

ROAD SAFETY — WHEATBELT

**545. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Road Safety:**

Can the minister please inform the house about the wheatbelt road safety review and when that will take place?

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

I thank the member for Moore for his question and his interest in road safety issues, particularly in the wheatbelt.

We remain very strongly committed to implementing our Towards Zero strategy in Western Australia, which is adopting our safe systems approach to reduce the road toll by 40 per cent by 2020. To the end of 2013, there has been a 21 per cent reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured in the wheatbelt region. That is comparable with the remainder of the state. However, despite that, there were 26 fatalities last year in the wheatbelt region, making it the region with the highest fatality rate in the state. In response to that and after looking at the 2009–13 period, in which that region maintained a high crash rate, we have instigated a review of wheatbelt road safety.

This is a cross-agency review. We have had a cross-agency approach to analysis of the wheatbelt crash data, which involved Main Roads Western Australia, the Office of Road Safety, WA Police and local governments. Those people went and had a look at the highways to try to determine whether the road infrastructure may have contributed to crashes or whether other factors were involved. We know that a large number of crashes in the wheatbelt involved drunk-driving and a lot were single-vehicle run-off-road crashes, in many speed was a factor and there is a high level of noncompliance with seatbelts and restraints. We have an education program and we have started a period of community consultation for the wheatbelt safety review. That period of consultation involved the launch today of an interactive online tool. We can analyse data and look at it with our expert analysts and engineers, but we know that the people living in the wheatbelt who use those roads every day have local knowledge that they can contribute to us and our review group so that we can combine that with our crash analysis data and have a comprehensive report for government to give us a way forward to try to improve that fatality and trauma crash rate in the wheatbelt.

I encourage people to have a look at the interactive tool available on the Office of Road Safety website. Following information that we received from the community as part of that process, we will be having a community forum in August in Merredin. We are inviting all members of that wheatbelt community to come to that community forum to further contribute to our information because we know that in talking to local people we will get records of all those near misses that are impossible for police and government agencies to keep track of; we know that the local community can tell us where they are occurring and where the camber or curve of the road may not be right, and those sorts of things, if our engineers have not picked it up. I thank the member for his interest, and I look forward to not only his involvement but that of the Minister for Sport and Recreation in this process when we roll out our community engagement process in the wheatbelt.