

DRINK-DRIVING — IMMEDIATE LICENCE SUSPENSION

584. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Police:

Twelve months ago, measures providing for the immediate disqualification of drivers caught driving with a blood alcohol content at or above .08 were introduced. Can the minister please advise the house on the impact of this measure?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Morley for some notice of this question.

It has been one year since the legislation was introduced to allow immediate roadside suspension of drivers who have a blood alcohol reading of .08 or over. In the past year, nearly 9 000 drivers have had their licence suspended at the roadside. To be exact, 8 903 drivers have blown at or above .08. Of those, 1 960 have blown at or above .15. It is a sad indictment that motorists think they are capable of driving a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol level at or above .08. Members might be interested to know that at .05, a person doubles their risk of being involved in a crash. At .08, that risk increases and a driver will be seven times more likely to be involved in a crash. The risk of an accident escalates the higher the blood alcohol reading of a driver.

Incidentally, and along these lines, it has been 20 years since the legal blood alcohol limit for drivers in Western Australia was lowered to .05. That was done in 1993. Members interested in road safety would be interested to know that reducing the legal blood alcohol limit to .05 has resulted in a 79 per cent reduction in the number of alcohol-related crashes causing death and serious injuries in this state. It was a very good move indeed.

We are coming up to a long weekend and school holidays; obviously there will be a lot of activity on the roads this weekend. Sadly, on the last long weekend in this state two lives were lost on our roads. Consistent with other long weekends, double demerit points will be in operation so that people who find themselves on the wrong side of the law will accrue double demerit points for drink-driving at .05 or drug-driving, speeding, failing to wear seatbelts or to use child restraints, or carrying passengers unrestrained in the back of a ute. In the past, double demerit points have proved to act as a deterrent to illegal driver behaviour. We hope that is the case again this weekend. We also hope that this weekend all drivers take the opportunity to drive responsibly, take care of other people on the roads and remember that we have a shared responsibility to reduce the road toll in this state.