

**CONTROL OF VEHICLES (OFF-ROAD AREAS) AMENDMENT BILL 2024**

*Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms H.M. Beazley (Minister for Local Government)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

*Second Reading*

**MS H.M. BEAZLEY (Victoria Park — Minister for Local Government)** [10.32 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Control of Vehicles (Off-road Areas) Amendment Bill 2024. This bill delivers on the Cook Government's commitment to support appropriate recreational off-road vehicle riding in Western Australia. Off-road vehicles, known commonly as ORVs, can include quad bikes, all-terrain vehicles and non-road licensed trailbikes. Riding ORVs is an increasingly popular recreational activity, and the Cook government recognises the critical importance of providing areas for riders to participate safely and legally. The Cook government also recognises the immense importance of ORV areas as significant tourist attractions.

This bill will deliver three main reforms to the Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978. Firstly, the bill will remove the requirement for a statutory declaration to be made when registering or renewing the registration of an off-road vehicle, which will enable transactions to be completed online. As members may know, off-road vehicle registration fees are collected into a special purpose account established under the ORV act. Local governments can then seek access to those funds to support the establishment and operation of ORV areas. An ORV must be registered to be ridden in an ORV area.

Funds from the ORV account have recently supported upgrade works at the Pinjar, York, Ledge Point and Lancelin ORV areas. At present, the requirement for a statutory declaration means that all registrations and annual renewals must be paper based, and requires the ORV owner to attend a Department of Transport licensing centre. As registrations must be renewed annually, this process is a real impediment to ensuring that ORVs are registered. This cumbersome process has also impeded the collection of revenue into the ORV account. To date, less than \$125 000 in registration fees has been collected annually, and it is estimated that only a small proportion of eligible ORVs are currently registered.

Secondly, the bill will introduce the option of registration stickers to be affixed to ORVs as an alternative to registration plates. This option responds to requests from ORV users and advocacy groups.

Thirdly, the bill will increase penalties for existing offences, such as riding an ORV in a prohibited area, riding dangerously or riding an unregistered vehicle in an ORV area. The existing penalties within the ORV act have remained largely unchanged since 1978 and have fallen behind comparable penalties under the Road Traffic Act 1974 and Road Traffic Code. The current maximum for a court-imposed penalty is \$1 000. There is a maximum of \$100 for offences against the regulations, and a \$50 maximum for infringement penalties. This bill will increase all court-imposed penalties to a maximum of \$5 000, up from the current \$1 000. The maximum penalties for offences under regulations and local laws will also increase, from \$50 to \$500. The increased penalties are intended to deter illegal and reckless riding, which can pose significant safety risks and cause serious damage to our natural environment.

I understand that these are the most significant reforms to the act since it was first enacted back in 1978. This bill is another step in the Cook government's ongoing work to support safe and legal ORV riding. For instance, the Cook government recently secured the future of the popular Pinjar ORV area as part of the decision to end pine harvesting in the Gngangara state forest, which will preserve the roosting habitat of the endangered black cockatoo and support the continued recreational use of the area. Work to support other ORV areas and potentially establish new ORV areas remains ongoing. This bill reflects the hard work and advocacy of many dedicated people. I recognise and thank the members of the Off-Road Vehicles Advisory Committee and acknowledge the Recreational Trailbike Riders Association of WA for its advocacy and work to support off-road riding in Western Australia. I also recognise the proactive work of local governments such as the Shire of York that have taken a proactive role in the development and maintenance of ORV areas.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)**.