

JOONDALUP DRIVER ASSESSMENT CENTRE

809. Ms E.L. HAMILTON to the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's efforts to clear the backlog of practical driving assessments.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the upcoming reopening of the Joondalup licensing centre will allow for more learner drivers to sit their assessments?
- (2) What further initiatives is the minister pursuing to ensure more practical driving assessments are available across the state?

Mr D.R. MICHAEL replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Joondalup for the question and for her strong interest in practical driving assessments, particularly as an advocate for the reopening of the Joondalup facility. The member is quite right that there continues to be a lot of demand in the system for practical driving assessments. That is something this government has been working very hard on over the last year or so. I want to talk today about three fronts where we are doing more to make sure learner drivers can get their licences. We are opening up more opportunities for driving tests—practical driving assessments—making it easier to book a test, and we are ensuring that learner drivers taking the test are suitably prepared. As the member knows, the newly designed Joondalup driver assessment centre will open its doors, with a focus on PDAs for novice drivers and overseas licence holders who are converting to a Western Australia licence. The Joondalup centre will initially conduct business on Mondays to Saturdays between 7.00 am and 6.00 pm. As we grow staff numbers and capacity at the centre, we are going to look at the possibility and viability of perhaps even opening on Sundays. We have also been working hard to improve accessibility of PDA bookings online. Firstly, is something I know that has been called for for a while. From 18 November, overseas driver's licence holders will now be able to securely book a PDA on DoTDirect using an online account. Previously, they had to attend or ring up and use that system. They will now be able to do it online. Secondly, I would like to update the house on the outcome of the trial in which we disabled the driving instructor portal swap system. I think the Minister for Transport had to deal with the bots six to 12 months ago. Prior to April this year, driving instructors had the ability to swap PDA bookings online. The intent of the function was obviously to allow instructors to swap a booking if one of their clients was not ready to another client who was ready. However, we found that the system was being abused and some tests were being sold for financial gain. Bots were active within the driving instructor system, making hundreds and sometimes thousands of bookings using learner permit numbers. The trial to remove the driving instructor PDA swap function has made the system fairer and more equitable so the Department of Transport will now permanently disable the swap function. The third area we are focusing on is the preparedness of novice drivers. In the late 1990s when I sat my licence near Warwick Police Station, the first time, I think in the member for Kingsley's electorate, I may have frightened the assessor, who asked me to turn right and I turned left.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: Obviously! In the second one, I think in the member for Carine's electorate, some bollards at Carine regional open space got a fright when I was reversing. I did not get my licence the first time and I did not get it the second time! It was excessive nervousness, apparently. I did get it the third time and have been pretty good since. In the past financial year, only 40 per cent of candidates passed their first test, and because 60 per cent were not ready, they then had to make another booking, which is costly to them and takes extra time and extra slots in the system. The Department of Transport will be running an education campaign across social media and other channels to keep encouraging candidates to prepare more thoroughly, keeping their costs down, including for their families, and easing demand on the system. We will continue to work on this. The Department of Transport continues to recruit more instructors and more staff to run the centres we have. We are looking at other innovative ways to make practical driving assessments more accessible and have many more in the system, as we were doing at the end of the month in Joondalup.