

ALCOHOL INTERLOCK SCHEME

696. Mr C.D. HATTON to the Minister for Police:

Can the Minister for Police please update the house on the progress of the Liberal–National government’s alcohol interlock scheme to manage high-level and repeat drink-drivers in Western Australia?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Balcatta for his question and his continued interest in road safety matters in the state.

I am very pleased to announce that the government’s alcohol interlock scheme is due to start imminently. On Sunday, I announced the advertising and education campaign that accompanies our alcohol interlock scheme to advise members of the community who fall into the scheme that they are about to have their lives significantly impacted should they be eligible for an alcohol interlock program. People eligible for the program will be first-time offenders who have an excess 0.15 blood alcohol level reading and a driving-under-the-influence conviction or second-time offenders in the other categories of drink-driving.

Mr Speaker, 25 per cent of our crashes have alcohol or drugs as a factor and as a state government we need to ensure that we have initiatives to try to impact these recidivist drink-drivers. We know that when alcohol interlocks are fitted there is a 64 per cent reduction in recidivist offences for those people who have a problem with drinking and driving. We have specifically targeted our scheme to ensure that those people who fall into the scheme get some assistance for their problem—their problem is drinking and driving. Once these drivers have served their penalty, if they fall into the program, they will have a minimum of six months when they have to have an alcohol interlock fitted to their vehicle. They will have to blow a clear reading before they can start their vehicle. If they attempt to tamper with the interlock device or attempt to start their vehicle while they have excess alcohol in their system, the vehicle will not start. It will have a timeout. Ultimately, the entire vehicle can be disabled should they try to start it three times while they are over the limit. This will effectively interrupt drinking and driving behaviour. Those people who are caught tampering with their devices or trying to restart their vehicle when they have an excess blood alcohol reading will go to six sessions of alcohol counselling to look at correcting their drinking behaviour and the problem they have with alcohol.

I am really pleased to be the minister who has brought this scheme into place in Western Australia. It was one of my priorities when I was appointed as minister in 2012. Although it has taken some time to achieve, it falls into place with other actions we have put in place to cut down on drink-driving in the community, including sanctions around vehicles, impounding offences, roadside disqualifications and increased penalties for people who drink and drive on our roads. Obviously, the endgame is to drive down incidences of drink-driving in our community in the interest of reducing the road toll in this state. I thank members in this house for assisting in the transition of that legislation through Parliament. I thank the people in the Department of Transport and the Road Safety Commission who have worked diligently to bring the program to the point at which we can now implement it pretty much everywhere across the geographical spread of Western Australia.