

EASTER ROAD SAFETY

**155. Mr P.B. WATSON to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:**

Can the minister advise the house of any strategies being used to keep the roads safe over the Easter break?

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO replied:**

I thank the member for Albany for the question.

Today we launched Operation Easter Care. However, before I talk about that, I would like to wish everyone in the house, and all Western Australians, a safe and happy Easter. It is a period during which we might all reflect on what Easter is about.

This holiday period is always a very dangerous one. Today, we launched Operation Easter Care. It is a campaign aimed at education, awareness raising and also enforcement. We will have a major blitz this weekend, and the police will specifically target people speeding, drink-driving and not wearing seatbelts, especially in the regional areas. I do not know whether the house is aware of this, but this year there have been 35 deaths in regional Western Australia out of 54 deaths overall. That is far higher than in previous years, and it is a concern.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** What are you going to do about it?

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** Please, this is serious. Of those 54 deaths, eight people were not wearing seatbelts. There is a clear message. I am not saying that all those lives would have been saved, but a number of those people could have been with us today if they had been wearing seatbelts. The message we need to give to the community is to please take care. It is a holiday period, and a lot of people will go away this weekend. We want them all to come back at the end of the holiday period and be part of our community.

As members will be well aware, double demerit points start tonight, and they will go right through until Monday night. We are not increasing the fines for offences; we are only implementing double demerit points. It is not a revenue-raising exercise; it is about trying to make sure that people understand that we want them to be safe.

The other thing that we need to highlight to the community is that driving when tired is very dangerous. I am told that 35 per cent of road accidents have fatigue-related aspects associated with them. I am also advised that if a person drives for 17 hours, it is the equivalent of a person having a blood alcohol level of .05 per cent. It is a very serious issue.

This weekend, we will make sure that the police are very visible in all locations, especially on country roads. We will make sure that as many officers as possible are on the roads to try to help -

An opposition member interjected.

**Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO:** I have been advised by the police today that all leave in the south west has been cancelled, and all the police will be on the roads over this holiday period. I thank all those police officers who will be working hard over the Easter period for the job they will be doing on behalf of the community. However, we also need to send a message to the people who are going away; that is, please be careful and slow down. They need to think about what they are doing and understand that other people are on the roads. We do not want any fatalities over this weekend. We want everyone to come back after the Easter period and be part of the community. People should slow down, be careful and take care.