in fatalities last year was predominantly on country roads. Western Australia Police shifted a substantial part of its speed camera operations to country roads, which meant that the number of vehicles going past cameras dropped substantially, but the hit rate of vehicles exceeding the speed limit went up quite substantially. If the member looks at the number of vehicles that went past cameras in that three to six-month period, he will see that there was a marked reduction in the level of operation of those cameras, because they were placed on country roads with fewer vehicles. However, there was a marked increase in the percentage of vehicles that were caught speeding by those cameras.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The total number of police hours has dropped by 851 hours according to the police annual report.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That question would be best asked during discussion of the police portfolio.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I am asking whether this is of concern to the Road Safety Council.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Enforcement is important. The traffic enforcement effort by police on our roads has drastically increased over the past three or four years. We have established the traffic enforcement group, or TEG. When we discuss that portfolio, I can go through how that group has been resourced. There has been quite a marked increase in that area over the past few years, but I think that question should rightly be asked during discussion of the police portfolio.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My question follows on to some extent from that of the member for Murray and relates to the strategic traffic enforcement program, which falls under the Office of Road Safety in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The office funds the ongoing strategic enforcement program of traffic law enforcement activity in addition to that normally conducted by WA Police. Is that just the funding that is given to the police? How is the WA Road Safety Council responsible for matters in addition to what the police usually do? My second question, which is very cogent —

[3.10 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Is the member asking one or two questions?

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is two questions, but it follows on from the other question; it is all one question really. The strategic traffic enforcement program activity for 2005-06 —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Which number is it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am asking a question about the funding.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the member like to tell me which line it is in the budget?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I would be very happy to, Mr Chairman. It is the average cost of road safety initiatives under “Key Efficiency Indicators” on page 101 of the *Budget Statements*. That is the area I am talking to in general terms. I am confused. How can the WA Road Safety Council be doing something in addition to what the police are doing? Is the council funding the police for overtime? I would like to know exactly what that allocation is for. If it is being spent on police overtime, how can that possibly be identified either in this division or under the general police division? I cannot see any correlation between the two.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am happy to clarify it for the member.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Okay, but I am concerned that under the strategic traffic enforcement project, the number of traffic patrol hours for 2005-06 was almost 12 500 and for 2006-07 it was 11 500, which is a decrease of 1 000. The number of vehicles stopped was reduced to 19 000 from one year to the next. The number of vehicles monitored for speeding was reduced to 8 000 between 2005-06 and 2006-07. The number of drivers who were tested for drink-driving in 2005-06 was 60 000, but decreased to 38 000 in 2006-07. Can the minister give me the details under the STEP activity of what numbers against those specific items we are looking at for 2007-08? Are they continuing in a downward spiral? It is obviously being funded, I assume, by the Office of Road Safety, which is basically the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope that the answer is shorter than the question. Will the member get to the point?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am sure it will be. This is the only question I have asked under this item.

The CHAIRMAN: Members want to move on to the other items.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I assure you, Mr Chairman, that I want to get on to the other items too. I hope that the minister will give me some answers. If he cannot answer my questions now, he can provide me with supplementary information.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member asked about the strategic traffic enforcement project. The Road Safety Council has been providing funding to the police to enhance road enforcement. That has been taking place for years. Many months ago, the member’s colleague the member for Murray came to me because he had heard a rumour that the funding would be cut. He is a strong supporter of this funding to the police. In 2007-08, the funding totalled \$1.6 million and was used to further enhance the police enforcement.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In what way?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will tell the member if he allows me to finish answering his question. It is a small amount compared with the total amount spent by the police, but it is a very welcome addition. The member rolled out a whole lot of numbers. I have answered one of the member’s questions already, but I will repeat it. I will not answer all the member’s questions because he spoke quickly and did not say where the figures he referred to came from or what they related to. The member said that the number of vehicles that had either been stopped at or driven past a speed camera had decreased in a given period. That happened because the police changed their operational approach. When speed cameras are moved onto country roads, fewer vehicles pass the cameras. That is done for good operational reasons. The member also raised the issue of stopping motorists and conducting a breath test to check a driver’s blood alcohol content. The police sometimes change their operational approach by going to an area where they know there is a problem but where they will stop far fewer people. That is also done for operational reasons. If the member wants specific details on some of those matters, it is appropriate to ask those questions when we deal with the police portfolio. The WA Road Safety Council and the Office of Road Safety help to coordinate a range of government agencies, but the operational matters such as this still rest with the individual agency. The police agency has operational control of enforcement.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: How is that funding quantified? The funding that the minister said goes to the police represents these particular items in the government’s publication. The money goes to the police and they are doing the job.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This program started when the member was in government. It has been around for a long time. The funds that the Road Safety Council receives through the road trauma trust fund are allocated for a range of purposes. For many years an allocation has been made to police to help enhance roadside enforcement. That funding has been designated for particular localities or subprograms to add to the very large program the

Chairman; Mr John McGrath; Mr John Kobelke; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ben Wyatt;
Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Rob Johnson

police already run, particularly over the past few years when the police have put more resources into the traffic enforcement group.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Does the minister have the figures for the funding from the road trauma trust fund, of which the strategic traffic enforcement project is a part? Will the minister provide a breakdown of that? The minister can provide it as supplementary information.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am happy to provide, by way of supplementary information, the 2007-08 estimated actual grants from the road trauma trust fund to various agencies.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Does the minister have the total figure handy?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The total amount of grants is almost \$14.3 million.

[*Supplementary Information No A35.*]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I missed asking a question on this matter earlier because other members asked questions. The member for South Perth referred to road fatalities in New South Wales. I cannot remember which line item in the budget he referred to, but it might have been the average cost of road safety initiatives under “Key Efficiency Indicators” on page 101 of the *Budget Statements*. The member for South Perth referred to the road fatality rate in New South Wales, which is rightly lower than that in other states, and significantly lower than ours. Mr Cameron might be the best person to tell me whether the fatality rates in New South Wales distort the figures. New South Wales and Victoria are significantly smaller states than Western Australia, and people in those states probably do not have to travel as far to get to a major trauma centre. As a consequence, fewer people would die after being involved in a major accident. Is the extensive network of remote roads in Western Australia taken into consideration when comparing the number of road fatalities? Is the process distorted by using only the fatality rate? The Western Australian strategy considers major crashes, which takes into account people who are hospitalised.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will ask Mr Cameron to make a comment in a moment because he has expertise in this matter. The member must keep in mind that New South Wales has a lot of country roads as well. Therefore, the difference could not be explained away because of that; a range of factors are involved. In 2005, all the other states were looking to Western Australia because it was the leader in reducing the number of road fatalities. We did not have the lowest rate of fatalities per 100 000 but we had shown the biggest improvement of the states until 2005. Clearly things were working. In 2006 the figure increased and in 2007 it jumped even further. In 2007 the number of fatalities that occurred on country roads increased. A lot of those accidents were single-vehicle accidents involving people running off the road and into trees and rolling over etc. We can designate what the problem was. Comparing it with New South Wales and finding out why it has been more effective is far more complex. I ask Mr Cameron if he would like to comment on that.

[3.20 pm]

Mr I. Cameron: We need to take the differences into account, but we do not explain it away on that basis. Every state and territory uses the population rates. The member is quite correct: Western Australia has different geographical and population spread issues, as does the Northern Territory and Queensland. However, we do not use that to explain it away; we stick to the population rates. There is something going on in Western Australia and it goes back as far as the early 1990s. We were the second best in Australia in the early 1990s, but during the 1990s we moved to second worst on a population rate basis. There is no doubt that our geography and economy are issues. Queensland and Western Australia currently experience the greatest pressure from the level of road trauma. The economy does not explain away road safety, but it is one of the background factors. However, the bar we set is not to use those as reasons for not sticking to the population rates. The member is right: there are differences, but all states and territories are trying to work on those rates. The best in Australia is Victoria, discounting the Australian Capital Territory, which has a largely urban population; Victoria has about five deaths per 100 000 and is tick-tacking with New South Wales at the moment.

The appropriation was recommended.