

## **REID HIGHWAY - INCREASED TRAFFIC FLOWS**

### *Grievance*

**MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine)** [9.51 am]: I rise to grieve to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, but I should probably be grieving to the Treasurer also on this issue. It involves funding over the past five years for, in particular, the Reid Highway, which runs through my electorate and the electorates of a number of other members in this house, including Carine, Balcatta, Girrawheen and Ballajura.

In 2004, after an electoral redistribution included the intersections of Reid Highway-Mirraboooka Avenue and Alexander Drive-Reid Highway in my electorate, I was approached by a number of action groups that had been campaigning about those intersections since 1998. May I congratulate this morning Gillian O'Shaughnessy from the ABC and Assistant Commissioner John McRoberts for a program they are running all morning on deaths on the roads, because this grievance is about that. In fact, in the past four or five years about seven deaths have occurred at those two intersections. I will touch on that in a moment, if I may.

My research showed that the member for Balcatta and the member for Girrawheen have been particularly active in trying to get overpasses for these two intersections since they were promised by the previous government in 1998. My subsequent research revealed that in 1998 the then Minister for Transport, who was represented in this place by the current Leader of the Opposition, Hon Paul Omodei, in reply to a question from the current Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, reported in *Hansard* of Tuesday, 10 November 1998, informed the house of a commitment of \$103.707 million in the 1998-99 budget to the Reid Highway project, which included the construction of interchanges at both Alexander Drive and Mirraboooka Avenue on Reid Highway. My subsequent research and approaches by the action group have informed me that these were also to include planning for the extension of Reid Highway Stage 4 from Erindale Road to Marmion Avenue. Under the Court government that further section was completed, but it was at the cost of the two interchanges on both intersections. When one drives along the Reid Highway one can clearly see at each of those intersections the cluster of crosses in place in memory of people who have died there in the past few years. That is a very poignant reminder to everybody in government of what changes in priorities can do at these kinds of intersections. There is no doubt at all - in fact, the cynicism has been expressed to me by people from all of the electorates in those suburbs - that it was no coincidence that, when the changes were made, the budget related to the 2001 election and the issues surrounding the Carine electorate at that time. That view of the Reid Highway situation is expressed very clearly by people in my electorate and those in all the northern suburbs electorates. One must ask why this cynicism has occurred.

I am advised by the local action groups that when this matter was raised by them with the Court government after the Carine extensions were completed, the Court government blew out the construction timetable from 2010 to 2012. I was given this advice by the action groups, which are very well versed in what occurred.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Does that include the action groups in my electorate? Have they contacted you?

**Mr R.C. KUCERA:** I suggest that the member drive to those intersections to look at the cluster of crosses that his government created.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Don't mislead the house. I suggest you tell the truth.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr R.C. KUCERA:** During the period January 2000 to December 2004, more than 500 crashes occurred at these two intersections, most of which resulted in serious damage and injuries. The Reid Highway-Mirraboooka Avenue intersection alone witnessed 260 crashes, 85 of which had casualties. The estimated cost of these crashes, including lost productivity, medical costs etc, is almost \$9 million at the current rate. The figures do not include incidents in the past 12 to 18 months, because those statistics are not available. At the Reid Highway-Alexander Drive intersection there have been 300 crashes, 61 of which involved casualties including seven deaths, at a cost of more than \$7.5 million. Those statistics are freely available on Main Roads web site.

For as long as the highway extended to just past Mirraboooka Avenue, the intersections could cope; however, the traffic flow has quadrupled over the past five years. Construction at the Mirraboooka shopping centre is now going ahead, and the real worry in relation to the Mirraboooka intersection is that the flow of traffic in the opposite direction will double in the next two years, which will again raise the probability of crashes.

May I pay tribute to the current Minister for Planning and Infrastructure? She made sure that \$600 000 was spent on realigning lanes on the northern and southern approaches to the Mirraboooka intersection and improving the distances involved. Turning lanes were also put in place. This has definitely improved the situation at that intersection. Nevertheless, on almost a daily basis, crashes are occurring at both those intersections.

Similarly, during the federal election of 2004, the federal Labor shadow minister committed to a 50-50 partnership with the state government. The current state minister examined this, and in fact \$2 million for

preliminary construction was found in the then budget and \$5.5 million was identified for entering into a partnership. The local Liberal candidate, Michael Keenan, in his plan for the area pledged to ensure better and safer roads for our community through AusLink. In May 2005, in a letter to the president of the Balga action group, the new federal Liberal member for Stirling said that he had written to Hon Jim Lloyd, the federal minister with responsibility for roads, to seek this out. It was a great disappointment to the action groups and me when last week the local federal Liberal member did a backflip, and said that it is now the total responsibility of the state government to fix these problems.

I took the federal shadow Minister for Finance and Administration, Lindsay Tanner, to the intersections last Tuesday. He agreed that the commitment made in the previous election campaign was one that he would examine very closely from a federal Labor viewpoint in the forthcoming election. I ask the minister to work very closely with the federal government to see if we can move on. I urge anybody who wishes to have a poignant reminder of the importance of this issue, particularly on the night before Good Friday, to drive to those intersections and look at the cluster of crosses.

**MS A.J.G. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure)** [9.58 am]: I thank the member for this grievance, and acknowledge that the member has frequently raised this issue with me, as have a number of his predecessors representing that area. I believe this is part of a larger problem that we are experiencing, as part of the economic growth in Perth and the strong growth in the outer suburbs. Obviously, that puts pressure on many of the middle-ring suburban roads. Perhaps that has not been frequently understood. We have put a lot of planning and effort into it. There has been a lot of agitation from people, such as the members for Wanneroo and Mindarie, for roads into these new suburbs, but perhaps not enough focus has been given to the sequela for the middle-ring suburbs to cope with the increased loads as that growth occurs further out on the perimeter.

As the member for Yokine has pointed out, as a result of his activities and those of the member for Girrawheen, in excess of \$600 000 has been allocated in the black spots program for the intersection of Mirrabooka Avenue and Reid Highway. I am pleased to say that those measures seem to have produced some results. I have an analysis of the number of crashes at the intersection. In 2003, before the treatment was done, there were 71 accidents; in 2004 that figure was 61; and in 2005 the figure was 36. The work on black spots is achieving some very good results. An area of greater concern is the intersection of Reid Highway and Alexander Drive. On the basis of our analysis of the frequency of crashes and the cost of those crashes, that intersection comes up as the number two black spot in the metropolitan area. The number one black spot in the metropolitan area happens to be in the electorate of our good friend the Treasurer. As part of the reconfiguring of Leach Highway, following the deletion of the Fremantle eastern bypass, the project on the intersection of Leach Highway and Orrong Road is under way. The number one black spot is being dealt with as we speak by the construction of the Leach Highway flyover. That will bring the intersection of Reid Highway and Alexander Drive into the number one position on the list of priorities. I use this opportunity this morning to make sure that the Treasurer is made well aware of that. He has indicated a preparedness to consider what we should do.

We want some federal government assistance. Throughout the last, very hotly fought federal election campaign, the Labor candidate for the federal seat of Stirling, with the support of the federal party hierarchy, had committed to part funding the work required on this road. The federal Liberal candidate, ultimately the successful candidate, used weasel words to imply that he would be getting the same support from his side of politics. Now that he has been elected, he has said that it is not a federal responsibility; it is all a state responsibility.

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** He has done that on two or three occasions in relation to various pledges that he made, where there was a mix of federal and state funding.

**Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN:** We would put it right back onto the federal member for Stirling, and I can assure the member for Yokine that we have also discussed this intersection with the federal shadow transport minister, Senator Kerry O'Brien, and he undertook, as did Lindsay Tanner, to get this on the priority list for federal Labor. In the meantime, we want to get on with approaching the current federal government. The federal government has a program called the AusLink strategic regional program, which we hope is not just a National Party slush fund. It is made very clear that state roads are eligible for assistance under this program. In the way the program is structured, local government must make the actual application, but the state government would strongly support the relevant local authority making the application. We can put the acid on Mr Keenan, the federal member for Stirling, to go into bat and fight for his electorate and for this state to get some money for roads. So far, about \$150 million has been spent on the strategic regional fund, and Western Australia has received nil - not one cent - largely because it does not have any National Party seats in the federal Parliament. In the federal budget, as I have told the house very often, Western Australia receives less than eight per cent of the national capital works pie, which is an absolute disgrace when it is considered that Western Australia's land mass is one-third of the continent, it produces 50 per cent of the volume and 30 per cent by value of the nation's exports, and

has 10 per cent of the nation's population. Mr Keenan will have a great opportunity now to support the members for Yokine and Girrawheen and the state government in getting some of the strategic regional fund out of the federal government and into the federal seat of Stirling.