

BUSSELL HIGHWAY — ROAD SAFETY

Grievance

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury) [9.54 pm]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport and is about a 6.4-kilometre stretch of Bussell Highway south from the intersection with Robertson Drive to the intersection with Harewood Road. This is part of a major arterial route that links the southern half of the south west to the northern half, and to Perth. It is a linear route that is used by both commercial and private traffic, so it is a very busy stretch of road. At the Robertson Drive intersection, there is a roundabout, and immediately past the roundabout as drivers head south is Bunbury Regional Hospital. It is a major access point, and that access involves crossing the four lanes of Bussell Highway. Further south is the intersection of Bussell Highway and Washington Avenue. That is a controlled intersection that provides access to the major southern suburbs of Bunbury—Usher and Withers—and is an end point for the route that takes tourists through the coastal side of Bunbury and south towards Busselton.

The next intersection, which again is a controlled intersection, is the major entrance to Dalyellup, one of the major southern suburbs just north of Capel. It is one of the growth areas of Bunbury and Capel. Around 6 000 people live in that suburb. Norton Promenade is the major entry and exit point to that suburb, generally with traffic flowing back north towards Bunbury. Sommerville Drive is a major route into College Grove. Around 2 000 to 3 000 people live in that suburb, and it is a major entry and exit point, again with the majority of local residents turning right to head towards Bunbury. Further south is Hastie Road, which is the major entrance to the Gelorup special rural area, and south of that is Harewood Road, which is the southern entrance to Dalyellup and is an uncontrolled intersection.

This stretch of road has a history of being a regional distributor road. However, over the past 10 years in particular, the growth of residential neighbourhoods in that 6.5-kilometre stretch of road has resulted in a considerable amount of local residential traffic. It is also a service road that provides access to both primary and high schools. However, there are very few pedestrian access ways or crossovers, and limited cycle pathways, and that causes potential conflict for all forms of traffic.

During the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2016, there was a total of 380 accidents in that area. Of those accidents, 212 caused major property damage, 86 were minor, 47 involved a requirement for medical treatment, and 31 required hospitalisation; and, unfortunately, there were four fatalities. The majority of those accidents occurred at the major intersections of Robertson Drive, with 70 accidents; Washington Avenue, with 31 accidents; Norton Promenade, with 29 accidents; and Harwood Road, with 14 accidents. That is an average of 76 traffic accidents a year, or more than one accident a week, and almost one death a year. That is, therefore, a serious area of risk.

This issue has been raised with me by a large number of people who live in the area. I presented a petition to this place last year with a request that speed limits in this area be re-examined. I understand the issue associated with having free-flowing traffic on a road that is a major regional distributor, but also the conflicts that are emerging with residential traffic in that area. It is a major concern for people who live in the area. It is a concern for the children who have to cross Bussell Highway to access the schools in the area. It is certainly also a problem for the number of cyclists who use that area. We know that the greater Bunbury area is growing. The south west region is growing in both freight and private vehicle movements. This area is also a major tourism route. We know that with this government's commitment to improve tourism numbers overall, the number of tourists who use this route is likely to increase, particularly flowing south to Busselton and Margaret River.

Bunbury is a major city that has been growing consistently. The issue of traffic movement and congestion around the City of Bunbury is reflective of that growth. There is a general requirement to look at traffic management issues in Bunbury as a whole. However, this particular grievance is about an area of Bussell Highway that has clearly been identified as a conflict zone for local residential traffic and through traffic heading north and south between Perth and the greater Bunbury area. Although the majority of fatalities on this road have related to the open road, there was a fatality at the Somerville Drive intersection, and that clearly highlights the importance of looking at that intersection in particular. Residents in College Grove have consistently raised that with me in my discussions with them. I am keen to make sure that we can provide residents with an effective reassurance about the future of that stretch of road. I would like to request that there be some form of analysis of the potential conflicts in that area and perhaps a safety audit to examine what would be the most appropriate mechanisms for dealing with the increasing number of road users, including pedestrians, vehicles and cycles, to see how we might improve treatments at key intersections to reduce the risk of people entering a major distribution road when they are travelling to and from home.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.00 am]: I thank the member for Bunbury for that grievance. He has been in contact with me and my office on this issue. Road safety is a big issue for everyone in the community, particularly in regional WA. It has been a focus of our government to see how much funding we can secure to put into regional WA. In the member for Bunbury's area, there are a number of big projects, in

particular the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, which can now proceed as a result of the work we have done and also our securing funds from the commonwealth on an 80–20 split. We are continuing to work with the commonwealth's Infrastructure Australia agency to get that project going as soon as possible. I know there has been a lot of discussion about routes and that continues, but we are very confident that we can continue with the planning for that project. I thank the member for his advocacy on that issue.

I appreciate the member's concern about this stretch of Bussell Highway. We know that it carries significant volumes of traffic. As the member outlined in his speech, there are a number of key intersections in that area. Of course, Main Roads Western Australia always has to try to balance the two competing wishes of the community. There are those people who travel along it to their destination, particularly those people who want to access that area, and a mix of other types of road users in that area, so it is a continual balance. There was some discussion when we reduced the speed limit on Indian Ocean Drive. Initially, there was significant criticism of that, but it seems to have worked well so far. It is always a continuing battle. I get a lot of correspondence, and a lot of issues are raised by people seeking different speed limits in areas and also about how we can improve the intersections for those who live in the local area and access Bussell Highway, as well as, of course, for those people who use it to get to their destination.

Specifically, the member has highlighted the crashes that have occurred at some key intersections, including at the Robertson Drive roundabout and at the intersections at Norton Promenade and Harewoods Road. He outlined the number of incidents and accidents that have occurred in that area over the last five years. My figures indicate that over 200 crashes have occurred along that six-kilometre section of Bussell Highway between Robertson Drive and Harewoods Road over the five-year period ending 31 December 2016. Given the concerns of the local community in particular, and the mixture of school students and other users of that road in that area, Main Roads will undertake a road safety review of this location. As part of this, it will look at a number of aspects of the road, including the road function, the traffic volumes, the different types of road users in that area, the roadside development that has occurred and continues to occur, the frequency and types of intersections, the number of crossovers, the reported crash data and the prevailing traffic speeds. I understand that Main Roads has started the inspection works and the monitoring. I hope to get a result. It has started some preliminary work and I hope to get the results of any review in the coming months. Once I get the results of that review, we can work together, member for Bunbury, to see how we can improve road safety in the regions. It is constantly a challenge, particularly in the member's area where there are key access points. People use those roads to access Busselton or further areas. There is also a growing community, with new families moving into the area. It is a constant challenge, particularly in the area that the member represents, and, of course, in the entire south west region.

I thank the member for his grievance. I thank him very much for the work he is doing in advocating on behalf of his Bunbury residents and his community. I hope to get that review done as soon as possible.