

ROAD SAFETY - YOUNG PEOPLE

283. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Community Safety:

Will the minister advise the house of the latest plans to reduce the number of young people tragically dying on our roads?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for his question and recognise his very keen interest in road safety. We are all aware that the government has taken road safety very seriously, and the two previous ministers have worked very hard to ensure that our roads are made as safe as possible. The results are there. There were 163 fatalities last year, which is the lowest number of fatalities since records have been kept, but 163 deaths on our roads is still totally unacceptable. Of those 163 deaths, about one-third, or 54 people, were in the 17 to 24-year-old age group. That number, plus a range of other statistics, shows that new young drivers have a much higher risk of being involved in accidents and fatalities.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: You obviously think they are the worst group of drivers in Australia.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am not saying that. I am saying that clearly there is a much higher incidence of that group being involved in crashes and fatalities, and the government is committed to doing something about it. Based on the Road Safety Council's report, the government will implement a range of changes from 1 July next year, including night-time driving restrictions; peer passenger restrictions for provisional drivers in their first six months of driving; a zero blood alcohol content limit for not only learners and provisional drivers, but also supervisory drivers; and a graduated demerit point system, so that we ensure that young drivers recognise that they must keep concentrating on getting experience and on learning the skills they need to drive safely. Also, learners' permits will be valid for three years, as it may take some people a longer period to get their licence; therefore, we do not want them to bear the extra cost of renewing their learners' permits. The government will also tighten restrictions on supervisory drivers, including imposing a zero blood alcohol content limit on them. We believe these changes will have support from the community. A range of administrative and implementation issues must be settled, and I will discuss those with a range of groups within the community, government members and the opposition to ensure that these changes will be implemented smoothly and effectively and that, through these changes, we will see a further reduction in the unacceptable level of carnage on our roads from serious accidents.