

ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL AMENDMENT (FUNCTIONS) BILL 2010

Second Reading

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [4.02 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

We know that the Towards Zero road safety strategy calculates the average financial cost of a single death or serious injury on Western Australian roads at \$600 000. We can readily cite the annual estimated cost of transport injuries to the WA health system at \$164 million. Less quantifiable is the emotional cost of road trauma to families and loved ones. It is no less real, however, for the bereaved.

Less than a kilometre away from my electorate office in different directions are separate sites each with two white crosses marking untimely deaths on our roads. In September 2009, two teenage pedestrians—Rebecca Ball and her boyfriend, Julian Brown—were killed in a hit-and-run while walking along Marangaroo Drive. Rebecca was celebrating her seventeenth birthday that night. The other crosses mark the site at which 89-year-old Norman Alexander and his wife, 85-year-old Olwyn Janis Young, died in a car crash on Anzac Day 2009. Last year's Anzac weekend accounted for six road fatalities. The crash that killed the elderly couple involved four cars. Police reported that a white Toyota Hilux collided with a Ford Falcon before it hit a traffic light and crashed into the elderly couple's Ford Laser. The Toyota then smashed into an oncoming truck.

The crosses are a salutary reminder as we drive by in our cars that we must drive more carefully. On closer reflection, we realise that they were erected by victims' loved ones—their friends and family. Often fresh flowers placed by the crosses remind us that the pain and loss suffered by the bereaved has not diminished by the passing of months and years.

Many other community members remain deeply affected by the loss of a friend, colleague or neighbour. While road traffic deaths are counted in the year in which they occur, a family remains bereaved forever. The bereaved are not counted or included in road traffic injury data. The devastation that these incidents inflict on victims and their families, friends and communities is incalculable. The effect on emergency service workers who must face the consequences of car crashes on a daily basis is also profound.

This Sunday, the third Sunday in November, is World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. It is a day on which we should focus on the social cost that road trauma exacts. It is a day to remember that each year 1.2 million people are killed in road traffic crashes around the world, leaving behind shattered families and communities. Many of those killed are young and in the prime of their lives. Their presence and contributions are greatly needed by their families and countries.

The impact of such traumatic events is the cumulative toll of suffering, which is truly unimaginable since each year more millions are added to the millions of people who are already affected and whose suffering is aggravated by the inadequate response of having their loss largely ignored. Just as with any other disease, prevention cannot be the sole focus. Mitigating action must be included in any strategy. Services for victims, such as access to relevant information, assistance with legal issues, physical therapies, counselling, the provision of wheelchairs or other rehabilitative devices and care-giving assistance must be planned and provided.

The absence of dedicated support for those left behind or devastated by a crash is something many in Western Australia have been lobbying for. Glenda and Alan Maloney have been at the forefront of this effort for more than a decade. Their 17-year-old daughter was tragically killed by a speeding driver. The tireless efforts of the Maloneys and many other bereaved families supporting the cause have resulted in a state government grant of \$35 000 for an investigation and consultation process to determine what form such a support service should take. I commend the government for progressing the issue. I will not form any view on whether the grant was prompted by the excellent grievance that was made to the Minister for Police in September last year by my colleague the member for Mindarie after he had been contacted by Alan and Glenda Maloney. The consultation process with a range of stakeholders is at an early stage. Once the findings of the study have been made, the real question will remain: how should the victim support service, in whatever form it takes, be funded?

The purpose of the Road Safety Council Amendment (Functions) Bill 2010 is to amend the Road Safety Council Act. This amendment will enable moneys from the road trauma trust fund to be spent on setting up a road trauma support service similar to the services that operate in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. It will also allow for education programs aimed at the prevention of road trauma.

There has been extensive publicity in preceding months that the doubling of speed and red light cameras will mean that the revenue from infringements will grow exponentially in the next two years. The last budget papers revealed that revenue for 2008–09 was \$71 million. That amount is expected to increase to \$119 million by

2012–13. Two-thirds of that revenue goes to consolidated revenue. The other one-third goes to the road trauma trust fund. It is timely to look at how we can effectively spend that windfall revenue in a way that will maximise road safety outcomes and alleviate the lasting consequences of road trauma on Western Australian roads.

The function of Victoria's Road Trauma Support Services is to counsel the bereaved, especially family members; to provide trauma support to others who may be directly affected by road trauma, such as witnesses, those who are first on the scene, emergency services personnel and surviving passengers; assist with victim impact statements in court; coordinate volunteers and emergency service personnel to provide road trauma awareness seminars for persons who have been before the courts on low-level driving offences and who are referred as part of their sentence to better appreciate the impact of road trauma and the impact that their offending may have on the roads; and, provide education seminars to the broader community upon request. A similar service in WA is well overdue and it should be funded out of the road trauma trust fund. But I understand that the —

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I regret having to bring a point of order during the member's speech but, Mr Acting Speaker, someone who has just come into the gallery is in an outfit that I think is intimidating to members of this chamber and I ask that that person be removed.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Further to that point of order, Mr Acting Speaker, I respectfully suggest that you take action. For anyone to come into the Parliament of Western Australia wearing a costume is not only against all the principles of security of this Parliament, it is in fact a contempt of this house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Members, it has been brought to our attention that it is a breach of security for somebody to come in here dressed whereby we cannot actually identify them, so I ask the person in the gallery who is dressed up to please leave the gallery.

Debate Resumed

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I do understand, however, that the Road Safety Council has legal advice provided to government by the State Solicitor's Office some time ago and that legal advice says that it is outside the scope of measures that currently can be funded in this way. I also understand that it is argued that the counselling work of such a service does not fall within the existing legislative parameters, although it could be argued that its educational work could be categorised as preventing road trauma in the future and hence may come within the current legal framework. This bill is about clarifying the situation and ensuring that all components of the work of the service would qualify for road trauma trust fund funding. In its 2010 —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I am sorry to interrupt but the timer was stopped. Can you continue?

Ms M.M. Quirk: I think that it has not been put back on; it has been at 52 minutes for about five minutes.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Yes, that is what I am saying. I am just asking for the timer to be put back on. Member, you still have the call.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: In its 2010–11 budget submission, the RAC, which has over 700 000 members in Western Australia, recommended the establishment of such a road trauma victim support unit. In doing so it noted —

Road trauma touches the lives of thousands of Western Australians every year. Families are left to cope with the sudden and tragic loss of a loved one. Often they are forced to cope with their loss over an extended period of time while the court system deals with the accident which took their loved one.

In other cases, families and loved ones are left to support a victim of road trauma who is left physically or mentally incapacitated.

For too long there has been a glaring hole in our road safety network.

The RAC believes the government should establish a Road Trauma Victim Support Unit to provide on-going counselling and support to people who have been physically or emotionally affected by road trauma.

Similar units exist in other States, some of which are run by volunteers with funding provided through various government agencies.

The amendments in this bill are specifically broader than the creation of, and recurrent funding for, a victim support service. The amendments would also permit access to road trauma trust fund funding for other programs currently ineligible because of the restricted interpretation of the existing law. For example, the charity Paraplegic Benefit Fund participates in the much-lauded Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth program, or PARTY program as it is known, which is an excellent injury prevention program that is run at Royal

Perth Hospital. Once a week during the school year, a group of young adults aged 14 to 18 are invited to Royal Perth Hospital to learn about trauma. The purpose of the PARTY program is to provide useful relevant information about injury to young people that will enable participants to recognise potential injury-producing situations, to make informed prevention-oriented choices about activities, and to adopt behaviours and actions to minimise risk. In order to completely involve the students in the experience of injury and recovery, the group is walked along the common course of injury and treatment of someone involved in a motor vehicle accident. Through a variety of teaching techniques including lectures, videos, simulated trauma resuscitation, tours of the intensive care unit, emergency department and rehabilitation wards, and interaction with injury survivors, students see firsthand what it would be like to be injured. Students are encouraged to think: what if it happened to me? There is candid discussion about what choices they could make in a variety of situations that would prevent themselves and their family and friends from being injured. PBF is anxious to extend the program to all students in Western Australia, especially those in the bracket of 15 to 24 years of age, which coincidentally is also the high-risk demographic for injuries and fatalities from road crashes. The reality is that the Paraplegic Benefit Fund currently attempts to meet the growing need for injury prevention in youth without government funding or support. It employs 11 volunteers, each of whom has suffered a traumatic spinal cord injury. They tell their story with a view to educating students and young novice drivers about the consequences of poor decisions and bad judgement. In 2009, PBF's injury prevention message was heard by 17 000 Western Australians at primary and high schools and also workplaces.

In researching these amendments and in my discussions with a range of people, I was referred to a website entitled Journey Beyond Road Trauma. This is an excellent online social network for all those affected by road trauma. The site notes that —

behind every fatality & serious road injury statistic, there are thousands of stories.

This online sanctuary provides a space where people can tell their story, create compelling tributes, find support and understanding from the online community and ultimately begin to heal. I think the final word should be a contribution that I found on that site —

Dear Jack,

These are some of the things I wish I never had to do.

I wish I never had the feeling I knew it was you in the accident that day,

I wish I was never compelled to go to the scene,

I wish I never had to identify your body to the police,

I wish I never had to stay with your body until they cut you out of the car,

I wish I never had to tell your mother you were dead.

I wish I never had to see your body at the hospital and the funeral parlour,

I wish I never had to pick you a coffin and plan your funeral,

I wish I never had to go to your funeral.

I wish I never had to clean your car out of your possessions and see your blood through the car,

I wish I never had to read the police report describing how you died in such detail,

I wish I never have to drive past the place where you died so often,

I wish I never had to walk past your bedroom all the time knowing you will never be in there again.

Please understand Jack, that I have no regrets about these things I wish and would do them all for you again in a heartbeat if I had to, but if my biggest wish of all were to come true,

I wish you didn't die. All my other wishes would then come true.

All my love, Dad ...

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson (Leader of the House)**.