

**BUREAU OF INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL ECONOMICS —
“INFORMATION SHEET 68”**

Statement by Minister for Road Safety

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Road Safety) [12.06 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the release of “Information sheet 68” by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics. This publication reports on the estimated impact that the introduction of airbags and electronic stability control in vehicles has had on Australian light vehicle fatalities.

Between 1990 and 2014, the number of road fatalities in Australia has halved, and the fatality rate per vehicle kilometre travelled fell by two-thirds between 1990 and 2012. This can be attributed to a number of factors including safer vehicles, safer roads and improved traffic enforcement. Safer vehicles is one of the four cornerstones of the Liberal–National government’s Towards Zero road safety strategy. The bureau estimates that frontal airbags have reduced light vehicle fatalities by 13 per cent, side airbags by four per cent and electronic stability control has contributed to an estimated six per cent reduction. The impact of these advances in vehicle technology should further increase as newer vehicles with these safety measures enter the Australian fleet. Together, these measures are estimated to have reduced light vehicle crash fatalities by 23 per cent.

Electronic stability control, or ESC, involves an on-board computer detecting when loss of control is imminent, then restoring control through reducing power and applying individual braking to each wheel. ESC is most effective at reducing single-vehicle crashes, particularly run-off-road crashes in which a vehicle leaves the roadway and crashes. These types of crashes are particularly prevalent in Western Australia’s regional and remote areas and accounted for 47 per cent of Australian road fatalities in 2013 and about 38 per cent of fatalities between 2008 and 2012. The Liberal–National government’s Stars on Cars program gives WA car buyers instant access to vehicle safety information when buying a new car. There are now around 50 dealerships participating in this initiative, which displays the Australasian New Car Assessment Program star-safety rating on new vehicles and is run in conjunction with the Office of Road Safety. The dealerships also display point-of-sale materials and provide advice to help customers make the safest choice when choosing a new car.

The bureau’s report suggests that the introduction of airbags and electronic stability control, combined with the continuing impact of random breath tests and the use of electronic speed enforcement, can account for much of the observed reduction in national fatality rates since 1990. It also notes that further reductions in the fatality rate could be driven by infrastructure improvements, speed limit reductions, improved enforcement and other vehicle safety improvements such as autonomous emergency braking. Tellingly, though, it suggests that some of these decreases in fatalities may have been offset by increases in driver distraction due to mobile devices. Driver distraction is one of the highest risk driving behaviours and it continues to feature strongly in crash trauma statistics.

The SPEAKER: Time, minister, thank you.