

**BACK ON TRACK — WA STATE TRAIL BIKE STRATEGY**

*Grievance*

**MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills)** [9.56 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I thank the minister for taking my grievance. I commence this grievance in the knowledge that this is one of the most difficult issues that I have had to deal with in the electorate of Swan Hills. I acknowledge that this is also the case in other electorates. It is also disheartening to report that despite all my efforts, I have had little personal success in dealing with this matter. I must say that even though this is a legitimate sport, and there are a great number of participants possibly doing the right thing, there appears to be an element of hooning within this sport. Some riders have no respect for their fellow neighbours and the communities in which they live. I have run out of sympathy for their behaviour and conduct, and I hope that part of the solution will include some comprehensive penalties. I have watched patiently and followed with interest the progress of “Back on Track: WA State Trail Bike Strategy”, through the committee chaired by the member for Darling Range, Tony Simpson, MLA. The reason for that is that this issue is not isolated to any one portion of my electorate; it is right across the hills communities of my electorate from Mundaring to Gidgegannup and Bullsbrook. It also impacts on the residential portion of my electorate, including The Vines, Aveley and Ellenbrook, as the riders take a short cut across the back of the residential area when accessing the Gngangara pine forest.

I also acknowledge the complexity of this issue in dealing with several different entities that will need to be involved in and responsible for the success of this project, including the Department of Transport, the appropriate local governments, Western Australia Police, the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Water Corporation, Motorcycling Western Australia and the Department of Sport and Recreation.

To give the minister an idea of the concerns in my electorate, the following is an extract from an email from one of my community leaders. It is fairly typical of what I get on a regular basis. This particular email was from Sally Block, the president of the Gidgegannup Progress Association. According to my notes, it reads —

The trail bikes were active again today, Sunday ... in the Main Roads property on Lilydale Road ... this was no deterrent, nor was the rain and the trail bikes carried on until 3pm and then it quietened down. It seems neither the police or shire have clear authority to make the trail bikers stop.

As the minister is well aware, the issues that must be dealt with include the different requirements and concerns of the community, landowners, environmental groups, regulators, other trail users and trail bike riders. The solutions must be suitably governed and appropriately resourced and funded to provide improved trail and venue facilities. Trail bike riding must be better managed with increased regulation, registration, licensing and enforcement. The issues that must be addressed concerning the land to be managed include the provision of facilities, insurance, liability and risk management. Designated trails and venues must be planned, developed and maintained to not only attract trail bike riders, but also ensure minimal environmental and community impact. Education and improved information will be needed also to foster socially and environmentally accepted riding behaviours.

This has been a longstanding issue in my electorate and there is a dividing line between two vested interest groups and lifestyles that each have an equal right to choose to live that lifestyle. Can the minister outline what plans and actions are envisaged for the future, based on the recommendations of the State Trail Bike Strategy, that can be implemented not only in my electorate, but also throughout the state?

**MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin — Minister for Sport and Recreation)** [10.00 am]: I thank the member for Swan Hills for raising this grievance. He and other members have advocated to me on behalf of their electorates on this matter for some time. The member outlined how this issue affects not only his electorate, but also many other areas of the state, including my own electorate. It was an excellent grievance that addressed some of the important issues that the government is working hard to get right. In that regard, I have some very good news to announce today. Before I detail that action, it is worth revisiting the background. Western Australia has seen an estimated 66 per cent increase in the sale of trail and quad bikes in recent years, with an estimated 50 000 currently being ridden in Western Australia. There is no doubt that the lack of regulated places to ride trail bikes has created a number of issues in the community, particularly the lack of legal places in which to ride, which I will talk about in a moment. Other issues include enforcement; a lack of education, which is very important; an increase in antisocial behaviour and conflict with other trail users; the risk of injury to participants, including children and the public; accidents resulting in injury and, unfortunately, deaths; environmental impacts; the liability of land managers; and general noise and nuisance. As the member for Swan Hills said, these issues have been around for many years. Due to a lack of a coordinated approach between state government agencies, local governments and the general community, we have not been able to address these issues previously. I hope that what I announce today is a real start in addressing those issues. This is not an easy matter but it is one that the government is determined to get right. As the Minister for Sport and Recreation, I have taken a lead on this and

am determined to get it right. The good debate we had on this matter in Parliament a while ago helped me to work out the best way to go now and in the future.

Addressing the problems associated with off-road vehicles is the responsibility of the government collectively; it is not just up to one or two agencies or the responsibility of one or two portfolios to manage. I am really concerned for the safety of the trail bike community, which is why I visited sites in Gngangara and Pinjar in person to see for myself what was happening on the ground. On that site visit I was accompanied by representatives from the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Recreational Trail Bike Riders' Association of Western Australia and local members of Parliament, the members for Darling Range and Wanneroo, whom I thank for coming and for their interest. I also take the opportunity to acknowledge Steve Pretzel from the Recreational Trail Bike Riders' Association WA, who acted as my guide on that tour. I wanted to make sure that we delivered something they really wanted and that would deal with the immediate problems now. Steve is a terrific advocate for the off-road industry. He understands it and I respect his advice. It was great to have him there. As a result of that visit, and in response to the immediate need for action, I have approved funding of \$20 000 to construct an interim riding trail within the Gngangara off-road area. It is important for the riders there to have a trail on which they can ride in relative safety. That funding is partnered with in-kind support from DEC. I thank the department and the Minister for Environment for their great support for this measure, which I am confident will go a long way towards reducing the incidence of illegal riding in that area.

Furthermore—this is very important, given the nature of some recent incidents—I have approved funding of \$60 000 for Motorcycling Western Australia to coordinate the implementation of three important projects, the first of which is an education and community program. This program will increase rider understanding of riding location options and codes of conduct for off-road riding and rider safety; that is, what people can ride and where they can ride. Many of the problems we are seeing are caused by people's lack of knowledge, so this is really important and I am pleased that it is happening.

The second project is to develop a volunteer management system that will support the creation of local "friends of" groups in areas in which off-road vehicles are ridden. There is a "friends of" group in Pinjar and we want to base more of these groups on that model so that local people are involved in imparting their knowledge to the riders to improve the safety of riders. We can make the trails safer, but we need the riders to understand that. I always believe that the local people who want to help should be involved, and we must ensure that they are armed with the knowledge and the means to do that.

The third project is a community awareness campaign, which is also really important. The purpose of that campaign is to consult with local government and retailers and manufacturers of trail bikes to involve them in the issues and to find potential solutions to the problems that affect their areas. What happens in my electorate in the bush around Wandering and Crossman might be very different from what is happening at Pinjar or Gngangara. This campaign will assist local governments to understand and work through the local issues. As I have said, \$60 000 has been allocated to these programs, along with \$20 000 for the trail in the Gngangara–Moore River state forest. These measures are intended to begin the transition process of recreational trail bike riders to a more planned, managed, sustainable and safer environment in which to conduct that activity. This is a start. We want to do more, but there seemed to be an immediate need to address some of the issues. I am addressing the immediate need to the best of my ability and then we will continue to implement further reforms.

I acknowledge the members for Darling Range, Swan Hills and Wanneroo for their support. Many other members of Parliament have been involved in this also. I acknowledge the member for Maylands, who has been fantastic and whose input I appreciate, and the members for Pilbara, Southern River, Murray–Wellington and Kalamunda. This funding is in addition to funding previously provided by DEC for the minimal impact riding program pilot. I visited Pinjar to see what was happening there and was really impressed with that great model. Different trails have been provided for different levels of riding ability. We need to do more of that type of thing, and hopefully the Gngangara project will be the start of that.

In the brief time I have left, I assure members that we all share a will to deal with this issue and that I want to make sure we deal with this matter properly. I am meeting with my ministerial advisers again to progress our plans for the broader implementation of the State Trail Bike Strategy and I am committed to ensuring the success of that strategy. This is a great start and I am pleased to make this announcement about those measures, which will have a real and immediate effect.