



REPORT OF THE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

IN RELATION TO

A PETITION OPPOSING THE POTENTIAL

FOR SERIOUS ROAD ACCIDENTS AT THE

BUNBURY HIGHWAYS JUNCTIONS (SINGLETON,

GOLDEN BAY, MADORA AND SECRET HARBOUR)

Presented by the Hon Murray Nixon JP MLC (Chairman)

Report 40

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Date first appointed:

21 December 1989

Terms of Reference:

1. The functions of the committee are to inquire into and report on:
 - (a) the constitutional law, customs and usages of Western Australia;
 - (b) the constitutional or legal relationships between Western Australia and the Commonwealth, the States and Territories,

and any related matter or issue;
 - (c) a bill to which SO 230 (c) applies but subject to SO 230 (d);
 - (d) any petition.

2. A petition stands referred after presentation. The committee may refer a petition to another standing committee where the subject matter of the petition is within the terms of reference of that standing committee. A standing committee to which a petition is referred shall report to the House as it thinks fit.

Members as at the date of this report:

Hon Murray Nixon JP MLC (Chairman)

Hon Ray Halligan MLC

Hon Tom Helm MLC

Staff as at the date of this report:

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ISBN 0 7309 8937 2

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	BACKGROUND TO THE PETITION	1
3.	THE PETITIONERS' SUBMISSIONS	3
4.	THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT'S SUBMISSIONS	3
5.	SITE VISIT	4
6.	FURTHER INQUIRIES	5
7.	HEARING	6
8.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	7
	Appendix A: Diagrams referred to in Paragraphs 7.3 and 8.4	11

**REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

IN RELATION TO

**A PETITION OPPOSING THE POTENTIAL FOR SERIOUS ROAD ACCIDENTS AT THE BUNBURY
HIGHWAYS JUNCTIONS (SINGLETON, GOLDEN BAY, MADORA AND SECRET HARBOUR)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PETITION

1.1.1 On 10 June 1998, Hon Simon O'Brien MLC tabled a petition (*TP # 1673*) opposing the potential for serious road traffic accidents at the junction of Bunbury Highway with the approaches to the townships of Singleton, Golden Bay, Madora and Secret Harbour. The petitioners requested that the Legislative Council "take steps to alleviate the circumstances which have resulted in this hazardous situation."

1.1.2 The petition was retabled by Hon Simon O'Brien MLC on 19 August 1998 (*TP #95*) again requesting that the Legislative Council take steps to alleviate the potential for serious road traffic accidents at the Bunbury Highways junctions.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE PETITION

2.1 In May 1998 Hon Simon O'Brien MLC and Hon Roger Nicholls MLA made a joint submission to the then Minister for Transport, the Hon Eric Charlton MLC entitled "*The Bunbury Highway: Erasing the Black Spots*".

2.2 The joint submission outlined some of the road traffic problems faced by residents of Secret Harbour, Golden Bay, Singleton and Madora relating to the junction of the Bunbury Highway with approaches to the four townships. The joint submission also outlined a number of suggestions to help overcome those problems.

2.3 The joint submission stated that, *inter alia*:

- Bunbury Highway was a road of fast-moving traffic, with little possibility of refuge for those drivers proposing to turn right across the flow of traffic towards Mandurah or into any of the four townships using Madora Beach Road, Singleton Beach Road, Dampier Drive or Anstey Road;
- residents wishing to turn left find this can be a problem at peak times; and

- those difficulties had been reflected in a significant number of accidents on Bunbury Highway and although those had mostly been injury free, there had been considerable damage caused. Residents felt it was only a question of time before there were incidents of serious personal injury or death.
- 2.4 The joint submission advised that residents of the four townships had formed the *Residents' Group for Road Safety* ("the Residents' Group"), which represented a total of 2 400 homes. The Residents' Group was aware of the proposed extensions southwards of Warnbro Sound Avenue, but agreed that it was not a solution to their road safety worries as the extension would be unable to serve the majority of those who lived in the four townships.
- 2.5 The Resident's Group had a number of plans of action which included:
- making Main Roads, the Minister for Transport and the road safety branch of the Western Australian Police Department aware of the real and potential opportunities for life threatening accidents at any of the four junctions;
 - petitioning the Legislative Council to seek as much support as possible from Parliament; and
 - proving the need for action before the situation worsened.
- 2.6 The Residents' Group also put forward a number of suggestions to help reduce the road traffic hazard. These included:
- reducing the speed limits near approaches to towns;
 - installing intersection traffic lights;
 - installing roundabouts;
 - providing merger lanes long enough for vehicles to accelerate to or decelerate from 110 kph; and
 - defining the Singleton fuel station entrance off the deceleration lane as "*entrance only*" to avoid traffic conflict.
- 2.7 It was stated in the joint submission to the Minister for Transport that merger lanes appeared to offer the only cost effective alternative to any of the suggestions put forward by the Residents' Group. It was emphasised that it was vital that the lanes be of sufficient length to enable vehicles to accelerate/decelerate to or from the main road traffic speed of 110 kph. It was also stated that merger lanes would only be effective if signage alerted drivers to them - preferably large and/or illuminated signs warning on-coming traffic of the potential for vehicles crossing the main traffic flow ahead.

- 2.8 The joint submission set out the next steps proposed to be taken by the Residents' Group. These included gathering photographic evidence of the problems at the four junctions with Bunbury Highway, seeking information regarding the number of accidents at those locations and investigating the need for a traffic count to confirm vehicle volumes on this stretch of road.
- 2.9 The joint submission concluded that the cost effective solution seemed to be to provide merger lanes in the manner referred to in paragraph 2.7. The joint submission stated that if expert advice indicated that there was a better method of reducing the potential for traffic conflict at the sites, there would be no objections from the Residents' Group. The method chosen was immaterial as long as the outcome was effective and took the least possible time for implementation.

3. THE PETITIONERS' SUBMISSIONS

- 3.1 The petitioners provided the Committee with a copy of the joint submission as part of their submission.
- 3.2 The petitioners also advised the Committee that despite the fact that the towns of Secret Harbour, Golden Bay, Singleton and Madora had become amongst the fastest population growth areas of Western Australia, none of them enjoyed a public transport system within their perimeters, each townsite was situated more than one kilometre from Bunbury Highway, and the daily necessity to access Bunbury Highway almost always presented a challenge.
- 3.3 The petitioners expressed concern for the safety of the collective population of the four townships, and stated that "the fact that few deaths have so far eventuated is precisely the reason for vigorous action now being taken to avoid major catastrophes."

4. THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT'S SUBMISSIONS

In May 1998 the joint submission was provided to the then Minister for Transport, Hon Eric Charlton MLC. The Hon Eric Charlton MLC (with advice from Main Roads) responded to the matters raised in the joint submission. The Minister stated that:

- given the high volume of long distance through traffic on the Perth-Bunbury Highway, a lower speed limit, traffic signals or roundabouts would not be effective. A driver education campaign would appear to be the most effective course of action;
- the proposed extension of Warnbro Sound Avenue provided an alternative for residents of Singleton, Golden Bay and Secret Harbour to access the

Rockingham City Centre without having to mix with the Bunbury Highway traffic;

- deceleration lanes for left and right turning vehicles were in place at Singleton Beach Road, Dampier Drive and Anstey Road. The provision of acceleration lanes at the various intersections may be convenient for motorists entering Bunbury Highway, however experience indicated that many motorists had problems in situations where they had to merge. Merging lanes offered little benefit with regard to the reduction of serious crashes as they did not provide any protection for right turning vehicles;
- subject to Federal Government funding it may be possible to extend the Kwinana Freeway further south to Paganoni Road which would result in a significant reduction of traffic on the adjacent sections of the Bunbury Highway and improve the situation at the access roads to the four townships;
- with regard to the fuel station on the corner of Singleton Beach Road, it was agreed that closing the driveway onto Bunbury Highway would reduce the potential for vehicle conflict, however in view of the excellent sight distance on that section of the highway, it was thought that drivers should be able to enter the highway with little difficulty or interference to other traffic;
- the intersections of Singleton Beach Road, Dampier Drive, Anstey Road and Madora Beach Road all had relatively low crash levels, and although no crash levels were acceptable and it was preferable to eliminate all potential hazards from our roads, this was not possible. Given the high cost of implementing any solution that would greatly improve the situation and the number of other higher priority locations waiting for improvements, significant upgrading works could not be justified at that time; and
- Main Roads had noted the submission made by the tabling member. All four intersections would be monitored to ensure that a high level of safety was maintained.

5. SITE VISIT

5.1 On 8 March 1999, the Committee conducted a site visit to Bunbury Highway and inspected the approaches to the townships of Singleton, Golden Bay, Madora and Secret Harbour. The Committee met with:

- Ms Edna Mather, Secretary of the Residents' Group and the principal petitioner;
- Mr Ken Holman, President of the Residents' Group;

- Mr Alan Morgan, member of the Residents' Group;
- Mr David Lloyd, electorate officer for Hon Simon O'Brien MLC; and
- Hon Simon O'Brien MLC.

5.2 The Committee discussed the issues raised in the petition and how those matters could be resolved.

6. FURTHER INQUIRIES

6.1 Following the site visit and as a result of matters raised during the meeting, the Committee sought further specific information from the Minister for Transport, Hon Murray Criddle MLC. In particular, the Committee inquired into:

- the feasibility of installing orange street lights and double sided reflectors (cats-eyes) to the traffic lanes near the intersections of the roads accessing Madora, Singleton, and Golden Bay;
- the name of the authority required to fund street lighting at those intersections;
- whether there was any intention to re-route the buses through the coastal villages and if so, to what extent; and
- the position of the bus stops in the event that acceleration lanes were provided at the intersections.

6.2 In response to its inquiries, the Committee was advised that:

- funding for the provision of street lighting at the junctions of Singleton Beach Road, Crystaluna Drive, Dampier Drive and Madora Beach Road with the Bunbury Highway had been included in Main Roads 1999/2000 Traffic Improvements Program. Street lighting was already in place at Anstey Road, and reflective raised pavement markers were already in place to separate the lanes on the carriageways of the Perth-Bunbury Highway;
- the section of the highway south of Ennis Avenue was not a controlled access highway and as such the costs of street lighting were shared by Main Roads and Local Government. Street lighting on the side roads, which were local roads, was a Council responsibility;
- there were no short-term plans to re-route buses through the coastal villages, however if Warnbro Sound Avenue was extended further south and connected to Dampier Drive, re-routing would be considered; and

- where acceleration lanes were provided for left turning traffic entering from a side road, it was common practice to position bus stops on the approach to the intersection at the beginning of the left deceleration lane on the major road.

7. HEARING

7.1 As part of its investigations the Committee heard evidence from Mr Rob Harvey, Manager Traffic and Safety, Main Roads Western Australia on Wednesday 23 June 1999.

7.2 Mr Harvey informed the Committee that acceleration lanes for 110 kmh speed limit roads need to be at least 500 metres long. Mr Harvey advised that this distance was obtained from Austroads guidelines for traffic management. Although the guidelines do not go up to 110 kmh, they recommended that for a 100 kmh speed limit road an acceleration lane be 460 metres long if the turning traffic can enter the acceleration lane at 20 kmh. Extrapolating that to 110 kmh, the acceleration lane would need to be a minimum of 500 metres long.

7.3 The Committee notes the information provided by Mr Harvey however it believes that acceleration lanes of any reasonable length would be an improvement on the current situation. Further, the Committee believes that a slip lane from the access roads to Bunbury Highway (*as indicated in Appendix A Diagrams 1 and 2*) would be an enormous advantage in facilitating the safe merger of traffic entering the highway.

7.4 At the conclusion of the hearing, the Committee requested that Mr Harvey provide further information he believed should be drawn to the Committee's attention. In a letter to the Committee dated 8 July 1999 Mr Harvey advised the Committee that Main Roads Western Australia was commissioning a study to establish the present and future functional role and operational characteristics for the section of Perth-Bunbury Highway between Rockingham and Mandurah. Mr Harvey advised that it was anticipated that the study would be available at the end of 1999.

7.5 Mr Harvey stated in the letter that:

"The study will address traffic management measures and requirements along the highway to reduce existing and future traffic problems and to improve traffic safety and efficiency and include intersection treatments, u-turn facilities, access issues, speed zoning, street lighting and bus stop facilities."

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Committee recommends that if they are not already in place, high pressure sodium lamps be installed at each of the four junctions of Bunbury Highway with the approaches to the townships of Singleton, Golden Bay, Madora and Secret Harbour.

8.2 The Committee recommends that if they are not already in place, acceleration and deceleration lanes be created at each of the four junctions.

The Committee recommends that the priority for creating acceleration and deceleration lanes be according to which junction has the greatest accident risk. The Committee recognises that these may need to be constructed by way of a phased-development program.

8.3 The Committee recommends that large and/or illuminated signs be installed alerting drivers to the approaching intersections and warning them that traffic, including buses and heavy vehicles, may cross or merge with the main traffic flow ahead.

8.4 The Committee recommends that the bus stops currently positioned on Bunbury Highway be re-located to loop roads running off the access roads approaching Bunbury Highway. (*See Appendix A Diagram 1*). The Committee recommends that the loop roads be constructed within a reasonable walking distance from the highway and that there be parking facilities adjacent to the bus stops to encourage people to 'park and ride'. This would mean that buses would turn off Bunbury Highway onto the access roads, turn right onto the loop roads, stop to collect and discharge passengers, and continue back to the highway. With the creation of acceleration lanes as recommended at paragraph 8.2, buses would be able to safely re-join the flow of traffic along Bunbury Highway.

In the event that it is not feasible for the bus stops to be relocated to loop roads running off the access roads, the Committee recommends that the bus stops be moved to an indent in the highway at the beginning of the acceleration lanes. (*See Appendix A Diagram 2*).

8.5 The Committee recognises the considerable concerns expressed in the petition by the residents of the four townships. The Committee recommends that Main Roads Western Australia give immediate and urgent attention to the recommendations contained in this report and act on those recommendations as soon as is practicable. In the event that the Committee's recommendations are not able to be implemented, the Committee requests that Main Roads Western Australia show initiative in formulating a solution to this serious road safety issue.

- 8.6 Subsequent to this report being tabled in the House, the Committee will refer the report to the Minister for Transport for comment on the Committee's recommendations pursuant to Standing Order 337 which states that:

"After tabling, the Clerk shall send a copy of a report recommending action by, or seeking a response from, the Government to the responsible Minister. The Leader of the Government or the Minister (if a member of the Council) shall report the Government's response within 4 months."

Hon Murray Nixon JP MLC

Date:

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A: DIAGRAMS REFERRED TO IN PARAGRAPHS 7.3 AND 8.4

Diagram 1
Not to scale

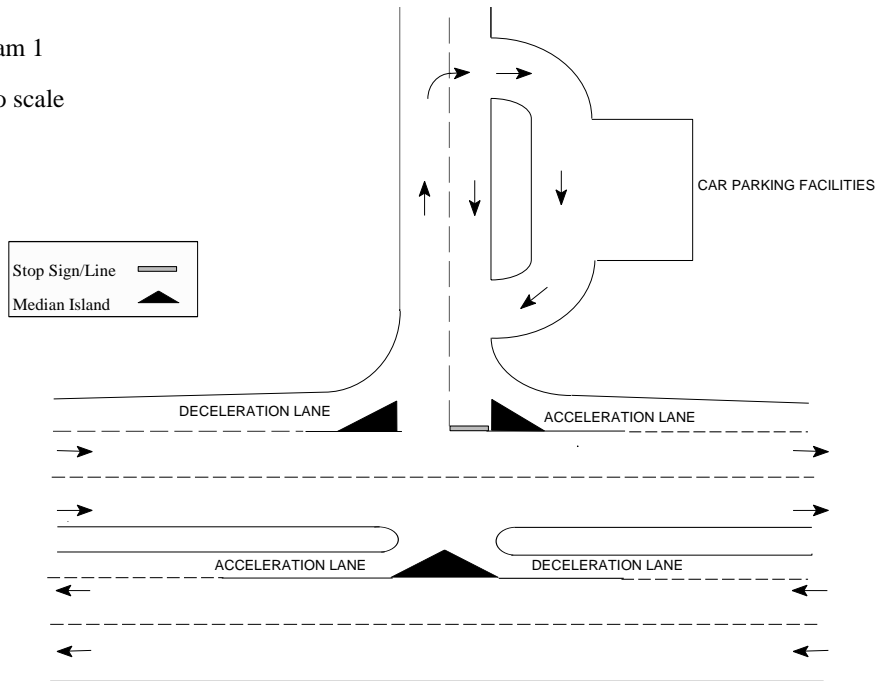


Diagram 2
Not to scale

