

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY — BICTON

Grievance

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [10.37 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Transport; Planning. The Bicton electorate is situated along the Swan River, approximately 13 kilometres from where we stand today and only seven kilometres from Fremantle. Being so well situated means that it is mostly well serviced by road, rail and public transport. The suburbs of Alfred Cove, Attadale, Bicton, Melville, Myaree, Palmyra and East Fremantle are growing community hubs that I walk around almost daily when I am out doorknocking or exercising in my fantastic local community. I know firsthand how important it is to be able to safely and easily move around, and how that makes for a healthier, happier and more connected local community in the Bicton electorate and beyond.

Since I was elected in 2017, I have worked hard to improve local pedestrian safety and access to public transport in my electorate. According to a 2019 report by the RAC, the top three reasons people choose to live where they do are affordability, proximity to shopping centres and local amenities, and access to public transport. Connected communities mean locals can better access employment, education, essential services and local amenities by foot, bus or car. Better connectivity has a positive influence on our health, wellbeing and sense of community, and that is why over the past few months, I have been working on some key issues around local pedestrian safety and public transport connectivity. Parents in the suburbs of Bicton and Attadale have been telling me that they and their kids are finding it difficult to get across busy Canning Highway to get to Melville Senior High School and home again. Whether by bike, foot or bus, there is a lack of safe crossing points and bus services north–south of Canning Highway. Pedestrians must scramble across the highway during peak periods, which is dangerous and unsafe for both motorists and pedestrians. If going by bus to Melville Senior High School, students need to travel via Fremantle or Booragoon, with bus changes resulting in a near hour-long commute to travel roughly 3.5 kilometres.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Bicton champions Nick and Karen who have created the community campaign “Melville Senior High School Transport Options” to help drive change for better bus access, as well as calling for a convenient and safe crossing point on Canning Highway in the two-kilometre section between the North Lake Road and Stock Road intersections with Canning Highway. Nick and his daughter Jess, a student at Melville Senior High School, are here today in the Speaker’s gallery. It is important to them and local residents that kids and families, the elderly and those who are differently abled can cross this road safely.

Additionally, I have been running a petition for some months now, which has collected hundreds of signatures, demonstrating the community’s stake in these issues. Meanwhile over in the growing community hub on Carrington Street, Palmyra, residents and business owners have told me that the volume and speed of traffic is having a negative and potentially dangerous impact on them. I have also been running a community petition there, which has been equally popular, with locals calling for changes to the street. Hubs like Carrington Street, Palmyra, which has a popular local park, cafes and shops, are important to our community. They are places where kids and families play, eat and frequent. They must be safe for pedestrians, business owners and motorists too. Thank you to local Palmyra small business owners Meray from Oushk, Mel from And [&] The Store, and Ashleigh from The Hair Hive, who have been unrelenting in their advocacy for greater pedestrian safety on Carrington Street. The best campaigns are community-led and that is why I am proud to stand alongside my community to try to remedy these issues and increase local pedestrian safety and transport options.

We have many local champions for greater pedestrian and cyclist safety in our community—people like Karen, Nick, Meray, Ashleigh and another local, Max FitzGibbon who is committed to researching and advocating for safer and more active local streets. Streets are shared spaces. I am not seeking to progress only one group’s needs; after all, I, like most in our community, drive, cycle and walk throughout the electorate of Bicton. By creating safer inclusive streets for all, our entire local community benefits.

The Minister for Transport has repeatedly demonstrated her commitment to improving pedestrian safety across our state and in my electorate of Bicton, with the upgrade of the Preston Point Road–Canning Highway intersection in East Fremantle last year. I respectfully ask for her support once more.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.42 am]: I thank the member for Bicton for raising this grievance on behalf of her community. I also acknowledge Nick and Jess in the Parliament today and thank them for coming along to watch democracy in action.

The member has raised a number of key issues in her grievance. One includes, of course, the pedestrian crossing at Canning Highway and Hope Road and, generally, public access to Melville Senior High School for students who live north of Canning Highway. Early in 2020, Transperth was made aware, through the member for Bicton and community members like Nick, of the concerns of parents of Melville Senior High School students who were seeking consideration of a direct bus route through the school’s northern catchment. The correspondence put forward

a number of suggestions, which have been investigated by Transperth. Although I am advised that the intent of these suggestions is supported, there are a number of logistical impacts on existing users. However, we are continuing to work with the member for Bicton and the office on this matter.

The bus services north of the school were reviewed with a view to introducing an additional service on existing routes, which would deviate to the school twice a day. I am advised that the deviation is primarily a service that will travel between Fremantle and Canning Bridge. The proposed service will enable students from the north part of the school's catchment to travel directly to and from Melville Senior High School without the need to transfer buses, which will largely achieve the outcome that is being sought by the member and parents. We will continue to work on that option with the community and the member to see whether we can get that all done and sorted for the beginning of term 1 next year. That is the aim for that bus service.

I can confirm that the member raised the issue of a Canning Highway crossing near Rome Road, Melville, with my office. I understand that the existing road conditions consist of a seagull island intersection at the T-junction of Canning Highway into Rome Road and Hislop Road. A lack of controlled pedestrian crossing facilities in the area increases the likelihood of pedestrian jaywalking and also compromises pedestrian safety. Also, of course, it causes disruption to traffic on Canning Highway.

To assist the member in her advocacy on this issue, we arranged for Main Roads to undertake some video surveys of the area to determine the extent of the problem. Two pedestrian surveys were completed. The first was done in June–July 2019 and a second video survey was done in September 2019. The second survey was arranged because many of the pedestrians impacted in the initial survey were attending football matches when the dedicated Optus Oval bus service was travelling along that section of highway, so that changed the numbers significantly. As a result, a video survey of the area was undertaken to include the football crowd. The gap analysis confirmed that in peak periods, pedestrians were having difficulty crossing the road. I understand that the analysis also showed a higher number of pedestrians than Main Roads had expected in that area. At that time, even though the numbers were high, the existing policy meant that the targets, or warrants, that Main Roads relies on for pedestrian crossings were not being met. However, Main Roads has since developed new guidelines for pedestrian crossing facilities at traffic signals, which takes a different approach when assessing the need for mid-block signalised pedestrian crossings. The new guidelines, currently being finalised, allow for a holistic assessment rather than relying on a warrant-based assessment of pedestrian and vehicle volumes. As a result, Main Roads is investigating a number of different options, including the installation of a staged staggered mid-block signalised crossing installation between Hislop Road and Rome Road; the installation of a staggered staged mid-block signalised crossing to the west of Rome Road; and the installation of full traffic signals. Currently, the staged staggered mid-block crossing to the west of Rome Road is the preferred option. It also includes extending the right-turn pocket on Canning Highway into Rome Road by approximately 18 metres to provide for additional vehicle storage. A very limited design has been done—a five per cent design concept—and we will continue to work with the member and the City of Melville to see how we can upgrade that area to improve pedestrian safety.

It is always tricky on busy roads like Canning Highway, particularly because a lot of cars use that road, to try to make them safe. I am really pleased to say that after working with the member and community members, we think that we will get there, particularly with that staged pedestrian crossing. It looks as though that will be the solution. But we will continue to work on the design with the city, the member and also the community to make sure that we improve pedestrian safety in that area.

Again, thank you, member, very much for the grievance and working well with my office and the community. It is these sorts of strong advocacy approaches, when the community works with the local member and the local member approaches the minister, that really get great outcomes. It really shows the value of having local members involved in the community, talking to the community and bringing forward these ideas to get a result that they would not have got if they had not done the work. Thank you very much to everyone.