

Mr Tony O’Gorman; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Frank Alban;
Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr David Templeman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mrs
Michelle Roberts; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Tony Krsticevic

SCHOOL CROSSWALKS

Motion

MR A.P. O’GORMAN (Joondalup) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That the house condemns the government for its withdrawal of crossings that do not fit the warrant criteria for a type A crossing across the state, and for subsequently endangering the lives of many schoolchildren who use these crossings.

This is an issue that I have been following for what seems, funnily enough, about three years. It is interesting to note that yesterday was 6 September, the third anniversary of the election date of the Barnett government. This issue has come up time and again. That day was probably the worst day that has ever happened in this state. What we found out recently —

Mr C.J. Barnett: What a charming thing to say!

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: The Premier should ask the pensioners.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We’ll be asking the voters of Joondalup.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: The Premier can ask the voters of Joondalup. They have been asked twice, three times before, and the Liberal Party has got the same answer, and I have no doubt it will get the same answer again.

In the last few days, Hon Sue Ellery asked the minister representing the Minister for Police in the other place a question —

- (1) What criteria are used to determine a type A warrant?
- (2) What criteria are used for a type B warrant?
- (3) How many children’s crossings will have their crosswalk attendants withdrawn, and where are each of these crossings located?

Hon Robyn McSweeney gave the answer on behalf of the Minister for Police. Answers (1) and (2) outlined the criteria, and I am sure that most of us in this place would have a fair idea of what the criteria for a type A crossing is. Therefore, I will not go into detail in reading out answer (1). Answer (2) reads —

As of 3 August 2011, new processes are being implemented for type B crossings. They will be discussed at the next Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee meeting, to be held on 6 September 2011.

Answer (3) of the question outlines the schools and crossing sites that are to have type A crosswalks suspended. In Heathridge there was Poseidon Primary School, on Poseidon Road near Larkspur Park. In Kingsley, we had Goollelal Primary School in Moolanda Boulevard near Cadogan Street. There was Lockridge, in Altone Road near Morley Drive East; Padbury, near Gibson Avenue near Warburton Avenue, in the minister’s own electorate; in the member for Nollamara’s electorate, Flinders Street near Windemere Crescent; Kallaroo, I think that is the member for Ocean Reef’s electorate at the moment —

Mr A.P. Jacob: It stays in my electorate.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: It stays in his electorate; okay.

In Kallaroo, there is Springfield Primary School. There is Pacific Way, Beldon. On the list is also Wanneroo, with Quarkum Street near High Road; Kardinya, North Lake, near North Lake Road; Maddington; Balga, at Princess Road near Ullswater Place; Kalgoorlie; Kambalda; South Guildford; South Perth; and Lewis Jones Cross near Drummore Elbow. All up, about 18 school crossings will be affected.

Today, in answer to the member for Alfred Cove, the minister said that there would be another nine crossings. I query—the minister can respond when he gets up to speak—whether that is another nine school crossings on top of the 18, which therefore would make 27 all-up. Also in his response, the minister stated that he had now issued a moratorium on suspending crossings, and I would be interested to see whether that moratorium applies to all 27 school crossings that we know about at the moment, and whether those nine are additional to the 18 crossings we know about already as per this question on notice.

As I said, we know about the warrant criteria already. As I also said, this issue has been going on for some time. The issue goes right back to 19 February 2009 when I think the first letter was sent to the minister’s office by parents from Bambara Primary School. Indeed, we were out at the Bambara Primary School, and I am pleased to

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say that there is still the appetite to fight this out at the Bambara Primary School. This morning, about 10 to 12 parents and about 30 children showed up following a request to come out and fight to keep their school crossing guard. That is in the minister’s electorate. The last time this issue came up was shortly after the minister reinstated a crossing guard at North Woodvale Primary School after a request from the member for Kingsley. Following that, and after some publicity, the minister agreed to reinstate the crossing guards and apply a moratorium while he reviewed the matter. We have not heard the results of that review, but we have clearly seen that obviously the minister has gone past the review. The minister has not told us the results; he has not told us whether the criteria have changed, but we have seen that 18 school crossings, plus the nine that he spoke about during question time, are now coming under threat. I sincerely hope that minister has looked very closely at the criteria and the schools, and that he has made a decision to change the criteria to reflect that we have a school crossing guard at any school crossing where there is any danger of any child being hurt because of a conflict with a vehicle.

The Bambara Primary School has a very passionate parents and citizens association and there was a very passionate group of mostly mums present this morning who want to keep their crossing guard. They are very concerned that Alexander Road has become a rat road, and that they are seeing increases in traffic and speed on Alexander Road. When we were out there this morning, I took note and had a look for the orange flashing lights at that school but they were still not there. Such flashing lights have sprung up at a number of schools around the area. I have written on behalf of all the schools in my electorate to the Minister for Transport for those 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs to be erected at those schools that have conflict issues and have a fair amount of traffic on reasonably major roads in the area that cause a problem. I keep reflecting on the minister’s answer in question time today in which he said he had placed a moratorium on taking away crossing guards. I hope that this is just not a moratorium while we are putting media and political pressure on the minister, and that we are heading towards a new era in which I can tell the parents at Bambara Primary School, Beldon Primary School, Poseidon Primary School and all the other primary schools on this list upon which the minister has decided to put in a new criteria that those schools will not have to fight every year to maintain their crossing guards.

Beldon Primary School is on the corner of Gradient Way and Pacific Way in Beldon—two very major roads. Again, they turn into rat roads on which people who want to avoid traffic lights swing through the suburbs, sometimes at high speed, to try to get through without being held up at traffic lights. I wrote to the minister following the approach from the Bambara P&C back in February 2009, and I got a letter back from him on 21 July 2009. I think my letter went to the minister a bit earlier than that—around March, I think, when the P&C came to me. I cannot find the letter right now, but I wrote to the minister and he responded in July. The letter stated —

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding —

Essentially, the minister said in his letter —

The Western Australia Police have advised that the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee ... provides a consultative and decision-making forum for reviewing applications requesting Children’s Crossings within Western Australia ... The CC&RSC ... reviews current Children’s Crossings to ensure that they continue to meet the warrant criteria, infrastructure and safety standards.

... I am currently considering a number of recommendations relating to Children’s Crossings and have requested that all Type A crossings currently under review be retained until a decision can be made by Government. This measure has ensured that the status quo remains while the review is undertaken.

That was written in 2009. The review has, I assume, been completed. But we have not been made aware of the outcome and can only assume that it has changed nothing because 27 schools are still under threat of losing their crossing guard. Is the minister’s moratorium mentioned in question time today, a moratorium in perpetuity, so that these schools can no longer feel threatened by the loss of their school crossing guard, or is this a moratorium only while the minister reconsiders the review and hangs on until the pressure comes off and he can once again slip into these 27 schools and remove their crossing guards? Poseidon Primary School is on Poseidon Road, which is a busy through road. That school community has raised with me the necessity to have a manned or guarded crossing for the safety of the children at the school. Again, that school does not have the flashing 40-kilometre-an-hour signs either side of the crossing in Poseidon Road. I might say the same for the school in Beldon on Pacific Way and Gradient Way. Neither school has any indication other than the stationary signs.

Mr A.P. Jacob: What about Eddystone?

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Eddystone is not under threat of losing its crossing. Keep up here! We are talking about the schools that are to lose their crossings, not the ones that will maintain them.

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We are asking the minister to give a commitment today that those 27 schools—the 18 that I have mentioned and the nine the minister alluded to during question time—will not lose their crossing guards, not only while he considers the report he has been given, but also all the while we have children who need to walk to those schools. We encourage our children all the time. We want our children to walk to school. We do not want the parents driving them to school because it causes more traffic and more chaos around the schools. It is healthy for our children to walk to school. It is healthy for their parents to walk them to school. Minister, it is really important that we get this right once and for all. I know that the minister refers back to the previous government saying, “Well, you closed so many.” Yes, we probably did. I am not saying that it was right or that it was wrong.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Nor am I.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: I am however now saying that Western Australia is a very wealthy state and it costs —

Mr R.F. Johnson: But you have to criticise me and blame me for any that close now! You were saying that on the radio this morning.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: The minister has the reins at the moment. The school crossing committee can work only according to the policy direction the minister sets for it. The minister can change that policy direction. He can seek the extra funding. By my reckoning, it is about \$3.5 million worth of funding for the 461 school crossings.

Mr R.F. Johnson: How many?

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: My information is that there are 461 school crossings across the state.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Is that incorrect?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Not correct; not according to my information.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Well, tell us what you have.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No; you have your say. I want to listen to what you have to say. I heard you on the radio. I am dying to hear you again.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: The information I have is that there are 461 across the state, which equates to about \$3.5 million, when we work out that the guards attend the crossings for roughly one hour a day and they are paid roughly \$20 an hour, which makes it \$7 600 per school crossing. I worked that out based on 461 crossings, and I will stand corrected. If the minister tells me a different number, I can correct my calculation if I need to. However, we are talking about a pittance. In a \$23 billion state budget, we are talking about \$3.5 million to protect those people in our community who are the most vulnerable; that is, the young kids going to primary school who are still learning their road sense. At Bambara Primary School this morning, one parent related a story in which she saw some kids who were going to cross the road, but who, as soon as they spotted a crossing guard a couple of hundred metres up the road, altered their—I think the word she used was “trajectory”—route by which they were going to cross the road, and walked the extra few hundred metres to cross the road with the crossing guard. The crossing guards are a unique type of person. They are a unique group of people. They are people who get involved. They do not just walk the kids across the road. The ones who have been doing the job for a while know the names of most of the kids who cross with them. They form relationships; the children trust them and know that they are safe people to go to. The children know that the guards will get them across the road safely. These people provide a vital service. Most of them are retirees—as I think the minister alluded to on the radio this morning—who live close by and who do not want to travel five or six suburbs away to do an hour’s work in the morning and an hour’s work in the afternoon. Many of them—I think this was a change put in place during the term of the previous government—come from within the local community or very close to the suburb.

Mr R.F. Johnson: They do that whenever they can.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Yes, whenever they can. Obviously it is not practical all the time, but in most cases that is the way.

Therefore, by removing the 27 crossings, 27 staff will have to be redistributed. But there may not be a school in their area. The crossing guards from some schools—although I will not mention which particular ones—have told me that if their crossing goes, they will not continue in the job because it is not worth their while to travel the extra distance and all those sorts of reasons. When the minister stands to respond, I hope that he will clarify what he said earlier during question time, when he mentioned nine further school crossings on top of the 18.

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Mr R.F. Johnson: As I understand, there are nine further schools under consideration. That is the information that I have been given. However, I can tell you that the direction I am giving the committee is that no type A traffic wardens shall be taken away from their current schools.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Okay. Is that the 18 on this list and the nine the minister mentioned earlier today?

Mr R.F. Johnson: No schools will be without their traffic warden.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Until when?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Until some time in the future.

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: Some time in the future.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: Minister, that is good news. I will immediately ring the schools that have contacted me and say that the minister has said that there is a moratorium on those schools that have been under threat and they will now not lose their crossing guards. However, minister, we need to know for how long. We need to know if we will be back here next year at this time putting up the same, if you like, grievance, to try to force the minister’s hand again over the issue of schools losing their type A crossings. It is vitally important. We need to help our children walk to school. We need to give them safe routes to school, and having school crossing guards—a manned crossing—is the best way to do that.

DR J.M. WOOLLARD (Alfred Cove) [4.18 pm]: I congratulate the Minister for Police on his announcement today. In congratulating him I ask that the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee takes a close look at the criteria for crossings. The minister has been in this chamber on the many occasions that I presented to the former government petitions from the parents at St Benedict’s School. I acknowledge that the member for Midland, in her former role, came to St Benedict’s in 2004 when the previous government was first going to remove the crossing guards. She met with the parents, looked at the crossing and decided that it was not safe to take away the crossing guards. Unfortunately, when the member for Midland left that ministry, the new Minister for Police did not come out to look at the crossing. As I said during question time earlier today, that crossing sees 43 000 cars. There are just a few of the newer members in the chamber now, but many of the older members will remember the countless number of petitions that I presented to this house pleading with the former government to review the formula that was used to establish a children’s crossing. That formula stated that there must be a minimum of 20 students and 700 vehicle movements per hour. I told the former government on numerous occasions that St Benedict’s School might not have had the minimum of 20 students but it did not have 750 car movements either; it had thousands of car movements. Primary schoolchildren had to cross Canning Highway by themselves when the former government took away the crossing guard from that school. My office and I did a lot of research to find out where that formula originated, but we could not find it. Each crossing should be assessed based on the safety of the children who use the crossing. That crossing in my electorate was not safe after the terrible decision was made to take away the warden. The community tried to bring to the government’s attention the problems with that crossing. Each child at St Benedict’s School drew a picture of what losing that crossing would mean to them. A number of the drawings showed dead children on the road, including Bart Simpson. The children could see that removing the crossing guard was a tragedy waiting to happen, yet the former government took away that crossing guard. The government did not review the criteria used by the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What is the position now?

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: We now have traffic lights at that intersection. Every day 43 000 cars drive past that intersection. The former government—although not the member for Midland when she was the Minister for Police because she supported that school—decided to take away that crossing guard.

Mr E.S. Ripper: And you never got it back.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: We have traffic lights there now, thanks to the Liberal–National government.

Mr E.S. Ripper: So was it a political decision to put in those traffic lights for you as an Independent!

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The Liberal–National government acknowledged the needs of the children going to the school and that the crossing was used by not only children, but also elderly people. The elderly people would cross the road with the crossing guards first thing in the morning. When they came back from town in the afternoon, they would go when they knew that the crossing guard would be there, because the intersection is so unsafe. That is why I am very pleased that the Minister for Police has acknowledged that there are concerns and that the government has put on hold the removal of any type A and type B crossing wardens. We should look at

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who has responsibility for those wardens. Rather than the police having responsibility for traffic wardens, that responsibility should fall on local councils. The state government should fund local councils to provide that service to schools. If that were the case, whenever there was a problem it would be much easier for the community to lobby the local council rather than the state government.

Ms M.M. Quirk: They didn’t want it. The minister tried to palm it off to local government and they refused.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: Would the member support local councils taking over the responsibility for crossing guards?

Ms M.M. Quirk: It doesn’t matter what I think. What I’m saying is that local government doesn’t want it. The minister has tried to give it to them.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: It is a case of what is best for the community. The best thing for the community is ensuring that children are safe when they cross the road on their way to school.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Exactly, but the councils didn’t want it. The minister tried to handball it to them.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: The councils might not have wanted it, but what does the community want?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Will the member for Alfred Cove speak to the Chair, please.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: I am sorry, Mr Acting Speaker.

This is a very serious issue. When the type A crossing guard was removed, it took up a lot of police time and resources to look after that crossing. It costs a lot more in police time than it would cost for the council to employ someone as a crossing guard. I hope that the review of the criteria results in a review of the responsibility for crossing guards. I do not believe that should be handed over to councils. The councils did not want responsibility for crossing guards because they were worried that they would not be adequately funded. They have to be given an assurance that they would get the funding from the police budget that goes into training and paying for the wardens so that they would not be out of pocket. If that case were clearly put to them, I believe more councils would be receptive today than they were previously.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I put that to them. I gave a commitment that the funding would be transferred to them but, unfortunately, not enough local authorities were prepared to take on the role of managing the traffic wardens. That is a great shame for the reasons that you have outlined.

Dr J.M. WOOLLARD: If not all councils are happy to do that, why could the funding not be given to those councils that are happy to take on that role? The councils fear that they will not be given funding to provide traffic wardens. A pilot scheme could be developed so that the councils that are happy to take on this scheme could be funded. The other councils could then see how successful it is. I believe it would be very successful from a community perspective. Some councils are not always seen to act in the community’s interest, but I believe that councils would win brownie points from the local community for doing this because the local community would appreciate knowing that their children were safe as they went to and from school. I believe the local community would also appreciate having far more say in this matter if it were a local government responsibility rather than a state government responsibility.

I congratulate the minister on the stand that he has taken. It is important to assess the criteria that are used for type A and type B wardens. The old formula of a minimum of 20 students and 750 car movements does not have a grey area for 10 students and 1 500 cars or five students and 3 000 cars. We must look at whether a crossing is safe for our children to cross. In this day and age, often both parents work and therefore children are happy to make their own way to school. Even when there was a crossing guard for St Benedict’s, before the former Labor government removed him, parents would often accompany their children to cross that road because it was so busy and they felt it was too much responsibility on the crossing guard. We really have to look at the needs of children. Another thing that used to happen at St Benedict’s is that parents would drive their children to school. We want to encourage children to walk or cycle to school. We hear on a regular basis that children are not getting enough exercise, but what parent, if they are able to take their children themselves and know that they will be safer, would let their children go by themselves? Again, minister, it comes back to not all parents having the luxury of being able to take their children to school, and because of that we must ensure that at that time of the morning all of the routes and the major roads—where there are thousands of cars and lots of things happening—that children have to cross are safe. We know there have been fatal accidents around several schools, and not one member of this house wants to have a fatal accident occur at one of their schools.

I think the minister has made an excellent decision, and I look forward to seeing the results of whatever investigation is going on in relation to these crossing guards. I look forward to the minister presenting that

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information to the house, and I certainly hope that the old formula that has been used for the past decade is thrown out and a new, safer formula is brought in that will ensure the safety of children.

MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley) [4.32 pm]: I also wish to applaud the minister’s decision on the change to the school crossing traffic wardens. As he knows, I have regularly visited him and his office about this matter because I truly believe that school traffic wardens are a very simple and uncomplicated way of making sure that we provide a very safe way for our students to get to school. Not only are they part of the wonderful school community, but also they provide a wonderful connection from the community to the school.

Traffic wardens are an absolute treasure. Often, they are looking for just a little something to do in their life; they are keen to be involved with the school, and they do a wonderful job. But, unfortunately, as the member for Alfred Cove said, the criteria for having a traffic warden just do not always make sense, and yet the department is rigid in its criteria. Unfortunately, the department tends to come out and do its assessment at times when it probably should not. At my schools they did it when the Building the Education Revolution buildings were being done, and people were taking different routes and going around other ways altogether, so the department was not getting accurate readings on the criteria that it set. At the same time, it was very, very frustrating for the school because it knew what was going on and how difficult it was going to be.

I have been having regular discussions with the North Woodvale Primary School about traffic wardens. That school is on a curve, so it does not quite meet the criteria for the amount of traffic that comes through, and being on a curve actually does not fit the criteria for the school crossing committee, and yet it is really quite dangerous. The curve has bushes—the bushes do not belong to the school; they belong to another area altogether—and it is not very easy for a young child to step out. It might be better coming back the other way across the street, but certainly in one direction in particular it is very, very difficult. This school had been told that it was going to lose the manned crosswalk, so I will be delighted to get back to them. But that school was going through the frustrating part of saying, “Well, look, if we have to have a type B, we’ll do something about it”, and the school P&C got involved and all these other things were going on, but the school was still waiting. It could not get anything out of the school crossing committee as to what it could and could not do. This is an example of the whole community getting involved, which I think is terrific; there is an over-55s small complex across the road on Chichester Drive, and a couple of the gentlemen from that village decided that they would get involved. They were prepared to get trained up and be the traffic wardens for that crossing on Chichester Drive at North Woodvale. Members can see that there are people who see that involvement with the schools as being very positive, and also when I have spoken to those school traffic wardens, they get so much joy and satisfaction out of the work they do. The children know them personally; when they greet them every morning and every afternoon, it is like another part of the school community. So, they get a lot of out of it.

The parents trust students being crossed over to school. Like the member for Alfred Cove, I was also going to mention that we want students to walk to school and do a little extra physical activity. If the parents know there is somebody they can trust at that crossing, then they are more likely to let their son or daughter walk to school. That is one of those things that really is important for the future.

I also have another crossing that has been under review, and I will also be very pleased to tell the school about it, because we cannot always get the traffic to fit in with the assessment.

[Interruption.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member for Girrawheen, you realise you are not allowed to have your mobile phone on in the house.

Mr R.F. Johnson: She ignored you!

The ACTING SPEAKER: She has to come back!

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I also just want to make another suggestion. The member for Alfred Cove talked about local government taking control; I hope that the committee could look at the school taking control—whether it is the education department or the school community—and whether those funds could be allocated to the school, and the school then allocates them, because the school actually knows the people who are the traffic wardens. Now, if the traffic warden cannot make it, invariably someone from the school takes over. I think that is a much more localised outcome and I think it is probably easier to manage, and it gives the school and community greater responsibility for that. So that is one that I certainly hope will be considered.

Dr J.M. Woollard: Member, will you take an interjection?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I am sure I can.

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Dr J.M. Woollard: In relation to the school taking over, I have discussed that with schools. Are you meaning the school take over the funding to employ someone?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: No, no.

Dr J.M. Woollard: Because the principal and the staff do not want responsibility for the crossings, but they might be happy for employees of the school, or people who they employ, to do that.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I think if the minister was prepared to send the money to local government, if it could go to the education department and to the school, so the school could manage that—like they do with school gardeners and others—those additional people could become part of the school community. I think the member may find there are other ways of managing who does what. It could be a good way that they could work things through. That is one suggestion that I would certainly hope could be given serious consideration. I am sure it probably has been given some consideration, but I would certainly hope that it could be given some additional consideration at this time.

I want to thank the minister for this decision, and I would also like to acknowledge the former and present Minister for Transport, because I think the LED school speed signs are also a wonderful way to ensure additional safety at schools. I have certainly seen that in a couple of through streets in my electorate. Most people have the best intention to slow down to 40 kilometres an hour at the school sign, but I think all of us can understand that occasionally we might just skip it, or there might be a mess up with pupil-free days or some of those other things. I have received very, very favourable comments about the LED signs from many people, not just parents going to the school, but others who have to travel those roads every day. They say that just having that LED sign is very well received by the community. That is not to take away from the traffic warden, but, together, we have a much, much safer road system for our students crossing the road.

Just briefly, I want to thank and applaud the minister for making another decision on this, and I look forward to having this resolved permanently very, very soon.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Before we go on, I remind members that they have to turn off their mobile phones before they come into the chamber. I am sure that the member for Girrawheen will learn a lesson from that.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont — Leader of the Opposition) [4.39 pm]: I support this motion. The motion has put pressure on the minister. After months and months of stonewalling, we have had at least a partial result for the communities that have been hoping that their children will be protected by staffed crossings outside their schools. The Minister for Police has to take responsibility for this whole issue. In June, he was asked by my colleague about a school crossing that is on the border of our two electorates. This crossing is on Great Eastern Highway. It enables people from South Guildford in my electorate to cross Great Eastern Highway, walk across the bridge over the Helena River and go to Guildford Primary School. We have to think about the circumstances. This is Great Eastern Highway. It is an industrial area and there is heavy transport traffic going to and from major industrial establishments. It is a very dangerous road. I live in Rivervale. As an adult, I do not like to walk across Great Eastern Highway. What we are expecting, apparently, is that children, with their much less developed sense of traffic dangers, will cross Great Eastern Highway unassisted. The government can do two things to protect those children: it can maintain the staffed crossing at Great Eastern Highway or it can construct a footpath on the hills side of the bridge over the Helena River so that the children can cross the Helena River and use the staffed crossing further up the road outside Guildford Primary School —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: In my electorate.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: — in the electorate of the member for Midland. It is absolutely outrageous to expect those children to cross Great Eastern Highway unassisted, yet that is what was going to happen until some pressure went on the minister today. In response to questions from the member for Midland on 10 August 2011, the minister simply said —

The Traffic Warden is due to be withdrawn.

(a) This crossing does not meet the criteria for a Type A warrant.

He further took responsibility for establishing those criteria by saying —

I have endorsed the Best Practice Review of Children’s Crossings in Western Australia and within that have approved the criteria for a Type A and Type B children’s crossing. In this case the children’s crossing at this location does not meet the criteria. The P&C of the school may wish to apply for a Type B crossing.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 7 September 2011]

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Mr Tony O’Gorman; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Frank Alban; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr David Templeman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Tony Krsticevic

When asked about this issue and presented with the evidence, the minister refused to budge. He was sent an email by a parent from Queens Road, South Guildford. The minister again stonewalled. He said to this parent —

The Western Australia Police have advised that the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee has determined that the crossing does not meet the Type A warrant criteria in this instance. In 2009 the government initiated a Best Practice Review for Children’s Crossings within Western Australia, which confirmed that the warrant criteria are best practice. I have endorsed the findings of this review.

At that stage, the minister was forcing the South Guildford parents in my electorate to apply for a review of the decision by appealing to the committee. It would seem that, with a bit of extra pressure applied today, the South Guildford crossing has been protected—at least for the time being. What I want to know is: for how long will these crossings be protected? Is this a decision for a month? Is it a decision for three months? Is it a decision for a year? Is it a decision for the rest of this parliamentary term? It was very unclear from the minister’s announcement whether this is a temporary decision or a permanent decision. Here is my fear: the minister will wait until the hue and cry in the community dies away and he will wait until the protest stops, and then a little later, by stealth, crossing after crossing, he will have the staffing withdrawn. I want the minister to say in this house today for how long this decision will hold. Perhaps the minister could say by way of interjection for how long this decision will hold.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I will give my speech in a moment.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: So the minister is not prepared to confirm in answer to a direct question that this decision will hold.

Mr R.F. Johnson: This is not question time. This is your speech; you give it and then I will give my speech. I wasn’t going to interject on you, because I would like the same courtesy when I get up. I doubt I will get it.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: No, the minister will not because he has not performed in a satisfactory manner and he does not deserve an interjection-free speech.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I don’t think you perform in a satisfactory manner. I think you’re abysmal, quite frankly, and I’ll come to that in my speech.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the House!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: What we get from this minister is a refusal to be accountable, a refusal to take responsibility and a bumbling, bullying attempt to silence the opposition. It staggers me that the minister can be both bumbling and bullying at the same time, but this minister manages to achieve what I would have thought was impossible!

These crossings involve insignificant amounts of money. A traffic warden costs the state \$380 a fortnight. It is a trivial amount of money. What the minister was intending to do before a bit of pressure went on him today was to save no more than a quarter of a million dollars a year in a budget of \$23 billion. The government has to think about priorities. The Premier is spending \$27 million on his palace, yet the minister wants to save a quarter of a million dollars a year by withdrawing traffic wardens from school crossings. It is shameful. The Premier makes a decision to locate a football stadium at Burswood when there is expert advice that the cost of building it at that site will be \$300 million more than the cost of building it at alternative sites; meanwhile, this minister tries to save a quarter of a million dollars a year, at most, by withdrawing traffic wardens. Where are the government’s priorities? Where is the credibility in the community for that sort of approach? The minister has tried to deny responsibility. He has tried to say, “I set the criteria. The Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee does the rest.” That has been his position for months and months: “Don’t ask me to take responsibility. Don’t hold me to account. Don’t get me to make a decision. I’ve made my decision and the rest is up to the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee.” Today we have seen that that position has just been dishonest, because today we have seen that the minister can take responsibility. Today we have seen that the minister is accountable, because the minister has overridden the decisions of the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee and put in place a moratorium. For ever after this minister will be responsible for every children’s crossing decision. That is what he has done today. He has completely removed the shield he has had. For ever after, he will be held to account by every member on both sides of this place for every decision on children’s crossings. He has shown that he is the minister and he has the power to change these decisions if he chooses to exercise it.

What I am really concerned about is that this is just a ruse. Today the Labor Party and the community put on a bit more pressure. We went to a school in the minister’s electorate and we joined with the parents at that school and protested about the minister’s refusal to maintain a warden at their crossing. Faced with the prospect of more bad publicity, the minister has caved. But how long has he caved for? Is this just media management? Is this just spin? Or is this a concrete, substantial decision that will last for at least the rest of this parliamentary term? That

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will be the test. If the minister cannot stand and say, “That’s it for the rest of this parliamentary term”, then the minister is revealed and exposed as merely engaging in desperate political management at the end of a very bad month in his portfolios. We will be listening very closely, minister. If he cannot say that these decisions will hold for all these schools for the rest of this parliamentary term, we will maintain our community campaign until the minister concedes again and adopts that position.

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [4.50 pm]: I would like to make a very small contribution. I thank the Minister for Police for listening when I went to see him about the issue, particularly the one in South Guildford. The minister not only listened but also made a positive decision. I acknowledge that Guildford Primary School is not in my electorate, but I was lobbied fairly heavily. As the minister knows, my wife is on the school’s P&C, and my youngest daughter, Lara, attends that school. Also, as a former councillor of the City of Swan, I was aware of the issues surrounding the traffic problems at the school crossing. This is not just the beginning. There have been other safety issues for students in my electorate, and this is particularly in my electorate. Well done, minister—the opposition can whinge and moan, but it was a good decision. The minister listened; that is what a minister does. He has taken action which is fantastic. That is on top of what this minister has already done. They are not the only safety issues in the state of Western Australia. In my electorate of Swan Hills, as the minister would know through another department in our government, there was an extremely serious issue, not unlike the one in Guildford, involving the Great Eastern Highway. Great Eastern Highway has tremendous traffic problems. On Great Northern Highway, through the Swan Valley, is the Upper Swan Primary School. Parents face the same drama morning and afternoon. Trucks travel through that portion of the electorate at 80 kilometres an hour. Parents had to negotiate not only crossing the road both morning and afternoon but also driving to that school. With the help of the Minister for Transport, we managed to get a redesigned entry to the school and redesigned parking, and also LED lights, which have been a fantastic success.

This is not the first positive our government has had on the safety of students. Considerably further to that: Chittering Road, which faces Bullsbrook District High School, what did we do there? Did we waffle, as the opposition does? We put another one in! We put in a second one! In my electorate, I did not just get one LED light, I got a second one, which is also on a main road. What a terrible government we are! Not only did we put in two LED lights, we put a third one in on Toodyay Road outside Gidgegannup Primary School. What a terrible government we have been! I thank the minister for listening and for the decision he has taken. I am sure that the students at Guildford Primary School, in particular, will be grateful for the minister’s decision.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Nollamara) [4.53 pm]: I, too, rise to support the motion. I do that because yesterday I was in this house putting in a petition to save the crossing guard at Our Lady of Lourdes School on Flinders Street in Nollamara. Flinders Street is a very busy street. The school sits virtually on the corner of Morley Drive. Often what happens on the corner of Morley Drive and Flinders Street is people come around that corner, quite blindly, into the school zone. It is very quick into that part because the school sits right on the corner. It is clearly a priority area for traffic concern for schools because, without any request from me or the school, it received a solar 40-kilometre-an-hour lit-up sign. Clearly it has been acknowledged as being a very dangerous part of the road.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Were you pleased to have that sign?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The school was very pleased with the sign. It was not very pleased when its crossing guard was taken, clearly.

Mr R.F. Johnson: When was that?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Our Lady of Lourdes, which is on Flinders Street in Nollamara—in the list the minister has given us, it is on Flinders Street, Nollamara, near Windemere Crescent. That is next to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You have not lost the warden yet.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Not yet.

Mr R.F. Johnson: And you will not.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The parents will be very pleased to hear that.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Good.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I want to put on the record that the member for Alfred Cove raised a very important point. I do not understand how calculations are made in terms of that. If the City of Stirling traffic surveys undertaken in June 2011 indicated an average week-day traffic flow of 13 630 vehicles per day, this is a one-lane road with higher residential density on either side, and the school and a church. It included 6 640 vehicles

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travelling north and 6 990 vehicles travelling south. Basically, each side is as bad as the other. The eighty-fifth percentile speed was found to be about 60.5 kilometres in a 60-kilometre-an-hour zone. People are driving very quickly. There are traffic lights at the corner where the school is. By comparison, two schools—which also have crossing guards and we are grateful for that—are on two-lane roads; one is Nollamara Avenue near Nollamara Primary School and the Steiner school. It carries 8 420 vehicles per day. Remember that the flow on Flinders Street was 13 630, and Ravenswood Drive carries approximately 10 990 vehicles per day—that is adjacent to St Gerard’s Primary School on Ravenswood Drive—both of which need school crossing guards; there is no question they were going to have their school crossing guard taken. I suppose it was a completely confusing situation when the principal and the school P&C contacted my office and asked whether crossing guards were being taken from them. Honestly, it was with a sense of absolute astonishment more than anything else. I know what Flinders Street is like—how could they possibly take the crossing guard from there? That would be madness for those children.

The minister himself said that the crossing and children’s safety is paramount. I understand there is a report in the minister’s office with respect to road crossings. I was advised of it; I do not know where I have heard that. I tried to look for it. The only report I can find is a report of the Select Committee on Road Safety in 1996, which I know was 15 years ago because my son was born in 1996. Basically, they talk about school crossings. They recommended that the use of wardens and guard-controlled crossings be retained and extended as appropriate to schools that have voluntary wardens. It refers to the importance of that. I understand the minister has another report; I am not aware of its contents. I am interested to hear about it when the minister stands to talk about this. In terms of when the assessments were done: on 8 April an assessment was conducted in the afternoon, 15 kids and 12 other walkers, there are bus stops all around, people are using it as well, and the traffic was 1 163. On 11 March, in the morning, 17 kids plus 22 other walkers or cyclists, with traffic of 1 322. On 1 December, in the morning, 22 kids and 14 other walkers and cyclists, which is 1 158. I understand that of the traffic flow of 1 158, 53 were heavy vehicles. On 8 December, in the afternoon, there were 10 kids and 15 other walkers, and 999 vehicles. On average, 30 people used the crossings at the times dealt with. There were lots of people and lots of traffic. We have to be careful about how we fix one problem, because it can cause another. In 2008 and 2009, the school was inundated with complaints from surrounding residents about parents who would park across the road, get out of their cars, walk to the crossing, cross the road and go into the school to pick up their kids. The residents struck up this campaign and got rangers from the City of Stirling to come out on a regular basis. Rangers and angry residents were going into the school, so the school designed a solution. The school asked the church that sits behind it to open its gates into its car park so that parents could drive up the road, turn left behind the church and go around the back to the church car park. The school got rid of some fencing and any obstacles so that parents could then drive onto the school grounds into a bitumen playground and pick their kids up. They created a Kiss ‘n’ Ride system. Parents could drive through a different exit back out onto the road.

To deal with the problem of the residents not wanting parents to park across the road and then walk across with the school crossing guard, by the end of 2009 the school introduced this Kiss ‘n’ Ride system, which reduced the number of children crossing Flinders Street. The school did not reduce the numbers very markedly compared with the 22 that is required. About 16 or 17 kids use the crossing, but when we combine the number of kids with the number of adults crossing the street, the average is 30. Clearly, the primary school wanted to deal with the issues of the residents and did not want to cause undue traffic hazards with people coming onto roads and parking in residential streets. However, the school then found itself not meeting the criteria for a crossing guard even though the criteria should be about safety and the busyness of the street. I welcome the minister’s decision.

As parent Lee-Ann Clements recently said in the *Eastern Suburbs Reporter*, it is just madness —

Traffic on Flinders Street is crazy at the best of times.

Given that we encourage kids to walk to school and given that they need to do it safely, the Flinders Street crossing guard is paramount and absolutely needed. I welcome the minister’s confirmation that the primary school will not lose its crossing guard. I concur with the Leader of the Opposition that the minister needs to say that that is a firm commitment for the rest of this government’s term. In saying that, the member for Mount Lawley might want to raise the fact that Coolbinia Primary School lost its crossing guard in the last round.

I know the Coolbinia crossing, because when I drop my son at school in Mt Lawley, I come over that hill. It is hard to go down that big hill and make sure I hit 40 kilometres an hour. Kids are everywhere. A lot of kids walk to school in that area. There is a parent walking bus. The minister may be able to save these crossing guards, but there are primary schools which are not on that list and which have lost their crossing guards, and kids are still having safety problems. I hope that members such as the member for Mount Lawley raise that issue with the minister and have that crossing reinstated. That crossing at Coolbinia is a really important crossing for those kids. Kids need to walk safely to school and we need to encourage them to walk to school. We need very

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practical and reasonable things that are merit based, not ledger based. We need people to go out and see the reality of the situation and to make sure our kids can cross safely and access our schools safely in a manner that is best for them and the school community.

MR P.T. MILES (Wanneroo) [5.04 pm]: I am in a different situation; the previous government took the crossing guard away from one of the most important areas in Wanneroo. That decision affects Wanneroo Primary School and St Anthony’s School. I had kids from St Anthony’s in here today for lunch. That occurred under the previous government and the previous member; I guess I am now in this place through the lack of funding for this road.

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: Yes, we are a much better government, especially when it comes to road safety.

Ms M.M. Quirk: You gave up when you went to the Minister for Transport.

Mr P.T. MILES: No; after only a few months, the previous government took away the crossing guard on Dundobar Road and Wanneroo Road in the south side of Wanneroo. The previous government failed to deliver; that is why I am here.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: I have huge population growth—some 32 000 voters.

To come back to road safety, we already know that the previous government took away the crossing lady on Wanneroo Road. To some extent, I agree with that decision. That road has 41 000 traffic movements a day. We have just done a targeted campaign and we are putting in a new road safety crossing at that particular point. The intersection of Dundobar Road and Wanneroo Road will now have a major upgrade to its lights and have a four-way crossing point, as opposed to a one-way crossing point. At the moment, St Anthony’s School takes its kids down Dundobar Road and helps them over the Wanneroo Road crossing because it is such a dangerous point. After speaking with the Minister for Road Safety, we came up with a couple of solutions that involved not only his department but also Main Roads Western Australia. Literally today I received the leaflets that will go into our local paper and they say “success”. I thank the minister for his help. We will get some improved traffic flow and some safer crossings at which our children can cross.

The other crossing that I need to point out is at the Joondalup Drive and Mistletoe Drive intersection in Banksia Grove. This has also been quite a difficult crossing. A crossing guard is on that particular road. To be honest, it is quite dangerous for this particular crossing guard; she is only little. She is only about four-foot something and she has to stop garbage trucks and all sorts of things on Joondalup Drive.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: Ferocious!

Fortunately, the federal government paid for some upgrades along that road and the state government will also fund some upgrades. We will have another set of lights at which people can cross that road, which will help this lady get these kids to and fro. The primary school is in the old part of Banksia Grove but most of the kids live in the new part of Banksia Grove. Until the new school is built in 2013–14, kids will still have to cross this very major road, which is the only way out of town when heading up to Bullsbrook. That is the uniqueness of Wanneroo; it has four major thoroughfares leading out of it—Wanneroo Road, Neaves Road, Joondalup Drive and Gnangara Road. There are crossing guards all the way through there, but from time to time we need to exchange crossing guards for lighted intersections with proper access for our kids to get across.

I will provide a further example of how this government helps with road safety. Through Minister Johnson, we got some \$18 000 for the driver-reviver caravan for the local council to use. As everybody knows, driver-reviver caravans provide tea and coffee for people who are tired, especially those people coming down Wanneroo Road from trips up north. People can pull over by Yanchep and get cups of tea or coffee and biscuits. Without those sorts of funding arrangements through the minister, we would not be providing safer roads in our areas.

Some 500 residents live in the Lake Joondalup lifestyle village, and they have never been able to get out of their village safely. It is a bad design. It is nobody’s fault; it is just the circumstances of growth through the area. We have had to seriously look at the fact that some people in there are legally blind and cannot cross Wanneroo Road. Again, road safety comes into play. Two ministers had a meeting about it, and we have come up with a solution whereby again we are putting in some lights and we are putting in a proper accessway for people to

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cross that road and be able to access both sides of Wanneroo Road. It is a win–win situation all the way around. Therefore, this motion condemning the government for taking away crossing guards is quite absurd. The member for Riverton is right. This government has done far more for road safety under this minister than the previous government did with either of the two ministers that it had.

MR A.J. WADDELL (Forrestfield) [5.10 pm]: I rise to support this motion also. One of the schools that had a crossing that was under threat was East Maddington Primary School, which borders my electorate. The deputy principal of that school, Pat, whom we spoke to, expressed some concern that the crossing would in fact be closed. It is fair to say that there has been a reduction in the number of crossings at that place over the years. However, that brings into question the criteria that we use for assessing whether a crossing is necessary. Put simply, I think we need to take into consideration the ages of the children involved. Some roads in my electorate are very busy, but they are being crossed predominantly by high school students, and I would say that they are far less at risk than schoolchildren who use a crossing and who are predominantly in the younger age group of six to 10 years. Yet I do not believe that the criteria take into consideration the nature of the children who will be crossing the road at these places.

That brings me to one of the key points that I was hoping to make tonight in this debate; that is, we have a motion that has arisen as a result of some imminent closures of crossings. Clearly, it seems that a process within the department triggered the decision to review the number of crossings and the amount of traffic at those crossings and to determine whether those crossings are still viable. There will certainly be a lot of argument about whether each of those crossings was viable. However, it raises the question: where is that automatic process for those areas that do not have crossings?

I will talk about the suburb of High Wycombe, for instance, which is at the northern point of my electorate. It has three primary schools—Matthew Gibney Catholic Primary School, which is a private Catholic school; High Wycombe Primary School; and Edney Primary School. It is an area that is growing at great pace. New housing developments are being built. Literally every month a new sign seems to go up, showing that there is going to be a new development at one spot or another. The suburb is intersected by a very busy highway—it is not even a highway; it is Kalamunda Road. Heavy truck transport tears down that road. My office is on one side of that road, so I see this traffic every day.

Kalamunda Road is the road that I, as a child, crossed every day on my way to High Wycombe Primary School. I lived on the other side of Kalamunda Road to the primary school. In those days, High Wycombe Primary School was the only primary school in that suburb. There are now three primary schools. Therefore, one would expect that, with the increased urban infill and all the additional housing that has gone into that area, and the fact that there are three primary schools, there would be greater demand for crossings. In fact, the crosswalk that I used in the 1970s to cross that particular road has been closed for some 10 years now. There are no traffic lights and there is no intersection or anything else that is controlled in any way that would allow children—there are literally thousands who live on the other side of Kalamunda Road—to cross the road to get to where all the schools are, which is on the southern part of Kalamunda Road. I have been approached by the primary schools—Matthew Gibney Catholic Primary School, Edney Primary School and High Wycombe Primary School—about how they can go about getting a crosswalk attendant onto that particular intersection. It should be kept in mind that that road does not have a school situated dead on it, but a lot of children cross it. Therefore, we are trying to get those three schools together and to put together a submission to try to convince the department to put a new crossing at that place. However, this is a proactive effort that the parents and citizens associations of the schools are making themselves. No automatic process was fired that said, “Hang on a second. We have all these primary schools in this area and we have these new populations popping up. Do you think somebody ought to go down there to see whether there is an actual problem?” The P&Cs certainly did not know how to go about doing it. It is only because I attend those schools regularly that they said, “Hey, do you know how to go about getting a crossing guard in our area?” I think it probably shows a bit of a hole in our system.

Two weeks ago I was reminded very much of the crossing that I used in the 1970s when I was contacted by High Wycombe Primary School because it is having its fiftieth anniversary. Its fiftieth anniversary celebration is being organised by one Aileen Moore. I spoke to this woman and she told me about how she had been involved in the school community for some time and was trying to get as many former students as possible involved in it. I said that in fact I was a former student and she said, “Really?” I said yes, and she said, “Well, you might have known me. I used to run the crosswalk across Kalamunda Road.” Suddenly I realised that Aileen Moore was not Aileen Moore; it was Mrs Moore, because as a child that is the only way I knew how to refer to her. She was certainly an element of sunshine in my day. I bring my comments back to the motion, because I want to let people know that crosswalk attendants are more than just crosswalk attendants. Mrs Moore was someone who cared deeply about the children. Mrs Moore would assist a child who had been hurt on the way home, or if there was some

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problem, she would identify it. She would often go out of her way to make contact with the school or with a parent if she felt that something was happening to a child which either the school or the parent did not know about and which she felt they should know about. She was a complete treasure to our community and had a huge impact. Aside from the number of lives she would have saved helping children cross the road, she probably intervened in the lives of a number of people in a very positive way in the years that she was there. She was an absolute treasure. It pleased me that she was organising that event because it gave me an opportunity to stand in front of many generations of the school community and say, as I am saying in this place, what an amazing human being she was and how much she had contributed to our community.

I think that the whole crossing guard question is a greater one. It is about enriching our communities; it is about making the roads on which our children walk safe; it is about knowing that adults along the way are keeping those children safe. That is far more important than the formula regarding the number of cars that go by a particular spot versus the number of feet that have to cross that road. It is a far, far richer question than that. I think that we all need to put some effort into thinking about how we can revise this model, how we can fund it in a positive way and how we can throw away some of the ridiculous things that we spend money on so that we can put money into, rather than cut back on, crossing guards. If we can ensure that there are more of them and that they are adding to the enrichment of our community and keeping our children safe, we as a society will benefit.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [5.18 pm]: This motion was moved by the member for Joondalup, who is a good friend of mine. He is a good man, the member for Joondalup; a fine man—a stout man, they say, but he is a fine man. The minister is AWOL as usual. There he is; he is at the back of the chamber. The motion that the member for Joondalup has moved in this house today is an important one. I think it is important that we take the opportunity to recognise the elements within our communities and within our neighbourhoods that, at relatively low cost, provide such an integral part of the safety and welfare of our children, as the member for Forrestfield highlighted, in regard to our school crossing guards and school crossings in general. I think many of us in this place remember the good old days when we walked to school; we walked to my school, Avonvale Primary School in Northam. If we did not walk to school, we rode our bikes. In those days there were probably only a few cars on the road! Not really; no. In those days, in the 1970s —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I may need to seek your protection, Madam Acting Speaker; I am being attacked!

Mr R.F. Johnson: I remember walking to school once every three days because my two brothers and I had only one pair of shoes between us!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I could say that the effects of that are shown in this house sometimes by the Minister for Police’s behaviour; however, I would not say that!

One of the sad things about population growth and when communities expand is that parents, understandably, want to ensure that their kids are safe, and that is absolutely understandable.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: It is the helicopter parent syndrome. By doing that, in the end they make their child’s life probably more dangerous because the kid doesn’t learn to take a risk or make his own judgements.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes. I think it is very sad. Some on my side have accused me of going through a period over the last few months of being right wing. I spoke on a bill a few weeks back and said that everyone has gone soft, that we are wrapping everyone up in cotton wool and that we are not allowing children to experience climbing trees and building cubbies on vacant blocks or going down the creek like we used to in Northam. We would go off down to the creek for almost the whole day, and the only time we came home was if we were hungry.

Mr J.E. McGrath: These days you probably wouldn’t come home; that’s the problem.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is exactly right; that is the sad thing. We now have a society in which, in our quest to continue to make our kids safe, we limit very much the real experiences that any child should experience in their lives, and that includes walking or riding their bikes to school and that sort of thing.

One way we can try to, if not maintain what some might consider to be an old-fashioned approach, at least allow kids to develop the skills that they need to develop as they grow up is to ensure that we create safe routes to school. That is where planning is so critical, because whether it is local councils or planners, at the end of the day, as we develop any new suburb, we should be asking how we will allow the people, particularly the kids, who will live in this suburb or in this new greenfields site, to traverse where they have to go safely. It always amazes me that some of the parks that are created in some of these new subdivisions now are either in the wrong place or on the worst bit of land that there is. They are a sterile environment, and are not always safe for kids to

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get to anyway. I think the key is ensuring that safe routes to schools are created. Integral in that is the role of crossing guards and safe crossings. I know that the minister has taken a bit of a pounding of late; he has been pounded every day he has been here. We pounded him last week and we have pounded him this week, and he looks like he is suffering from an intense pounding! In question time today he was quite remarkable. The minister almost did one of those things like a flat bag that H.G. Nelson and the other fellow do. The minister did many backflips in question time, and landed there and did a flat bag at the end of it by saying that now he has suspended any crossing closures at this stage; the minister has suspended them.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Yes.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister did that 18 months ago; he announced that 18 months ago. My understanding is that he announced as part of a review that he was suspending any closures 18 months ago. I think there is a press release that someone I am sure will highlight —

Mr R.F. Johnson: I think you’ll find I did it a lot earlier than that.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: Like July 2009.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, it was July 2009. It is almost like *deja vu* here in that respect.

Mr R.F. Johnson: So would you prefer me not to issue the direction that I have done today; are you saying that?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, but it is a bit sad. It reminds me of what happened to the Minister for Culture and the Arts when he was exposed for cutting funding to libraries. And I know that the member for Riverton got lots of pressure from his local library, because we heard about it; the staff there told us about it. We had a motion on the books to debate it and that morning—it was quite remarkable—the Minister for Culture and the Arts quickly and hastily convened a press conference or an event down in Riverton with the member for Riverton to suddenly backflip and say, “No, no; now we’re not going to do that funding cut.” That is an example. Of course, we will claim credit for this, as is our right and privilege; we will claim credit for the fact that we have brought the Minister for Police to account.

Mr F.A. Alban: You’re a day late; you could have done it yesterday.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, because today is private members’ business. The member has his days wrong. Duffy, you have got your days wrong; you have got to get your days right!

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The member for Mandurah referred to the member next to me by something other than the name of his seat. It is unparliamentary and I would ask the Acting Speaker to correct the member for Mandurah.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Thank you, members! Member for Mandurah, I think you really should withdraw.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I affectionately call the member for Swan Hills “Duffy” and he knows that.

Mr F.A. Alban: I convincingly tried not to call you a name! Everyone is on the edge because you are out of order. You’re more likely to be called a name than I am!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If the member for Swan Hills is offended by me calling him “Duffy”, I withdraw and I apologise.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: At the end of the day, the seriousness of the matter is that as the Perth metro area continues to expand as we are going through a phase of urban infill, putting more and more people in high-density populations, this whole issue of safety for everybody, particularly the safety for children, will become even more important, and how we create safe corridors and safe routes to schools will become even more critical. The minister has suspended the closing down of crossings. But now in the minister’s thinking about where to from here, the whole issue of ensuring how to make it safe for kids to get to and from school, which is essential, needs to be integrated into the planning. I know that the minister has grappled with the problem of who should have the responsibility for crossing guards. The minister knows and I know that the police do not want it and that local government does not want it. Earlier this year I think I raised with the minister in this place—or I wrote him a letter—the example of a crossing in my electorate on Lakes Road, which is a very busy road that is becoming increasingly busy. Unfortunately, the crossing guard had left, and the regime of training up someone else had taken two or three weeks before we could get someone permanently into that place. During that two to

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three-week period we were in a bit of a hiatus. I had parents coming to me saying that they would do it, but they were not legally protected to take on that responsibility. Each day I went down there in the morning, and for about three or four days in a row no-one was there to allow those kids to cross the road safely. I rang the superintendent at the time and he quite understandably said that the police would make it a priority but could not guarantee to be there. And nor could they. In fact, they were not able to guarantee to be there and they were not able to be there. However, we even had parents who wanted to act as crossing guards and one morning I actually escorted kids across the road before realising that I was essentially exposing myself legally if something happened.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I took some kids across the road because no-one else was there—no crossing guard, no policeman or policewoman. However, in escorting three or four kids across the road, I realised that I had exposed myself to a legal —

Several members interjected.

Ms J.M. Freeman: It is the wrong word. I had made myself vulnerable —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Well I had! But okay, that is your minds going there! I had put myself in a position in which I could have been legally liable. Something might have happened to the kids as we crossed—a car might have come through and cleaned up me or them, or some cars might have run into each other. It was risky. We did not have any flags. I realised, when crossing the road, that I could not keep doing it.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You did not have the right equipment.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Exactly! And I was unauthorised. I realised that straight away. However, Lakes Road is a busy road. At the time, people were still using it to get onto the new Perth–Bunbury highway. The incident highlighted that the Riverside Gardens–Greenfields area, although initially a residential area with a hospital, has, over time, developed into a thoroughfare that is quite a commercial strip, yet the Foundation Christian College is right there and three or four hundred metres down the road from the crossing is the state primary school—Riverside Primary School.

I know that the minister has grappled with the problem of who takes responsibility for school crossings. In my honest opinion—many do not like it—it is the responsibility of local councils. In my view, it is the responsibility of local councils. Local councils sprout on about the need to nurture and to encourage communities and about how they want to build vibrant communities and how they want to ensure children and families are valued, but as soon as we say to them, “What about taking school crossings?” they say, “Nah, don’t want to touch it! That is cost shifting onto us.”

Mr R.F. Johnson: I offered them funding.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I honestly believe that it is the role of local government. Many would say no and throw the suggestion back at me. However, I honestly believe that local government is —

Mr M.J. Cowper: What does Mayor Creevey say?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mayor Creevey would probably say the same as most local government elected officials; that she sees it as cost shifting. I do not agree with that.

Mr M.J. Cowper: What if there was an allocation of funds?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Well, that is the thing! I do not think that we can say it is the problem of local government and not fund it. No! State government has to fund the service. However, I think local government should take responsibility for overseeing delivery of the service. I also believe that schools and the education department are, in many respects, abrogating a responsibility. Some school principals and some teachers will say, “Sorry; as soon as those kids walk out that gate —

Mr M.J. Cowper: That is not actually true. It is as they walk out their home gate.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes; I know, but as the member knows very well, a number of schools have the view that once the children have left the school gate, they are no longer the responsibility of the school. Sorry—I do not agree with that either! However, I believe that the provision and oversight of school crossings should fall to local government; that is, local government should be given an allocation of money from the state to ensure that it supports the fantastic volunteers that the member for Joondalup highlighted in his opening remarks. All of us agree that the people who stand out in rain, wind and hail, and in the hot weather during the summer months, are remarkable people. In fact, quite often the schools they are linked to look after them and include them—albeit some schools do not do as much as they should. However, I think local governments have to step up to the plate.

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If they want to build vibrant neighbourhoods and safe communities, they have a critical and essential role to play in the provision of school crossings. The Minister for Police needs to talk to the Minister for Local Government who sits just behind him, because it is not a police role. The police should not have oversight of school crossings because police resources are, quite frankly, stretched in many, many communities in a whole variety of ways. Obviously all the proper processes for training school crossing guards would need to be in place—there would be no change to the training regime; it would be the same—and we would simply be transferring operational responsibility to local government, while resourcing it appropriately. I think that is the answer to the problem. I do not care whether my local councillors tell me they do not agree with me. If they say they do not like the idea, I simply do not agree with them. I am sick of councils—I am not pointing the finger at mine—and local governments in general that espouse these wonderful corporate statements about being inclusive and celebrating diversity and about wanting to enjoy and have vibrant communities, but when we scratch the surface of them starting to deliver on their statements, they all say, “Oh no, no, no, no! That is state government!”

Mr R.F. Johnson: Very true.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They say, “Oh no, no, no, no! That is federal government” or “No, we don’t want to touch that; it’s police; the police have to do that!” I reckon that we have to call their bluff.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes; we have to call their bluff! Quite honestly, local governments have for too long sat in the little castles that they have created and have not wanted to move with the times.

Mr J.M. Francis: Big castles!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I beg your pardon.

Mr J.M. Francis: I would say they are big castles.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Well, some have very big castles. Some have very tiny castles. Some, like those in the Premier’s electorate, have very tiny municipalities—almost the size of Vatican City!

Given I am on a roll, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms L.L. Baker), I will ask for an extension.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I really think that if we are to genuinely address some of these issues about child safety and making sure these communities are safe, we need to take it up to that level of government that has a primary responsibility. Those who have been in local government—a number of the members present tonight have—know that it espouses that it is closest to the people. Local governments always say they are closest to the people because they deal with the day-to-day work or business of life. Well, there is no more important thing than making sure kids get safely to school and safely around their communities. Why would a local government that wants to be vibrant and build strong inclusive communities, not say, “Yes, we will take that on”? If the minister were to go to some of the more progressive councils around—I consider my council to be quite progressive; I think Mandurah is a progressive council ==

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is one of the better ones.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is! And I think that if the Minister for Police went to some of these more progressive councils and said that the state was prepared to put some dollars together —

Mr R.F. Johnson: That is what I intend to do.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Well, I think you should!

Mr R.F. Johnson: I tried WALGA and I got nowhere.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: You will not get anywhere with the Western Australian Local Government Association.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I am going to try individual local authorities. I know of one already that has said that it will be delighted to take on that responsibility, provided it was funded to do so.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I would strongly encourage the minister to do that. I would strongly encourage the minister to talk to my local council.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I will do.

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Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I believe that if the minister starts to pick off a few of the progressive councils that are ready to say that they want to be resourced to do this job, he will find it to be a great pilot program or series of pilot programs, and I think he will find that it will work.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Can the minister speak to my seven councils?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Absolutely!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Seven! The minister is condemned in this motion —

Mr R.F. Johnson: Well, the government is.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, the government is condemned in the motion, and I am happy to condemn it. I reach out an olive branch to the Minister for Police and ask him to continue to pursue local governments to accept their responsibility. Call their bluff, minister, because they will bluff their way through a lot of things. All members have local councils in their electorates. Read their charters, mission statements and goals and objectives for their communities. I can guarantee that every one of them would have the word “safety” in the first line and that most councils would talk about being dynamic or achieving a vibrant and proactive community—all those things. This is a great opportunity to tell them to put their money where their mouth is and their words where their aspirations are. Tell them that the state government will give them some money. I reckon it would work. This could be an example of government departments and the different levels of government working together. I encourage the minister to do that. I will probably get a phone call from a couple of councillors on the City of Mandurah asking me what the hell I have been talking about, but I honestly believe it. They will say that I am a traitor because I used to be on the council. They will say that they can remember debates in which I used to slam the state government of the day, whichever persuasion it was. We used to attack the government about cost shifting. I remember the great debate about head lice treatment. I think that was during the Court years. The local councils used to get the head lice treatment for free from the Department of Health, from memory. As the deputy mayor and an aspirant to enter state Parliament, I was involved in running a huge campaign. I was a teacher at the time and had more hair then than I do now! It was a very effective issue because it was a matter of cost shifting. However, I digress.

I doubt that we will get to vote on this motion, but at least we have had a debate about the importance of getting our children to school safely. The Minister for Police will need to look closely at what he will do from now on. I have given the minister an alternative, which is to give the responsibility for this to local government, and I will support the minister doing that. Please talk to the City of Mandurah and ask whether it is interested in being part of a pilot program, because it should be interested. I encourage any other councils and the mayor of Mandurah to be involved in this, as they should be. More councils should be involved in it.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [5.43 pm]: I thank the member for Mandurah for his constructive comments. They were not delivered in a malicious, sarcastic, vitriolic or insulting way. The member made a very valuable contribution and I believe that he and I are thinking along the same lines. I have said for a very long time that local government is the ideal solution to managing traffic wardens. Main Roads does a lot of work to make sure that the infrastructure is in place, and the police are called in when there are problems or the traffic wardens do not turn up because they are sick. The schools do not like it when the traffic warden is unavailable to oversee the children crossing the road. Many people are involved in this issue. All I wanted to do was get someone to manage the traffic wardens, and I believe that the best body to do that is local government. I had meetings with the Western Australian Local Government Association and I met with some mayors and offered to transfer the funding for traffic wardens to the local authorities because I believe that local government, local schools, local families and local children know the local roads best. Most of the schools are on local government roads rather than state government roads anyway.

I believe that local government has a duty to ensure that the roads are okay, the sidewalks are okay and that the children are safe. If the state government will fund the traffic wardens, what do the local governments have to argue about? It is just a matter of administering the traffic wardens. The local governments are at an advantage because if a traffic warden does not turn up due to being sick or whatever, it is far better to send a local government ranger to do the job—they can be trained to do it quite easily—than it is to send not one but two police officers. The industrial situation requires police officers to work in pairs. Therefore, the time of two police officers is wasted. A police vehicle is stationed around the corner from where the children cross the road and the police are taken off the front-line duty. I think that is a total misuse of the valuable asset that is our police officers. Local government certainly is in a better position to administer the traffic wardens. As I said, I have spoken to one or two mayors and one of them has told me that, provided the local government gets funding to cover the cost of the traffic warden, the council would be happy to manage the traffic warden at that particular

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location. If I had not been a bit tied up recently with various other issues, I can assure members that it was one of the things on my to-do list.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: Your bucket list!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I assure members that it is not on my bucket list. I have much more pleasurable things to do on that list, but it is on my to-do list.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: What was the problem with WALGA?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It did not achieve anything for me. It has to get all the councils to agree to this type of thing. I think I am better off visiting some of the big players such as the City of Joondalup, the City of Stirling and the City of Mandurah. They are significant and well-funded councils, particularly Joondalup, Stirling and Wanneroo. Those councils are expanding and it is important to have them involved in what I believe is a community issue and a local government issue. It is not an Education or Main Roads issue; it is a local issue for families. Everyone says that local government is closest to the community and to families, and I agree with that.

Mr P.B. Watson: Should it be run by the local government in some of the small country towns in the regional areas? Some people drive at 110 kilometres an hour when they come into town. There are real issues about speed. Do you think we should have properly trained people in the regional areas instead of just the people in the school?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The people in the schools have been trained. Before they can put on the lollipop uniform, if I can call it that, and stop traffic, they must have undergone a certain amount of training, although it is not a huge amount of training.

Mr P.B. Watson: Should the training be different in regional areas?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Certainly that can be done. In all honesty, we have done quite a bit since we have been in government to ensure the safety of children around our schools. We have introduced the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing light zones.

Mr P.B. Watson: Can we have some in Albany?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I assure the member that between myself and the Minister for Transport, our intention is to roll them out as much as we possibly can and as soon as we can. We cannot just say that every school will have one, because we have hundreds and hundreds of schools.

Mr P.B. Watson: On major roads.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is not just major roads. We must have them in some of the rat runs where people travel much too fast on a narrow road and there is a much bigger chance of injuring a child who is crossing the road, and we will do that.

Was the member for Joondalup at Bambara Primary School this morning with the member for Girrawheen?

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: Yes.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I thought so. I recognised the sound of traffic when the member for Girrawheen was on the radio. A couple of people who the member for Joondalup knows very well phoned my electorate office after they heard what was going on and said that they did not want to be involved in the circus that the Labor Party was putting on up there. They were one of the biggest advocates for having a traffic warden in that area, and the member knows exactly who I am talking about.

Ms M.M. Quirk: I have no idea, minister.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am talking to the member for Joondalup, not the member for Girrawheen! I am talking to the organ grinder.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: I know exactly who you’re talking about.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Joondalup knows exactly who I am talking about. Can I say, they phoned my electorate office because they wanted me to know that they were not prepared to have a bar of what went on this morning, because they realised what it was —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: I think you should be very careful about what you’re saying there, because I will tell you —

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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — and they wanted to pass on the message that they believed that I had done an awful lot in the time I had been there —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: That’s very strange, because they’re the couple who organised it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — and they said, “If it hadn’t have been for Rob, we wouldn’t have a traffic warden outside our school today, so we’re not going to get involved in that circus.” That is what they said.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: I think you’re misleading.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have to tell members that they were very, very vocal a year or so ago.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: I think you’re misleading.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am not misleading anybody. The member does not believe they did that? He can phone them tonight and ask them whether they did or not.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: I have spoken to them already today; they will be very surprised.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They will not tell porkies, I can tell the member. I am telling the member that they phoned my office and wanted me to get that message—both of them. I am not going to say their names because I do not think it is appropriate to, but the member knows who I am talking about and I know who I am talking about, and nobody else would matter. Nobody else would matter at all, anyway. There are insignificant people in this chamber, so I do not worry about that, but I think it is important that the member for Joondalup knows. Today was a stunt; of course it was a stunt.

A member interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It was a stunt; of course it was a stunt. I know what the game plan is; it is out to get Rob Johnson because he is under the pump, this, that and the other.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This is the sort of stuff the opposition wants!

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: All this rubbish that the opposition works up in the LOOP office—I know exactly how it does it. Members are given stuff to do, and they go out there and do it.

Mr A.P. O’Gorman: We had a good teacher! Remember all the guff you used to come in with?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, no; I would not get involved in that sort of thing, ever.

But I was interested because the member for Girrawheen, of course, was on the radio this morning, and she was peddling mistruths. According to my notes, she stated that —

Rob Johnson has said that why these crossings have to be downgraded is because it is the wardens are not in attendance. The police have to staff the crossing, and that takes police off frontline resources.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Yes.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I never said that.

Ms M.M. Quirk: You’ve said that a number of times.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I never said that at all.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Yes, you did.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In fact, it shows that the member for Girrawheen has a complete lack of understanding of the issue. The member knows as well as I do that the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee makes the decision on whether children’s crossings are viable based —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You changed the criteria.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I did not change the criteria—do not be stupid!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: In 2009.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Do not be stupid!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It’s in your own minute; I’ll read it out to you later, if you like. I’ll read it out to you!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I did not change the criteria! I am coming to the member for Midland.

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Mrs M.H. Roberts: You endorsed the new criteria!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The committee makes that decision that they are viable based on —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Are you denying that now? Are you denying that? Are you denying that you changed the criteria?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — survey data gathered at the locations over four different dates. Okay? They did that.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Are you, or are you not? You are not denying that you changed the criteria.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Oh, just be quiet! You sound like something else.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: The truth hurts, doesn’t it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Midland would not know the truth if it smacked her in the ear!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: So tell the truth; did you endorse the new criteria or not?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The assessment is based on a ratio between the number of students, as members know, and the number of vehicles using or driving through the crossing. If the committee determines that a location has a high level of vehicle traffic versus pedestrian activity, it will classify the crossing as a type A. The member for Girrawheen knows all of this, but she did not put this forward to them on the radio. This is not what the member told them on radio. A traffic warden will be assigned by WA Police.

Mr P.B. Watson: Minister, we had a situation in Chester Pass Road when we were in government, and I lobbied for a long time and they said, “No, there’s not enough cars.” There was one accident and a child was hurt, and it was there within a week. So where is the criteria? That’s what I want to know.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The criteria is established by the committee; it establishes the criteria. The former government spent \$77 000 on two different consultants who came in and did a review, and what did the former government do with it? Nothing; it is like all the reports the former government got out. The former government spent \$77 000; the member for Balcatta knows how much was spent.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You had one, and you endorsed their recommendations; that is why we are all here today!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will tell members which ones they are. The independent review of the children’s crossing program was done under the former government, but it did not take it up. That was in 2004, and released in May 2005, but what happened? The opposition took away loads of wardens from schools.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That’s not right! Name them! Go on!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What—the schools? Does the member want me to name them—does she?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Yes.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Does the member really?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Yes; I do —

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: There were quite a few.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: — because I didn’t change the criteria.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: There were quite a few when the member was the responsible minister; I have the list here somewhere. I am more than happy to give it to the member because there were quite a few. There were about a dozen or so in one year that lost traffic wardens while the member for Midland was the minister. That is fine; I have not got them here, but I will find them anyway. I will find them.

Mr P. Papalia: What a surprise!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will find them, I can assure the member. They are amongst these papers somewhere; I will get to them, but they were in, I think, 2004 or 2005. I have the list. Is the member for Midland saying that —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I am saying that, unlike you, I did not change the criteria. I did not change the rules.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — no traffic wardens were taken away from schools?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You changed the rules.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That was in the criteria.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 7 September 2011]

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Mr Tony O’Gorman; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Frank Alban; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr David Templeman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Tony Krsticevic

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You changed the rules, and about 30 crossings are now in jeopardy. You changed the criteria, you changed the rules, you endorsed it, it’s in your answers, and it’s in your correspondence.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The change in the criteria was actually to enhance the criteria so that more schools would not be so adversely affected. That was the criteria —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member for Midland!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — and the member can shout like —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You wouldn’t go out and look at them; I did. That’s what I’m saying.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland, the minister has the floor, please.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I thank Madam Acting Speaker for her protection.

I have mentioned the two reviews, and \$77 000 that just went down the drain. It was very interesting when the Leader of the Opposition was on the radio this morning, and, once again, he was scaremongering and blatantly distorting the truth. According to my notes, he said —

The minister has changed the criteria and a lot of schools are going to lose their crossings.

Yes, I did change the warrant criteria, but that made it easier for both combined schools and high schools to comply with the criteria. It was changed to make it easier for them.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Table it! Table the criteria; you won’t do that, will you? Will you do that?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Therefore, more schools are now eligible for a type A crossing than was the case under the previous government.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Let’s see the truth. Let’s see the truth. Table the criteria before; table the criteria after.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: According to my notes, the Leader of the Opposition then went on to say —

It is in his portfolio. He is the minister, he has to be accountable, he sets the criteria, and then the committee goes ahead and decides to which crossings those criteria will be applied.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has been referring to some official, typewritten documents. I would call upon him to table them, please.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am referring to some speech notes that I prepared. They are not official documents.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Do you type, do you?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Oh, look—toughen up, princess! Toughen up; all right?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: So, you are reading your speech.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Midland does not like any criticism.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You’re reading your speech now, are you?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No; I am referring to quotes.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, thank you. Members, can the minister please take the floor. I am not accepting the point of order. Please continue, minister.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: As I was saying, once again the Labor Party applies a different set of standards to the government than it applied to itself when it was in government.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The minister has said that they are not official notes; he has then claimed that he is quoting some quotes from there; and he is now reading his speech, which he knows is against the rules. It is clearly a speech that he is reading, and he has clarified that for the house.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Further to that point of order, Madam Acting Speaker, I am not reading my whole speech; I am quoting stuff from my speech. The member for Girrawheen read the whole of her speech in the previous debate, and that is all she ever does!

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Ms M.M. Quirk: No; I was quoting from a letter.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, she did; no, she was not—it was a long letter!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, would you please return to your speech, thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Midland is always desperate to try to keep me quiet, but she will not.

In fact, let me come to her. When the member for Midland was asked in Parliament in December 2002 about what she had done since 2001 when she had announced that the government was reviewing the future direction of all children’s crossings and traffic warden positions, her response was—this is in *Hansard*—

As I have explained previously in this House, the review of children’s crossings was not a formally constituted review but was a matter for consideration by the department, myself as minister and the Government. Crossing wardens play an invaluable role in getting children safely to and from school. The designation of school crossings and their various categories is subject to ongoing review.

Basically, she reviewed the issue and did nothing.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: And I left the crossing guards largely in place. Unlike you, I did not remove them, did I?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: She did absolutely nothing. What a surprise! The trouble is that members opposite hate good news. I took the view today that this was getting out of hand. A number of schools were going to lose their wardens; there were too many in my view.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You should look at the letters you signed to all those schools telling them tough bickies. You told them tough bickies; that’s what you said to all the schools.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, I did not say that. Do not tell porkies. I did not say “tough bickies” at all.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That’s the summary of your letters.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is the member’s summary. That is the member for Midland’s articulate summary—tough bickies!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That’s basically what your letters said: “Not interested. It’s nothing to do with me. I can’t do anything to help you. That’s the committee’s decision.”

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Why does the member not tell the truth?

I have been looking at how I can possibly try to keep as many traffic wardens as possible outside schools. I have been working on this for some time now. I have been working out how we can find some funding and whether some of it could be funded from the road trauma trust fund if we needed to enhance the funding.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Is funding an issue, minister? I didn’t realise funding was the issue.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am not saying it is; I am saying—if we need some extra funding. Listen very carefully. I am saying that it is not just funding. There are funding issues; of course there are sometimes. There are funding issues in anything. The problem we have very often is finding people to do the job, and who will fill in when those people cannot do the job? Some of the schools were appealing, and they may well have been successful. In fact, I believe one school was going to be successful in an appeal. That is what I heard. I do not know for sure until I hear officially.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: One of them had their appeal upheld yesterday.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The safety of children is of paramount importance. The view I took today was: “Hang on a minute; we are not talking about a huge amount of money.”

Ms M.M. Quirk: When did you form this conclusion? At what time today?

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The funding issue should not really come into it.

Ms M.M. Quirk: It was about 10 minutes before question time.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No; it was a long time before that.

Funding should not be an issue. What will be an issue is finding people to do the job. But before we can do any of that, we have to ensure that we do not lose good people who are doing this very valuable job at the moment. Quite frankly, I simply took the view that I needed to make a very positive decision, and I made that decision. Now members opposite want to criticise me for it. I decided that I would direct that committee to put a hold on

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cancelling any traffic wardens who are in place now and, indeed, any who were in place from the first term of this academic year. If any wardens have been lost in that time, they can be replaced. I am putting kids’ safety above politics, because I think that is the sensible and rational thing to do. Members opposite can call me all sorts of names and they can insult me time and again day in, day out, as they do. I think the sorts of names that some of them have been calling me recently are childish.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Which is the one that has hurt you the most, minister?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I could call the member names if I wanted to, but I would not do that. I like to think I am more of a gentleman. When some members opposite start calling me the sorts of names that they have been calling me, I believe they have lost the argument.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What have people called you? I haven’t heard anyone call you names.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, they have. They have lost the argument when they start being really insulting.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Who did this to you? Who was it? What did they say?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I make no excuse whatsoever for directing —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Who called you names? I think that’s appalling.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member should have a word with her leader.

I make no excuses for giving a direction to that committee, because I have a duty as minister to do that. Members opposite keep asking, “How long is it for? Is it for a week? Is it for a month? Is it for this term of government?” It will stay in place until something better can be sorted, such as talking to the local authorities. It is not for a week; it is not for a month. If necessary, it will be to the end of this term of government and beyond. I am not prepared to allow the schools that need these traffic wardens not to have them when they are needed for the benefit, safety and good health of children going to school. I thought this morning, “Enough is enough. I must direct the committee —

Ms M.M. Quirk: So was that after your interview with Geoff Hutchison?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I thought about it before then but I did not announce it on the radio. I was not going to give Geoff Hutchison the benefit of hearing such wonderful news. I felt that it would be much more appropriate that I make the announcement in this house.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Your decision was above politics but it was too good for Geoff Hutchison!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This house was the appropriate place to make the announcement. I did not go in front of the cameras and make a big thing about it; I announced it in this house. I have not been in front of the cameras since then. I have not been on the radio, and I do not want to do that.

Ms M.M. Quirk: You’re under a media blackout, aren’t you?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No. The member is the one who knows about media blackouts. They used to wonder what the member looked like when she was a minister. They used to say, “We can’t see her.” If there was a TV camera or a microphone around when she was a minister, she went down in the dugout.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Did you call her names when she was a minister? Were you a horrible person who called her names when she was a minister?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We never saw the member when she was a minister, and now we cannot keep her away from it.

Mr J.M. Francis: I was flicking through my local newspaper today and I found this ad from Western Australia Police for vacancies for traffic wardens. I’m just wondering how on earth you could believe people who say that you’re trying to get rid of them if we’re still advertising for people to fill the current jobs. This was in the *Cockburn Gazette* today.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: One of the problems we have, member, is getting enough people to do the job. Some people either do not want to do the job or are not able to do the job, or it affects them financially. If some people earn over a certain amount of money, it affects their federal benefits. That is crazy. We need a federal government that recognises that when people do this sort of job, it affects their income. I thank the member for Jandakot. I appreciate the very clear copy of this advertisement.

Mr J.M. Francis: It was in today’s paper.

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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I think it is very appropriate that I table this document for the benefit of everyone in the house so that they can see that we desperately want traffic wardens.

[See paper 3836.]

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We value the job that they do. We certainly want to encourage them to come forward and do that job. As far as I am concerned, no school that has a traffic warden at the moment will lose that traffic warden. If any wardens have been lost since the first part of this year, they can be reinstated. The cost is not important in my view. The safety of those children and the peace of mind of their parents in knowing that their children will be seen safely across the road are paramount.

I am surprised that the opposition has moved to condemn the government; I thought it would be moving to condemn just me today rather than the whole government, because that has been the main purpose of what the opposition has been doing. This issue affects all members of Parliament. All members have schools in their electorates. I have done something today that I believe the previous government should have had the guts to do. During its seven and a half years in government, it should have had a minister who had the guts to give a direction to that committee rather than allow those schools to lose their traffic wardens. That is critical. None of the ministers in the previous government had the guts. I have a list of the schools that lost traffic wardens.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That’s not what the member for Alfred Cove said. Are you disputing what the member said?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am telling the member that many traffic wardens were lost when the member for Midland was the responsible minister.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I’m telling you that whenever there was representation, I intervened. The member for Alfred Cove attested to that today, and she’s not the only one.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Are you saying that no schools lost their traffic wardens?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: No, I’m not saying that; I’m saying that I did not change the criteria, as you did, and that when representations were made to me, most of the time I went out and had a look on-site—something that you’ve refused to do.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I did not go out to Guildford; two of my staff went out and had a look.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I asked to go out and meet with people there, and you declined, and you didn’t advise me that you were prepared to send any staff members or anything. You just gave me a bald, “No, I won’t do it”. I would’ve been really pleased to hear that news that you were sending staff members out there, and it’s a shame that you were so political that you didn’t communicate that with me.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I wanted them to see the situation, how many children were crossing the road that the member for Midland pointed out and the type of traffic that was being used on that road, without some sort of forewarning.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What time of day did they go? Do you know that?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They went in the morning; they were there for about two hours.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Excellent.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They saw what the situation was, and unfortunately there were very, very few—hardly any—children crossing the roads there, but I accept that it is a dangerous road, and I am delighted that I can now include that one with all the others that will retain traffic wardens. The member for Midland should be over the moon about that, because these are her constituents. Rather than criticise me —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I’m going to give my speech soon, and I’m more than pleased to applaud the decision.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I certainly do not expect thanks, but perhaps the member should not criticise a decision that was made —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I’ll criticise you when you deserve it and praise you when you deserve it, be assured of that.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member will never praise me, I am sure. She would find it too hard to praise me.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Well, let’s see.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am delighted that that is the situation at the moment; I am delighted that the children in our community at those schools that were going to lose their traffic wardens will now be able to go to school more safely and return home more safely. I am very proud of the decision I made today to give a direction to that

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committee, because I think it is certainly one that is to the benefit of the community in general—not just for the kids’ safety, but also for the wellbeing and peace of mind of the families.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [6.11 pm]: Just to surprise the minister, I am going to say what I was always going to say at the commencement of my speech: the minister has made a very, very good decision today—possibly the best decision he has ever made, and I would like to thank him on behalf of the communities of Guildford and South Guildford, and also on behalf of the community around Stratton and Middle Swan. The decision that the minister has made today will benefit those communities and it will particularly alleviate the concerns of so many parents about the safety of their children. So, minister—congratulations. He has made an excellent decision today, and I am very, very pleased on behalf of all the children and parents involved with the two schools in my electorate that were due to miss out.

What I am critical about, minister, is that it really has taken so long. I know the member for Girrawheen and others have been pursuing the minister on his changes to the school crossings criteria and warrants for some time now. I have been taking up the issue in respect of the South Guildford crossing for some months now. I note that on Tuesday, 14 June, at about 5.13 in the afternoon, I raised this issue in this place and said that there was currently a proposal to remove two crosswalk attendants in South Guildford. I said the children walking home from Guildford Primary School had no option but to cross the Helena River bridge and could not get to homes on the other side of the Great Eastern Highway without crossing the road. I went on to say that surveys have been done and that the crossing had been in place, with two attendants, for at least 30 years, as far as I was aware. I asked the minister then to give the matter some consideration. That was back on 14 June this year.

I followed the matter up with a question on notice, notice of which was given on 22 June, and I got an answer from the minister on 10 August. Clearly, the minister gave no priority whatsoever to the question I asked on behalf of my community. I put the question on the notice paper on 22 June and waited for an answer, and I did not get a response until 10 August. In part of his response the minister said that the traffic warden was due to be withdrawn and that the crossing did not meet the criteria for a type A warrant. In answer to questions (2) to (5), the minister’s answer reads —

I have endorsed the Best Practice Review of Children’s Crossings in Western Australia and within that have approved the criteria for a Type A and Type B children’s crossing. In this case the children’s crossing at this location does not meet the criteria. The P&C of the school may wish to apply for a Type B crossing.

For members who may not be clear on that, a type B crossing is a crossing that is attended by trained volunteers from the school. My next question was whether the minister would be prepared to meet with me and the parents at the site to see for himself how dangerous that section of road is; and, if not, why not. The minister, in his speech to the chamber just now, said that he had sent two staff members out; but he did not advise me of that until now. They did not want to see me, the parents or the kiddies there—they just wanted to go quietly and assess it, and see how many children were crossing the road there. Well, the minister has learnt nothing from my correspondence or the correspondence from the P&C association at that school, because it was not an issue of how many children cross the road there, but how dangerous the road is at that location, and that is why I specifically asked the minister whether he would be prepared to meet me and the parents at the site to see for himself how dangerous this section of road is. I got a very bald answer to that question: a point-blank “no”. Not, “I will send a couple of other people out at an undisclosed time,” or whatever; the answer I got was no. The minister then provided the same answer to my further question, “if not, why not?” His answer again reads —

I have endorsed the Best Practice Review of Children’s Crossings in Western Australia and within that have approved the criteria for a Type A and Type B children’s crossing. In this case the children’s crossing at this location does not meet the criteria. The P&C of the school may wish to apply for a Type B crossing.

Exactly the same answer as he provided for questions (2) to (5).

At this point, I would like to congratulate the efforts of the P&C of Guildford Primary School, a school in my electorate. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Belmont, has already noted that the actual crossing I am referring to falls within his electorate, while the school that the children attend is in my electorate, so in a sense we have a joint responsibility for this crosswalk and the children at this school. Parents have been in touch with both of us.

It is quite interesting that the minister said that he has had pangs of guilt or something, but that he has thought about this long and hard and thought how terrible it is that so many type A crossings have been removed under his watch. Today, of all days, he suddenly decided to make a decision and do something about it. He did not make the decision back in June; he did not make it in July or August. He had not made a decision even by the

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time the opposition had put notice of this motion on the notice paper yesterday and advised the government last night that this was the main issue that we would bring on during private members’ time today. He did not make a decision then.

He went on Geoff Hutchison’s radio program this morning, and kept batting the question away, but sometime after that he made a decision. The minister tried to tell us about 10 minutes ago that he actually made the decision before he went on Geoff Hutchison’s program this morning, but he decided that he would not tell Geoff Hutchison about it because, for some reason, Geoff Hutchison did not deserve to know. Well, it is not about Geoff Hutchison; I would have thought that it was about the community. I would have thought that it was about the people who were listening to the radio and who were genuinely worried about their children and their children’s safety when going to school. These parents must be even more worried that this minister is in charge of their children’s safety. But did he allay those fears when he had the opportunity to do so on radio 720 this morning? No, he did not because he did not want to give Geoff Hutchison the satisfaction of doing so. I think that is a very petty attitude to take. It leads me to think that perhaps the minister was just responding to pressure. We have put him under some pressure up until now. We have asked lots of questions, we have gone through the normal processes, but he has not moved. Suddenly today, he moves. We are told that it is coincidental that it just happens to be on the day after we have given notice of this motion to bring this matter forward in private members’ time. It happens to be on the day that the member for Girrawheen and the Leader of the Opposition go to a crosswalk in the minister’s electorate, and a whole number of parents and students turn out to say how terrible the situation is and how they have not been listened to by the minister or the government. Suddenly, on this particular day, the minister has a change of heart. This minister and the government have had months to have a change of heart, but at long last they have done it. I am not going to complain about that because it is the right decision—it is absolutely the right decision. It just took way too long.

In congratulating the P&C at Guildford Primary School for its sustained and long campaign on an issue it knows to be right, I particularly want to pay credit to Mrs Hazel Bradley and Ms Trudy Braszell who have taken up a relentless campaign on this issue. They have lobbied me, they have lobbied the Leader of the Opposition, they have lobbied the government, and, along with me, they have lobbied the City of Swan to get some support. They have been through the whole process. They have protested to the minister. As a last stage in the process they were told they could lodge an appeal; an appeal they were not very confident about given correspondence they had received from the minister. In fact this minister, who had a change of heart today, wrote to Ms Trudy Braszell, a parent of Guildford Primary School. The letter is signed by Rob Johnson, MLA, Minister for Police; Emergency Services; Road Safety, dated 22 August 2011—only a couple of weeks ago. I will read the content of the letter the minister sent —

Thank you for your email dated 9 August 2011 concerning the children’s crossing located on Great Eastern Highway near Kidman Avenue, South Guildford.

The Western Australia Police have advised that the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee has determined that the crossing does not meet the Type A warrant criteria in this instance. In 2009 the government initiated a Best Practice Review for Children’s Crossings within Western Australia which confirmed that the warrant criteria are best practice. I have endorsed the findings of this review.

I am further advised that Guildford Primary School may appeal this decision by 26 August 2011. If the application is received by the Student Pedestrian Policy Unit by this date, it will be placed on the agenda for the next Committee meeting to be held on 6 September 2011. The appeal application form can be located on the WA Police website at www.police.wa.gov.au.

I am also advised that there is a set of traffic control lights approximately 200 meters from the crossing that the children may wish to use.

I thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and trust the above information clarifies the situation.

That was only a couple of weeks ago. There are a number of things to note from this correspondence. The first thing to note is that it is the minister who endorsed the findings of the review. The minister says in the letter, “I have endorsed the findings of this review”; a letter signed by none other than the Minister for Police; Emergency Services; Road Safety. There was a review—the review was in 2009. The minister endorsed the findings of the review.

It is interesting that today the minister has been critical of me for not signing off on reviews that were done in the police department—reviews that were not initiated by me, reviews that were initiated within the department and then sent up to me. I will tell members here and now that I was not inclined to see any penny-pinching take place with respect to crossing guards. I was not prepared to sign off on review findings that would have resulted in

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dozens of school crossings being removed in Western Australia. Wherever crosswalks were drawn to my attention, where there was a proposal to remove a type A crossing guard, there would, on occasion, be genuine reasons for removing a type A crossing guard from one location and placing one at another, or removing guards where numbers dropped to a very low level or where traffic was diverted to another location. I am not saying government can never ever remove a type A guard but I am saying it would need to be done very, very cautiously. I expect it would happen only on rarer occasions than what has happened in recent months.

I knew that something had gone wrong in this whole system when two crosswalks, virtually in my electorate—one just outside and one within—had their type A crossings withdrawn. After talking to my colleagues, I found out that it was happening not just throughout the metropolitan area, although largely the metropolitan area, but also at a couple of country locations. How was this brought about? It was brought about because this government and this minister changed the rules. This minister would not intervene and have a look into things. He says, “Oh well, this and that when you were in government.” When representations were made to me and to our government when I was Minister for Police, I was always willing to look and see what the situation was. As the member for Alfred Cove already attested to earlier today, I was happy to go out to Canning Highway and talk to people from St Benedict’s, have a look at their particular situation and see what their concerns were. Yes, perhaps they had fallen below a certain number of children crossing the road, but the road we were talking about was Canning Highway! I believed that an exception needed to be made in that case. I think these situations need to be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

The particular case for South Guildford is a very compelling one because the school is on one side of the road and where the students live in South Guildford is on the other side of Great Eastern Highway. There is a safe crossing place within my electorate near the school to cross over the road. The only problem is, if students cross the road at that point, they cannot then cross the bridge at Helena River because the pedestrian way is only on one side of the bridge. It is only on the school side of the road that students can utilise the pedestrian bridge to get across the river. Having got across the river, students need a safe crossing point to get to the residential area.

I note in this letter, which I have quoted in full, that the minister says a couple of hundred metres away there is a set of traffic lights. That is true—there is—but I do not think those particular traffic lights afford a particularly safe place for young children to cross. Those traffic lights are yet another 200 metres further from the school. There are no residences that children would be going to beyond those traffic lights. In fact the residential area is immediately adjacent to where the staffed crossing currently is, where people want to go to Queens Road and Kidman Avenue.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Knowing small children, most of them, on a daily basis, do not want to walk 200 metres up to the lights and at least 200 metres back. That is another 400 metres—roughly half a kilometre extra—to walk for primary school-aged children to make in their journey. Sadly, the temptation would be there not to walk that extra 400 to 500 metres and to cross the road unsafely, probably roughly where the attendants are currently.

I note that the member for Girrawheen FOI-ed some material on this subject. The member acquired some correspondence on my crossing in South Guildford, which I had raised with her, from the Minister for Transport; Disability Services, Hon Simon O’Brien, dated 8 June 2009 and directed to the Minister for Police. I note the Minister for Police referred to is still the Minister for Police even though Hon Simon O’Brien is no longer the Minister for Transport. Hon Simon O’Brien’s memo to the Minister for Police is titled “School Guard Crossing Review — Provision of Type A Crossings on Highways”. Hon Simon O’Brien writes —

I write in support of your current review into the operations of the School Guard Crossing program.

I have been approached on many occasions by both members of the public and Members of Parliament aggrieved by decisions to remove Police trained and manned Type A guard controlled crossings from busy roads and highways.

One such recent instance is the proposed removal of the Type A crossing on Great Eastern Highway in South Guildford because the criteria warrants are not met. Whilst I understand the need for the warrants to justify the expense of providing the crossing guard —

I note that there are two crossing guards, not one; Simon O’Brien has not got that quite right —

I would suggest that the review also needs to consider other factors which would give a particular location higher priority for a Type A crossing than presently exists.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 7 September 2011]

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Mr Tony O’Gorman; Dr Janet Woollard; Acting Speaker; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Frank Alban; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Andrew Waddell; Mr David Templeman; Mr Rob Johnson; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Tony Krsticevic

I would suggest that Type A crossings should always be provided at schools fronting major highways regardless of warrants being met due to the inherent safety concerns about vulnerable road users mixing with heavy traffic on these busy roads.

I look forward to consideration of these matters and receiving a copy of the results of the review.

There we have it. The memo is dated June 2009. It is a shame that the member for Swan Hills is not in the chamber, because, as a former ward councillor for the area and as someone who lives in Guildford, he knows something of Guildford Primary School and the situation. Hon Simon O’Brien made the point on this particular school crossing that I, the Leader of the Opposition and others have been making for months. Our point has been falling on deaf ears, but we now find out through this FOI request, which I saw for the first time today, that Simon O’Brien recognised that crossings on major highways should not be subjected to the same warrant criteria. He specifically mentioned the crossing with the two attendants in South Guildford when he said, “I would suggest that Type A crossings should always be provided at schools fronting major highways regardless of warrants being met due to the inherent safety concerns about vulnerable road users mixing with heavy traffic on these busy roads.”

He specifically mentioned the situation in South Guildford and made exactly the points we have been making about the vulnerable road users, the little kiddies from school—it is true that there are not that many of them—and the mix of heavy traffic. It is an industrial area and there are lots of trucks in the early morning when kiddies are crossing and, later in the afternoon, traffic is at its peak. There are only two lanes, one in each direction, across the bridge over the Helena River. The road broadens out to four lanes on Great Eastern Highway on the South Guildford side of the bridge. On one hand, as traffic exits Guildford and moves towards South Guildford, the road drops down to one lane to cross over the bridge and then the road broadens out to two lanes near the crossing that the children need to use to cross the road. In the other direction, in the evening, if the traffic is going from the South Guildford side and across the little bridge over the Helena River, two lanes merge into one lane. There is a mix of heavy traffic and two lanes merge into one lane. That is a very, very dangerous situation.

I said at the outset that I am pleased with the decisions and I really could not be happier. However, it has disappointed me that this issue has caused so much anxiety and stress in the local community. Very few issues in Guildford and South Guildford have caused this much anxiety, particularly at the school. When Ms Braszell received correspondence from the minister, I received some further feedback. Mrs Bradley, one of the other parents, read that letter and the questions and answers I got from the minister. She wrote to me in the following terms —

I have read your questions to Minister Rob Johnson regarding the South Guildford school crossing and his replies in the Hansard of Wednesday, August 10.

Firstly let me thank you for representing our concerns so effectively and factually.

Obviously I and other concerned parents are somewhat disheartened by the Minister’s replies.

The parent who is putting together our appeal, Libby Buttfield, has noted Minister Johnson’s continual reference to the ‘criteria’ and ‘best practice review’. Would it be possible to follow up your questions to the Minister on the basis that we have never been provided with a comprehensive copy of the criteria or the review, only summaries and extracts.

I point out to the house that this school community and the parents want to see the full criteria, rather than summaries or extracts, and they have not been given them. I am sure that has been the same situation at 20 or more locations. As a result of the request from Ms Bradley, I put some questions on notice. On 16 August, I asked the minister —

- (1) How many school crossings across the State were reviewed by the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee in the financial year 2010–2011?
- (2) How many of the school crossings that have been reviewed have lost their Type A Status?
- (3) How many of the crossings that have lost their Type A status are in the Metropolitan Area and which schools are these?
- (4) How many of the crossings that have lost their Type A status are in the country and which schools are these?
- (5) Are the children’s crossing sites visited when they are being reviewed ...
 - (a) if yes, by whom ...

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(b) if not, why not?

(6) How many school children’s crossings does the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee intend to review in the financial year 2011–2012?

I also asked some questions about how many type A crossings there were in the years from 2008 to 2010. There were also several other parts to that question. I asked that question on notice on 16 August. I believe that today is 7 September, and I am still waiting for an answer. That is the priority that the minister has given this issue.

I further note that Mrs Bradley goes on —

Given the serious outcome schools face as a result of this review, we believe we are entitled to see its contents. More transparency is needed on this issue, given that as of May, 17 WA schools had lost their crossings in the past year. Obviously this number is on the rise.

As far as we have been able to discover, Type A crossings can be retained despite low numbers if there is a high volume of traffic.

The letter goes on —

We have written to Minister Johnson asking to see his best practice review in full, and hope you will be able to back up our request.

That is something I have done through my questions, but as yet neither I nor the parents have been able to get the information that we require. I note that the Minister for Road Safety was out of the chamber for most of the comments I made. I hope he will take the opportunity to read what I have said. I hope he takes particular note of the letter I quoted.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I was watching you on the screen in my office.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is a good thing.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You talked about Simon O’Brien.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Did the minister hear what I said about Simon O’Brien’s letter?

Mr R.F. Johnson: Yes, I did.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Does the minister have any explanation about why he did not take that into account when he signed off on the recommendations?

Mr R.F. Johnson: I think, if I remember rightly, the error that you are talking about happened when Minister Kobelke was the minister.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, I am not. This is referring to 2009.

Mr R.F. Johnson: It was the same criteria, as I understand it, that applied to the member for Alfred Cove.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: This is the 2009 review on which Simon O’Brien had input to the minister. Obviously, the minister has not got that right. I have only one minute left on the clock. I urge the minister to take a look at that. He has made the right decision today. It has been months and months of pain for so very many families and so very many children. I am pleased that it is finally at an end and I sincerely hope that the minister gets it right from here on in.

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef) [6.41 pm]: I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to address this motion. I first of all start by congratulating the Minister for Road Safety for his decision and announcement on this issue. The motion before the house reads —

That the house condemns the government for withdrawal of crossings that do not fit the warrant criteria for a type A crossing across the state, and for subsequently endangering the lives of many schoolchildren who use these crossings.

That motion is particularly harsh, given that the minister has met us halfway on this issue. Following on from the member for Mandurah’s speech, it is a pity that it was not a motion calling on the house to discuss options to ensure the continuity of school crossings into the future. There were some very good suggestions on ways in which we could approach local government, in particular city councils and larger councils, to take this matter forward.

I would like to very quickly talk about the opposition’s record on this issue in the minister’s electorate, given that he is the member for Hillarys; in my electorate as the member for Ocean Reef; and in the electorate of the

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member for Joondalup. The opposition did its media bit on this issue in the member for Hillarys’ electorate, and one of these crossings is in my electorate. By and large, a lot of this issue centres around our electorates. I will give the member for Joondalup some credit because he alone has raised this issue previously in grievances. Indeed, I think he raised a grievance with the minister about the crossing on Alexander Road, Padbury. It is interesting that the member for Joondalup seems to spend a lot more of his time in the area these days chasing up issues in our electorates.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Exactly!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have noticed that. The member for Joondalup has been chasing up issues in government seats, including in my electorate, as opposed to his own electorate.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Someone’s got to do it!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I think that is a very good way for the member for Joondalup to spend his time, and I encourage him to continue doing that. As the member for Hillarys said today, the member for Joondalup got a little bitten doing that this time, and I think he was bitten considerably harder in the Ocean Reef issue more recently.

In looking at the previous record on this issue, we heard in question time today about attempts in 2004 and again in 2006 to remove crossings guards at Canning Highway. The member for Alfred Cove gave a speech about that. Closer to home for us again, the member for Wanneroo talked about the intersection at Dundobar Road and Wanneroo Road. That is a far busier intersection for St Anthony’s Primary School. Those two four-lane roads there have more than 40 000 cars a day travelling on them, yet the roads that we are talking about here—although this is an important issue—are really just feeder suburban roads. Although the member for Joondalup has done the right thing in raising this issue in Parliament, and Poseidon Road is a very important road with a very important school in his electorate—more closely for me it is actually the suburb I live in and is therefore one I have quite a lot of familiarity with; I have lived there for about 10 years now—to my mind, to equate a crossing on Poseidon Road, a 50-kilometre-an-hour, small suburban street, with the intersection of Wanneroo and Dundobar Roads is like equating chalk with cheese; the two do not even come close.

Something else that was mentioned was alternative traffic management systems that have been installed recently by this government. There is a lot of really good news, certainly in our local area. One that I would like to particularly highlight is the 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs, the light emitting diode—LED—ones that the member for Swan Hills mentioned. It is a very important initiative that this government seized and has absolutely run with.

One school that I will raise as an example of that in my electorate is Currambine Primary School. That school sits between my electorate and the member for Joondalup’s electorate. It is a pity that the member for Joondalup is not in the chamber at the moment, but he may have a good reason for that.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Is he? Okay.

When I first doorknocked Currambine Primary School’s immediate region under the previous government in 2008, it was not one of the Labor Party–held seats at that time, and the number one issue that was raised with me by residents in that locality was the urgent need for flashing, 40-kilometre-an-hour LED signs on Moore Drive. I was not even asking residents about that; this is what they were telling me. I am very proud to say that those signs were rapidly installed within months of the fortuitous election of the Liberal–National state government. Contrary to what the member for Joondalup said, that was a very happy day for the northern suburbs, and all those projects that were backed up in the pipeline have now started to flow. As I said, interestingly enough, I think that was the most pressing school crossing issue in the member for Joondalup’s electorate at that time. I was not a member of this Parliament at that time, so that issue may or may not have been raised here previously.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: No, that was not mentioned.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, I have noticed that.

We as a government have continued to roll out those flashing signs at crossings throughout the area according to the need at the crossings. This is well over and above any election commitment. In fact, I did not even have an election commitment for those flashing signs at Currambine Primary School. I just said that I would follow it up. I have found the road safety minister and both transport ministers incredibly receptive. Sometimes they have

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been too receptive! In one case, where Hodges Drive crosses between Prendiville Catholic College and Ocean Reef Senior High School, the signs had been installed before the ministers let me know they were going to install them! Therefore, I did raise that matter with the transport minister separately. However, by and large, the community is happy because it is getting a result and it is rolling out very quickly.

I will raise a point made by the member for Joondalup because he has been raising this issue in other electorates, including in Padbury in the member for Hillarys’ electorate, and in Dampier Avenue in my electorate, right near the member for Hillarys’ own home. The member for Joondalup talked about the flashing 40-kilometre-an-hour signs and said that he would prefer them at Poseidon Road, north of Eddystone Avenue. I found that a particularly unusual statement. As I live near Eddystone Avenue, I know that it is a main distributor road and that vehicles come down a hill there where they cross the freeway. Again, unfortunately, the member for Joondalup is not in the chamber. I would have liked the chance to question him about that particular one, as I thought it was an odd priority. However, it does highlight to me how good a job the government is doing by not politicising this issue. Although the department is installing these signs, rather than responding off the cuff to whichever issue a local member is complaining about at the time, it is clearly applying a little more scientific rigour to how it is rolling them out. In my experience, the department has been responding to the issue on dual carriageways and roads in 60, 70 and 80-kilometre-an-hour speed limit areas—for instance, at the intersection of Wanneroo and Dundee Roads in the member for Wanneroo’s electorate. Canning Highway is a far more important road to prioritise than is Poseidon Road or Dampier Avenue, although Dampier Avenue is a very important intersection.

I also want to say that in my experience in recent years our local government—picking up on the member for Mandurah’s comments—has been pulling its weight considerably with the infrastructure it has been putting in.

It is a very progressive council, which has some fantastic local members, and it has been progressing this. In fact, it is interesting to note some of these streets and crossings that were mentioned. Most of them would appear in their forward works program, which has been rolling out fairly steadily. Often their roadworks, island treatments and crossing treatments benefit from state government funding. We are partnering them in that. I hope that my own local council of Joondalup will be very receptive to possibly managing crossings in the future; I think that is a fantastic idea. I certainly agree that we should resource it to do that in partnership. Going back to the Poseidon example, some of those road traffic treatments—I probably should point out that I was the local councillor for Heathridge, although it is in the member for Joondalup’s electorate now —

Mr R.F. Johnson: A very good local councillor too.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you very much; I do not expect for a second that he would give me credit for the traffic islands that are now there, and for helping with the crossings in the meantime!

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I did, member; I raised it when it went on the forward works program, but it was not finished until after I became a member of this place.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you. If the member for Joondalup reads what I was saying, not necessarily from the politics side of it, and takes a bit more of a scientific and rigorous look at the most important intersections and crossings, I very strongly encourage him to catch up with me because a dual carriageway flows through the border between our electorates. I am talking about the crossing at Prince Regent Drive and Marmion Avenue from Heathridge to Ocean Reef Senior High School.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I know. It cannot be helped, but he may read this later. I would say that that is clearly the most dangerous crossing for both our electorates, one we tried to wrap our heads around on the council. It would be very good to have local government partnering on this as well. I am not quite sure what the solution is. I do not think the solution is to install 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs; it is only 200 metres from another set of traffic lights. It is quite a tricky problem, and it is a very, very dangerous intersection.

Mr J.E. McGrath interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Possibly, yes. It would be a hard one to man. I might chat to the minister about it. I am inviting the member for Joondalup to chat with me further on that if he would like. In addition to all the other traffic controlling measures local government has been doing with state government funding assistance, which the Minister for Police and the Minister for Transport have been rolling out in our local area and doing a

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fantastic job of, the minister has also responded very, very positively to this matter by issuing a direction that all these paid traffic wardens should remain in place. I do not think the motion suits the situation now.

Amendment to Motion

Mr A.P. JACOB: I move —

To delete all the words after “house” and substitute —

congratulates the Minister for Police on his decision to put on hold any removal of type A and type B crossings until the government and the Children’s Crossing and Road Safety Committee has reviewed the current policy to ensure children’s crossings are safe.

Point of Order

Mr M. McGOWAN: The motion moved was that the house condemns the government, and the member has moved a motion that, as far as I can tell, is directly contrary by seeking to congratulate the government.

Several government members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Those members do not understand anything about standing orders, so they might want to listen. It is not possible to move an amendment to a motion that is a direct negative of the motion on the notice paper. I suggest this motion seeks to negate the motion that the opposition moved and, therefore, it is out of order.

The SPEAKER: I am not going to take the point of order; it is not a direct negative, member for Rockingham, and I give the call to the member for Balcatta.

Debate Resumed

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta) [6.54 pm]: I congratulate the minister for the action he has taken today, for whatever reason he was driven to it. Perhaps it was through the member for Joondalup and the member for Girrawheen. It is great that the minister has now put a stop to the withdrawal of type A wardens. I speak on behalf of the staff, students and the community of West Balcatta Primary School. I am sure the member for Carine, who was in the house a moment ago, would give me his full support because he has children at that school. They are very concerned that the survey that they are aware of with respect to the type A warden on Amelia Street places it under threat of withdrawal. The West Balcatta Primary School is a fantastic school. The school principal, Mr Julian Vinciullo, has voiced his concerns that the withdrawal of that warden on Amelia Street would pose a real risk to the students and the parents coming to and from school. In his early days as a minister, the Minister for Police agreed to the removal of the warden on Cedric Street because West Balcatta is at the corner of Cedric and Amelia Streets. The withdrawal of that type A warden still very much concerns parents at the school. The crossing on Cedric Street was near a rise on the hill and near the kindergarten car park where cars pull in and out. I am told that there have been a number of near misses since that warden has been withdrawn. My representations fell on deaf ears there, but it is certainly great that, for whatever reason, the minister has taken a sudden decision to ensure the wardens will remain in place, and for that, I am sure the school community of West Balcatta will be most thankful. We trust it will be more than just a political delay and that there will actually be some changes that will provide greater certainty and, hopefully, mean that the crossing warden on Amelia Street for West Balcatta Primary School can remain there.

West Balcatta Primary School is an outstanding school. The school principal, Julian Vinciullo, has been recognised as an outstanding principal. When we go to the school and see the performances of the students we very quickly realise that it is a very special school where the students perform at a very high level. That has led to an increase in the student population, which is going from around 440 to about 500 next year, so it will mean more students go to that school in an area where there is not a great deal of new housing or new people moving in, although there might be a few younger families moving in. But a lot of the extra students come from out of the area because the school has such a good reputation. Those out-of-area students will be presumably driven there. However, for the students living nearby, it is a good thing if they can walk to school. It encourages physical activity and a sense of independence, but crossing Amelia Street, and Cedric Street to a lesser extent, poses real risks. It is unfortunate that this area has an issue with a very small number of people who tend to drive in a way that might be characterised as hooning; they have hotted up cars and they speed. That adds to parents’ concern for the safety of their children when crossing Amelia and Cedric Streets to get to West Balcatta Primary School. It is a fantastic school, which is growing. The threat that the warden would be removed was causing considerable concern. The fact that the minister today has suddenly done an about-face and been willing to put in place this moratorium is a very welcome move. I wish to again thank the minister for that.

Mr R.F. Johnson: How can you call it an about-face?

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Because on radio this morning, the minister was not willing to say it. He knew this debate was coming on this evening, so suddenly in question time he announced this major decision.

Mr R.F. Johnson: How was it an about-face?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is an about-face because the minister was trying to defend the situation, although I admit he was taking a low profile. He was talking about a review and he did not announce the outcome of the review that he announced a year or so ago. He also said a year or so ago that this issue was going to be handled by local government. When local government said it was not interested, he backed off. Transferring responsibility to the local government is back on the agenda today as a possibility. The minister is all over the shop. People will welcome that, at least for the moment, he has put a halt to the process that may have led to the withdrawal of wardens on the crossings outside our schools. Because this school is on the intersection, the roundabout where Cedric and Amelia Streets intersect, is also quite dangerous. The removal of a traffic warden from Amelia Street may lead more people to cross at the roundabout intersection. That should be discouraged. We do not want to do anything that encourages people to cross at that intersection because I think it is more dangerous than one of the streets that is some distance from the intersection. Again, minister, this move will be very welcome. I trust it will lead to a more permanent situation in which people will have security of a warden on Amelia Street outside West Balcatta Primary School.

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [6.59 pm]: I wish to add comments to this debate. Some very, very good points have been put forward this evening on crosswalk attendants. One of the points I want to start with is whether local councils have a role to play. I think they do; it has been pointed out that they are the primary body that this function should sit with.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
