

WHEATBELT HIGHWAY SAFETY REVIEW

**595. Mr T.K. WALDRON to the Minister for Police:**

Can the minister please update the house on the progress of the wheatbelt highway safety review?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:**

I thank the member for Wagin for his question on wheatbelt road safety, and I also acknowledge his strong advocacy for his community in the road safety space. I appreciate and acknowledge his continued effort in this area.

A few months ago I initiated a wheatbelt highway safety review, the first of its kind to be conducted in Western Australia. The review was based on a successful model that had been trialled in New South Wales, where they were trying to get to the crux of the problem on particular patches of road where the road safety outcomes were particularly poor. As the member is no doubt well aware, people living in or driving through the wheatbelt are seven times more likely to be victims of road trauma as people in metropolitan Perth. That statistic is not acceptable, and that is why we have undertaken this wheatbelt highway safety review. All the stakeholders in road safety are involved in this—Main Roads, police from the major crash unit, the Office of the State Coroner, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia, the Office of Road Safety and our new Road Safety Commission. They have examined a large number of crashes across the wheatbelt between 2009 and 2013. They have had a look at the causes of those crashes. The second stage of this review was to take that crash analysis and do a road trip. Those experts have driven along 370 kilometres of the Great Eastern Highway and the Great Southern Highway to examine where the crashes occurred and to try to understand what happened in those circumstances. We also opened an online portal through the Road Safety Commission website. Over 350 people from the local community have nominated bad patches of road and areas where they would like to see a focus on improved road safety. Obviously, we know where the crashes occur, and we can log and record those.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Are you going to spend some money to fix it up? You're sitting on a big pile of money while people are dying.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Collie–Preston, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. What an extraordinary outburst, when the member for Collie–Preston knows that the government is spending millions of dollars on improving the Collie Coalfields highway, and when he was in government, he did nothing. We are improving his local roads.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you. We are getting the wall of noise now. Wind it up, please, minister.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Back to the amazing people in the wheatbelt community. We have had over 350 contacts through our portal, and that number is still growing. People are nominating the patches of road that they want to see improved. They are nominating where the near-misses have been, and feeding into the solutions for the issues we face with road safety in the wheatbelt.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Collie–Preston, I call you to order now for the second time. Minister, a quick ending.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Mr Speaker, I am nearly finished.

All of this effort culminated in a forum in Merredin, which was attended by the member for Wagin and the Minister for Sport and Recreation in her capacity as a local member. At that forum were over 50 road safety stakeholders from the wheatbelt community—people who live in that community and care about road safety and about finding outcomes in the road safety space—and 30 experts who were part of the review group. We tasked each of the tables at the forum come up with solutions to a particular problem.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Girraween.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Out of this forum, we have actually had local people assist us in understanding the cultural issues of road safety in the wheatbelt. It has never been done in Western Australia before. Unlike the people over on the other side of the house, we believe in local issues for local solutions. That is why the regional representation in this Parliament is predominantly on this side of the house, because we engage with local

communities and ask them to help us find solutions. We will allocate money from the road trauma trust account to fix the problems in the wheatbelt.