

WEST COAST HIGHWAY, SCARBOROUGH — ROADWORKS

Grievance

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [9.55 am]: My grievance is to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Transport. As the local member for Scarborough, a shopper at the Luna Maxi Mart and a resident living in the affected area, I want to air the grievance of thousands of my constituents regarding the roadworks on West Coast Highway, Scarborough and the associated road closures as part of the City of Stirling's Scarborough Environs Area Strategy. Although there is no doubt that the roadworks are well intentioned and that there is a need to upgrade pedestrian safety for those crossing West Coast Highway, particularly the elderly and sight-impaired, the traffic changes have caused significant congestion; they have carved Scarborough Beach into two, an outcome that is seriously affecting local businesses.

In particular the traffic changes to The Esplanade, which have removed egress to Scarborough Beach Road from both north and south of the street, have caused significant angst in the community. This has divided the foreshore of Scarborough into north and south, cut off significant business to the local shopping centre—the Luna Maxi Mart—and resulted in the time taken for the valet to collect cars at the Rendezvous Observation City Hotel increasing to more than 20 minutes. It is a crazy situation that people who live in Observation Rise, for example, have to queue in traffic to get onto a regional road—West Coast Highway—and wait for many minutes at multiple intersections to get to their local shopping centre. I have been told stories of a one-way car trip taking more than 40 minutes, when it would take only 10 minutes to walk. Unfortunately, with the nature of grocery shopping, it is difficult to walk short distances.

At this point I admit the traffic changes on the Scarborough foreshore have been a grievance of mine since they were first mooted in the 2002 City of Stirling—commissioned traffic study of the area by Sinclair Knight Merz. As a local resident at that time, I held a community forum in 2003 which vehemently opposed the proposed closure of The Esplanade. Although it is undiplomatic to say so, I cannot help but say to the City of Stirling, “We told you so.” The community identified significant shortcomings in the proposed traffic modifications and, unfortunately, each of those identified issues has proven to be a problem. These problems include, but are not limited to —

- residents of northern Scarborough foreshore taking more than 20 minutes to get from Manning Street—which is about 50 metres long—onto West Coast Highway due to their inability to access Scarborough Beach Road directly;

- beachgoers who want to check out the northern and southern ends of the beach prior to deciding where to stop facing a 30-minute round trip;

- ambulances now being required to bounce over three speed bumps to exit from the surf club onto Brighton Road;

- according to the local Scarboro Surf Life Saving Club, members facing an additional wait of 15 to 20 minutes as congestion clogs up Brighton Road, which does not come close to catering for the demand placed upon it on a hot summer's day;

- the creation of a dangerous, blind rat run from The Esplanade to West Coast Highway through private property at Luna Maxi Mart car park. This has created an untenably dangerous situation for pedestrians who are heading for the beach, is dangerous for shoppers and also impedes delivery vehicles' access to the shopping centre;

- the flow-on effects being felt inland at Bournemouth Parade and Elliott Road as traffic avoids the Scarborough Beach Road intersection and rat runs through local streets and past local school, which is causing not only commuter traffic in peak hours but also dangerous diversions through local roads that are occurring all day, and residents of these suburban streets were never expecting such an impost and degradation of amenity of that area.

This is such a debacle; at times The Esplanade has been closed at both ends, with traffic entering the foreshore area, but being unable to exit at all due to the Cevue construction site at the corner of Brighton Road, requiring road closure for safety reasons while equipment and materials are being moved.

I could go on and on. What has been extremely disappointing in this situation is the attempt by local government councillors to pass the buck for the congestion onto the state government. At council meetings and in the local community newspaper, the *Stirling Times*, councillors have been inferring that the City of Stirling was not aware that the roadworks were about to happen. Indeed, they have supposedly taken issue with Main Roads Western Australia going ahead with a plan that had been developed and supported by the city some years earlier. An officer of the City of Stirling even mentioned that the city was not aware that the roadworks were going to

proceed until the day after information was provided by Main Roads to the public late last year. The councillors quite rightly questioned why the roadworks would proceed when the City of Stirling had agreed on 15 April 2008 to review the Scarborough beach urban design master plan. Any changes to this plan had the potential to modify the access and egress at each of the three intersections that are currently being upgraded by Main Roads, which is working in good faith on the original City of Stirling's Scarborough Environs Area Strategy. The community and I are interested as to why consideration of the new urban master plan, which will be released shortly, did not occur prior to the commencement of the works.

Moving away from the mess of The Esplanade, not a day goes by when I am not contacted by somebody who lives in the affected area or has visited Western Australia's best beach to tell me about the difficulties they experienced in exiting onto West Coast Highway by either Brighton Road or Manning Street.

My constituents are patient people, having waited far too long for positive development at Scarborough. They do not appreciate queuing for long periods at traffic lights for phantom vehicles. They find it increasingly frustrating that the lights change colour for phases when there are no cars waiting. Although I realise that currently there are some issues with the detection loops, it is unacceptable that traffic green time is not altered to local conditions, such as catering to the mass exodus from the beach once the sea breeze kicks in.

In conclusion, I seek the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport's clarification on these roadworks and, in particular, his addressing the issue of passing the buck by local government councillors, especially about the closure of The Esplanade. For the parliamentary secretary's information, the City of Stirling will shortly be presented with a petition bearing nearly 2 000 signatures opposing the closure of The Esplanade. I would appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response.

MR M.J. COWPER (Murray-Wellington — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.03 am]: I thank the member for Scarborough for her grievance. On behalf of the Minister for Transport, I provide the following response. The member's grievance gives the government a chance to correct the record and ensure that the community is aware of the full background of the roadworks. I have been informed that the member has been working closely with Main Roads Western Australia and has expressed ongoing constructive feedback about these works.

Since late 2009, Main Roads has been upgrading the section of West Coast Highway between Manning Road to the north and Brighton Road to the south, with a particular focus on the upgrade of each of the corresponding intersections. These upgrades have been designed in conjunction with the City of Stirling's Scarborough Environs Area Strategy, otherwise known as SEAS, as a significant \$3 million state government contribution to the overall revitalisation of the Scarborough area. The project involves a number of measures to improve the amenity of the area as well as traffic movements. In particular, the upgrades provide for an exclusive pedestrian phase at the intersection of Scarborough Beach Road and West Coast Highway; a cycle lane on each road throughout the area, including an advance stop line available for cyclists; and an additional right-hand turning lane from Scarborough Beach Road turning north onto West Coast Highway.

The project initially received black spot funding for the 2003-04 financial year for pre-construction activities and major funding in 2008-09 to commence construction. However, the project has been delayed because of the time taken by the City of Stirling to formalise land acquisition required on the north-east corner of the West Coast Highway and Scarborough Beach Road intersection. The design for these works is based on traffic modelling from a 2002 report by Sinclair Knight Merz, commissioned by the City of Stirling as part of SEAS. The report contained a number of recommendations to improve pedestrian safety and access to the foreshore, which is what the roadworks are designed to cater for. In particular, the report recommended the closure of egress from The Esplanade to Scarborough Beach Road, both north and south, as well as any access to The Esplanade north from Scarborough Beach Road.

I believe from the member's grievance and the advice that I have received that the majority of complaints from the local community stem from these local road closures, which are directly the result of the SKM traffic report commissioned by the City of Stirling for SEAS. As the member said, the community did not agree with the report on its release; however, the council proceeded with formalising the road closures by resolution in 2005. The physical closures have happened only recently with works carried out by the City of Stirling as Main Roads has been completing the West Coast Highway upgrades.

With regard to local media reports and discussions at council meetings since the closure, it is disappointing that local councillors have inferred that there has been no consultation with the city prior to the upgrade works late last year. It is particularly odd given that the mayor and council officers were present at the media event on 20 August 2008 at which the funding of the upgrade was re-announced. On 26 August it was reported in the *Stirling Times* that the mayor said the changes would improve pedestrian and driver safety at a recognised accident black spot. Of course, this media event was not the only communication as Main Roads had been in ongoing contact with the City of Stirling because it was waiting for the city to complete the land acquisition prior to Main Roads being able to proceed with the planned upgrades.

That brings me to the City of Stirling's communication. As the member mentioned, the City of Stirling is currently reviewing its Scarborough Beach foreshore plan. The decision to review the master plan was made by the Stirling council in April 2008, months before the re-announcement of the funding of the project. Unfortunately, the City of Stirling did not make Main Roads aware of this review until the meeting on 9 December 2009. It is likely that the review of the master plan will see significant changes to the management of traffic on the local roads to the west of Scarborough Beach Road, which will hopefully address many of the concerns of the member's constituents. From the government's perspective, it is disappointing that these potential changes were not highlighted to Main Roads prior to the commencement of the \$3 million upgrade to West Coast Highway.

Other issues mentioned in the member's grievance include the green-light time of the intersections and the resulting effect on traffic trying to exit from west of West Coast Highway. This issue is far easier to rectify and at the completion of the roadworks should no longer be a significant problem. Presently, the intersection of Brighton Road, Scarborough Beach Road and Manning Street are on a synchronised timer due to the roadworks currently being undertaken. This means that the detection loops that usually allow for the efficient movement of traffic by detecting how many cars are waiting at a red light are not operating. Once the works are complete, the detection loops will be reactivated, which will remove this inefficiency and allow for a significant increase in the movement of traffic through this area. I have no doubt that the member will be in further contact with Main Roads if this continues to be an issue for her constituents.

In summary, the upgrades to West Coast Highway are significant. The state government has invested \$3 million in the revitalisation of Scarborough. The member's issue about the closure of The Esplanade, which, as she admitted, she has been fighting against since it was first proposed, is an issue that local residents will need to take up with the local government authority, the City of Stirling. Once the West Coast Highway roadworks are complete, the individual intersections will operate more efficiently and, no doubt, that will reduce congestion during off-peak periods. I thank the member for her grievance and hope that my reply clarifies for everybody concerned the situation surrounding this debacle.

[Quorum formed.]