

**ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL AMENDMENT (FUNCTIONS) BILL 2010**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 17 November 2010.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [4.01 pm]: I am very interested in speaking to the Road Safety Council Amendment (Functions) Bill 2010, which was introduced by the member for Girrawheen. All members in this place are, I think, very much aware of the importance of road safety, and very much aware of the great trauma that traffic accidents cause in our communities. I refer to not only the pain and suffering caused to the people who are injured in a traffic accident, but indeed the great trauma and tragedy caused for family and extended family members if a person is unfortunately killed in a road traffic accident. I was listening to a local radio station the other day, and some interesting facts about Western Australia's road traffic statistics, particularly deaths on roads, were highlighted. Although our population has increased markedly over the last 20 years, the statistics highlighted that the number of deaths on our roads compared with the equivalent figure 20 years ago is much reduced.

However, as has been very commonly stated, any death on our roads is a tragedy. Therefore, road safety and the work and functions of the Road Safety Council are of particular interest to all members in this place. Significant progress has been made with regard to the role of the Road Safety Council. It is important that members in this place and indeed other leaders in our communities continue to work together and look to ways to continue to reduce the number of road traffic fatalities in our communities and ensure that we support programs and projects that aim to educate drivers in our communities. Certainly, the earlier we seek to educate drivers, the better. On that point, the other day I was very interested to receive in my mailbox a letter from Ms Tania Gigg. Tania is a coordinator of SDERA—that is, the School Drug and Education Road Aware project, which focuses very much on working in schools to provide professional learning opportunities for and resources to schools, day care centres and community groups that work with children aged zero to 18 years. SDERA involves a range of activities, but its road safety focus is on getting out the message of the importance of road safety as early as possible to children and those who work with children and young people. An example of this group's activities is the Smart Steps program, which is directed to children aged zero to four years. Smart Steps is a SDERA program that provides information and projects for parents in relation to road play and pedestrian safety awareness. I think it is very, very important.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** It is a good program

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is a very good program. I admire Tania Gigg. I used to teach with Tania. She is a professional teacher who has gone into this particular field over the last few years. She is the Peel region's consultant. Tania has young children—a young family. She is working very hard in the Peel to ensure that SDERA's programs are available to the local community.

I think all, but particularly those who, like me, grew up in a community such as the one I did in Northam, where children walked to school, would relate to this program. It was previously commonplace to walk or to ride a bike to school. I lived in a part of Northam where it was rare to be driven to school, and it was only in the 1970s that I was at primary school. We lived about 1.5 kilometres from school. I am sure the minister has statistics to show that the parents of children who live a few hundred metres from school are now, unfortunately, because of the safety concerns and the massive volume of, and the types of, traffic on the roads, choosing to drive their children to school.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** I think in fairness it is also because of the stranger danger awareness and the types of people roaming our streets and hanging around schools. Parents quite responsibly prefer to take their children to and from school.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I think it very sad that we are in that era now in which the first choice of transport to school is not walking or even riding a bike.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** That is until they get to a certain age.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is right. I am also quite amazed when I visit and talk to my road traffic attendants or school crossing attendants, because they play a critical role.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** They are traffic wardens.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Traffic wardens play a very critical role, particularly in my electorate. There are some very busy roads in Mandurah. I am sure members have busy roads in their electorates, but the roads in Mandurah are far busier than they have been. Pinjarra Road, the Mandurah bypass, Lakes Road and Mandurah Terrace are all very busy roads that carry literally thousands of vehicles a day, including at peak times in the morning and afternoons when children go to and from schools. I take my hat off to these traffic wardens. I will not be critical

of the minister, but I know that the issue of who should hold the responsibility for traffic wardens is an ongoing boil for the minister. I think the minister needs to lance that boil! I know the minister has been doing a review and that Western Australia Police has a very specific view on traffic wardens. I had an experience late last year when one of the very busy roads in my electorate, Lakes Road, was without a traffic warden for two weeks. I went down there with parents who were very concerned. We tried to get the local police to escort the children across the road, but their resources are too stretched for them to be there in the mornings. The superintendent said to me that he would try to have police officers there, but he could not guarantee it if there were other priorities.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Why was Lakes Road without a traffic warden for two weeks—illness?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I wrote to the minister about this. The traffic warden who was usually there in the mornings resigned due to ill health. There was a schedule to train some new traffic wardens, but in the interim they could not fill the position. They have filled the position now, but it was really quite concerning. The situation identified for me that as local members we need to be very aware of who is responsible for traffic wardens in our communities. Traffic wardens play a crucial role in the ongoing safety of children, and I take my hat off to them. That aspect of road safety is important.

I referred to the issue of the responsibility for traffic wardens as a boil. I know this minister will have heard local governments say, “We do not want it. It is not our responsibility. It is cost shifting. Do not give it to us.”

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** I am prepared to give local governments the funds.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Absolutely, but local governments are saying no to the minister. The police service questions whether it is its role, given that it has very important front-line policing responsibilities. However, someone has to take this responsibility and a department or organisation must make sure traffic wardens are resourced appropriately and that the measures and mechanisms are in place to replace wardens who are sick on certain days or whatever.

The experience I had late last year at Lakes Road was frightening. A group of parents took it upon themselves to escort kids across the road. That is admirable, but they had no legal right to do that. They had no legal standing. My understanding of the law is that parents could be liable if something goes wrong when they voluntarily escort children across the road without being authorised to do so, whereas wardens and police officers are authorised. It is concerning because in this instance the parents were frustrated and wanted to escort the children across the road. On this morning I did it myself; I escorted a group of kids on bikes across. Even then I thought: what happens if someone comes through and collects a couple of these kids? The first question would be, “What were you doing taking on the role of a warden?” and then, “What authorisation do you have?” The answer would be that I have none. I think that is a concern. In cities that are growing in density and have neighbourhoods around schools and main thoroughfares that lead to schools, this problem is not going to go away; it will probably increase and we will see more potential conflicts between pedestrians and road users. I know that the Road Safety Council looks at issues such as this and it will advise the minister, but we really need a decision to be made.

I think there is a role for local government. As former councillors in local government, when the minister and I wear our local councillor hats, we love to tell state and federal governments not to cost shift to us. However, if the minister is offering money to local governments, they have the opportunity to take an active role in this aspect of road safety. I think local governments should explore that opportunity.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** I wholeheartedly agree. To me local governments deal with local families, local schools, and local children, and they would be ideally placed to manage the traffic wardens. Some local governments would be prepared to take on that role provided they got the funding. I have offered them funding, but WALGA as a whole has turned it down because councils do not want the aggravation or the work involved in managing traffic wardens. To me it is a very simple thing for local governments to manage. Instead of a police officer seeing the children across the road, local governments can send one of their rangers or council staff who has done the easy training—it does not take long at all—and has the authority to see the children across the road safely. That is the easiest, simplest and most focused solution. As the member is probably aware, the Department of Education and Main Roads Western Australia do not want the responsibility. The police service does not want the responsibility either, because it does not see it as its major role. However, police officers will always fill in whenever possible, because of the safety of children. The member mentioned that he and a couple of parents saw the children across the road. Is the member a parent at that school?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** No, but it is a school I have a lot of contact with.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** The member for Mandurah is a very hardworking local member; a conscientious one. I suggest that where we have a school like that with committed parents, two or three parents take the course and become qualified traffic wardens and only use the responsibility when necessary.

Mr David Templeman; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Rob Johnson

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**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is an interesting concept. The four parents are single working mums who had arranged with their bosses to arrive at work a bit later than they normally would. They normally leave home to go to work once their kids have left for school. These parents stayed back over this two-week period because they were concerned for the safety of the children. I think the minister's suggestion is not a bad idea.

Schools also need to become a little proactive. I am probably generalising, but I suspect some schools like to keep an arm's length from traffic wardens. I do not think that is a good idea. Schools always say that they are not responsible for the kids once they leave the premises. However, technically, schools are responsible. Effectively, as a teacher or school principal I would be concerned if there was an issue about a kid's safety when going to school or returning home from school. If I was a principal or a teacher and there were kids in my class who I knew were in danger going home or coming to school, I would take an active interest in that. I think schools are also in this debate and the discussions that the minister has obviously been having over a period of time; they need to take a role here.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Will the member talk about the bill at some stage?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am using a pincer movement here! I will pinch the minister very hard shortly, but he will not see it coming! Schools also need to play an active role and I think any effective primary or secondary principal would be interested in that concept. I return briefly to School Drug Education and Road Aware, which plays a very important role in our community. SDERA runs the pre-driver education program called Keys for Life. I am not sure whether the minister is aware of this.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Yes. I think you'll find it's funded through the road trauma trust fund.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** It's funded by the federal government I think, minister.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Is it? I am not 100 per cent sure. I think that the nature of driver training has changed markedly in the past 10 to 15 years. I know legislation has passed through this place that has strengthened, if we like, the whole process that a young driver is required to go through, and for good reason. I remember back in the 1970s and 1980s, when I was growing up in Northam, people were always told—it was not a myth; it was reality—if they wanted to get their licence to go to Wundowie, because Dad could drive them there and the local sergeant in charge will say, "Look, go drive around the block and come back here and you'll have your licence." I know it sounds like an old wives' tale, but a lot of this happened in the country in particular. Why? One reason is that quite often, in the country in particular, a lot of young people had been driving before they even got close to their driving age. The reality is that a lot of young people had been driving, whether they were out on farms or even in the local acreage, and they were taught to drive by their folks. We must remember that in the past 15 to 20 years, again, the volume of traffic on our roads has increased exponentially. I can remember as a young fellow on weekends driving around Perth trying to find the rostered service station. I had guests here to dinner last night and we were talking about this. I said, "You'd drive around Perth, spend half an hour trying to find where the rostered station was and then put five bucks worth of fuel in the car!" But even then, the amount of traffic on the roads was far less than it is now. Of course, young drivers get a bit peeved with us more mature people because they think we are trying to restrict them. They say, "You had it good and you're trying to make it hard for us." However, the reality is that young drivers now seeking to drive on the average Western Australian road have far more potential threats, if we like, to them than ever before, even though the quality of our roads has probably improved markedly as well, particularly in —

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** And the quality of the vehicles.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The quality of the vehicles—absolutely! However, the reality is that there are more people on the road, so these early intervention programs that engage young people even before they are eligible to get the keys in their hands are very worthwhile.

I also went through that period when driver education programs were run in a lot of high schools after school. A lot of the schools used to use their own vehicles and would teach young people who had a learner's permit, so they were engaged in learning there. Again, this was done in an environment in which there were fewer cars on the road. I have to talk about the type of cars that a lot of us would have done our training in. I did my training in a Datsun 120Y. It was my mum's baby-pooch yellow Datsun 120Y. The amazing thing about the Datsun 120Y is it is probably one of the most amazing vehicles we will ever see. My mum and dad had this Datsun 120Y into which they fitted a family of five—three kids in the back—and they used to tow a boat to Mandurah. My parents got their beach place in Mandurah back in the 1970s. We would tow the boat all the way from Northam, with three kids in the back of the car, and we fit everything in the little boot, which was probably no more than one metre long by 45 centimetres wide—what we did not fit in would go in the boat or between our legs in the back. There was no air conditioning, but I tell you what —

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Luxury!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It was luxury, lads! But it was one of the best cars to learn how to drive in because it was a very easy to drive manual car.

Another thing that I think is interesting—the minister might have more statistics on this than I—is that I suspect a larger number of drivers’ licences are now granted for people driving automatic vehicles than manuals. I think that 20 years ago it was probably the other way around; a higher percentage of drivers got their drivers’ licences using a manual vehicle. I think the proportion of people getting their licences in automatic vehicles might be 60–40, but it could be even higher. I do not know whether that has anything to do with people’s capacity to manage a vehicle, but if people learn how to drive with a four on the floor or a five on the floor, as most of them are now —

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Or three on the tree, like I did!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Or three on the tree —

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Or on the column!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We had to think a bit because if a car had one of those column things we had to have one hand on the wheel, one on the column and use our foot, and I used to use the longest finger of my hand to do the flick at the same time.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Is that the one that came out the side like that?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My grandfather had one of them! I can remember going to the farm in the 1970s when I was very young—I was at primary school—and my grandfather had a truck that had one. When he wanted to turn —

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Left, he’d go like that!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is true! For the benefit of the *Hansard*, it was a mechanical arm, basically, a piece of tin shaped like a hand, that had a bend at the elbow that had a little wire flick and if he wanted to stop, it would turn and make a bend at the elbow and do a stop hand signal. If he wanted to turn, it would just extend out.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** How old are you?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am a young man—very young.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** What did it do if he wasn’t stopping or turning?

**Mr A.J. Simpson:** It stayed in there.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes, it just stayed down the side and he could pull it out.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member is having a trip down memory lane!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I do love nostalgia, Mr Deputy Speaker, I know you do, too. I know you are a nostalgic man.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am sure that the member for Nollamara has some probably more interesting stuff to say about this —

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** It’s probably more likely she’ll actually speak to the bill.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** She probably will, knowing the member —

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Although I found your conversation very interesting.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Knowing the member’s experience in these things, I am sure that she will.

I will perhaps finish with some points on the Road Safety Council Amendment (Functions) Bill 2010 itself, which I am sure the house will find very worthwhile. It is good to see that there is a massive audience. The member for Girrawheen’s leading sentence in her second reading speech is very pertinent and very sobering—that is, that the Towards Zero road safety strategy calculates the financial cost.

[Quorum formed.]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to tell members that I did not call that quorum but I am very pleased that we have an audience. They have missed a very nostalgic trip back in time, which included Datsun 120Ys and other things.

I conclude my remarks by reminding members that the financial cost, calculated by the Towards Zero road safety strategy, of a single death or serious injury on our roads averages \$600 000. That is an unbelievable figure.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Human cost.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is right; that is a human cost. When that compounds across the number of tragic deaths and injuries on our roads, both minor and severe, the impact on people who find themselves permanently incapacitated by a road trauma incident is very sobering for all of us.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** In fact, the cost for critical injuries is higher than death.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes. That is a very sobering thing for all of us to contemplate.

The idea behind this bill, as has been outlined in the member for Girrawheen's second reading speech, is to ensure that victims of road trauma or family members who have experienced road trauma have access to those funds to deal with some of the emotional and psychological costs that they or their loved ones are experiencing.

I live in a region that has had a number of very tragic road accidents over a long period. The opening and the extension of the Forrest Highway has been a godsend, certainly for the Old Coast Road, where we had some appalling accidents over a long period. Even with the opening of the Forrest Highway, which has now been open for just over a year, we have already had about four fatalities, from memory. That is a good road. It is a very modern road. It is a great stretch of road. It has great visibility. In my view, it is well designed, yet we have already had at least four deaths too many on that road.

I commend the member for Girrawheen for bringing forward this bill. I will be interested in listening to the minister when he responds at the appropriate time to some of the issues that I and other members have raised because, like everyone in this place, I know that he shares a passion for making our roads as safe as possible and reducing the number of tragedies that we have seen over many, many years.

**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Nollamara) [4.32 pm]:** I, too, rise to speak on the Road Safety Council Amendment (Functions) Bill 2010. It comes somewhat as a surprise to me that money that we put aside for the Road Safety Council cannot be put into trauma counselling for road trauma victims. I say this because of my experience and knowledge of what accidents and traumas can do to people. My background is as a workers' compensation advocate for many years—six years on the tools and about three or four years sitting on the board and setting up other such offices in different unions. One of the areas that we covered was ambulance officers. I was absolutely surprised when I became the workers' compensation officer at the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union to find out the situation for ambulance officers, who witness some of the most hideous road traumas that we normal folk could not imagine. The Minister for Police could probably imagine what these people witness because police officers attend those accidents as well.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** And firefighters and SES volunteers.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** That is right. When I started as a workers' compensation officer, these officers did not have any trauma counselling. I was dealing with a gentleman who had post-traumatic stress disorder. When someone who works in that field witnesses a trauma, they often tend to push it to the back of their mind. This gentleman attended a terrible accident in which a number of children were killed. He had young children himself. He turned up to work at the ambulance depot the next day and his chief came in and said, "How are you going, mate? Is it all going all right? Bit of a hard thing to deal with yesterday, wasn't it?" The gentleman who witnessed the accident said, "Yes, it was terrible." His boss said, "You just talk to me if you need anything." That was the form of counselling that was provided when I started working in that area. That was not long ago. I started working as a workers' compensation advocate in that area in 1997. My understanding is that St John Ambulance still does not provide specific trauma counselling. A chaplain now attends roadside accidents if people want them. The impact on this young man, who was in the early years in his profession, was magnified after what it did to him, his family, his extended family and his capacity to have an ongoing working career in something that he loved and had chosen. Having seen that, I can only imagine what it is like for people who live through that trauma—those people who are sitting next to the person who was fatally wounded in a car accident or even seriously injured.

We heard a much lighter discussion about different experiences when listening to the member for Mandurah. My experience of the need for proper and direct counselling as a result of the impact of trauma was gained when I was held up in a bank. I was 19 years old. It was New Year's Eve. I was at university. New Year's Eve was on a Saturday night, so I had had a heavy-duty Friday night enjoying myself to get ready for New Year's Eve. I got a phone call from my boss saying that she could not make it into the bank that morning—it was actually a building society; they are now banks—and she asked whether I could go in and relieve. I put on my nice little HBF zip-up uniform, which was gorgeous, in the heat. It had that wool stuff that sticks to the body. I marched down to the

Cottesloe branch, opened up and within five minutes of opening up and putting my money into the till, a bloke walked in and said to me, “This is a hold-up. I want your money!” I was 19. I was full of myself. I said, “Yeah, right; show me the gun!” He certainly showed me the gun. It was “Grey Beard”. “Grey Beard” was very famous. He was also very pleasant, saying please and thank you.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** He lived next door to the deputy commissioner.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I never knew that.

I was standing there experiencing that trauma. I know that it was not perpetrated against me as Janine Freeman; it was perpetrated against me as a worker. We closed the bank, the police arrived, we did all the stuff and within 25 minutes there was a counsellor in that building sitting down asking how I was feeling. The next day a counsellor rang me to check on how I was feeling. I was 19. I had a great story to go out and tell everyone on New Year’s Eve. I went to the biggest party I had ever been to. I walked around saying, “Guess what? I got held up today.” I did my own trauma counselling in my own way, which happens when one is invincible and aged 19. The woman behind me who was working with me was a mother of two small children. She had seen how I responded to this man and she had gone into a complete meltdown because I had not done things in a quick way and she saw it as a complete threat to her life. She could not continue to work for some period after that because for her that trauma, even though she was not directly involved in it, was so acute in how it impacted on her personal life. It affected her financial stability, her financial security and her family, but she was able to deal with it through proper counselling and she returned to work successfully.

In both cases I have seen people suffer traumas in workplaces. I gave the example of St John Ambulance, which is one of the bodies I worked with. I worked as a workers’ compensation officer in a variety of areas, dealing with childcare workers, carers in nursing homes, education assistants and a range of other workers. They experienced traumas, though at the moment no examples are coming to mind. If they had received early intervention or early counselling when things led them to stress, perhaps issues relating to child care, they would have been in a much better situation to deal with it. They not only have to deal with it themselves but they also have to deal with their families to express what is happening. As local members of Parliament, we often come across people who have witnessed road traumas in their own neighbourhoods. They hear squealing tyres, they hear the thump of an accident and they hear the ambulances come. We see things that confront our sense of fear for what lays before us in terms of our own mortality. The Buddha talks about the fact that the greatest truth is the truth of impermanence. We are confronted when we see trauma, not only because we see something that is horrific, but we are confronted on a personal level about how that happens. That is not to say we are not sympathetic to what we see. We are completely and absolutely sympathetic. We recognise it as a personal experience. We have all seen what is unfolding in Christchurch. Many of us have visited Christchurch and we can relate to what these people are going through. We go to work, we go to lunch and come back from lunch, but to suddenly see buildings falling about us is confronting. We can personally relate to that. That is the same with road trauma. Some communities are quite substantially affected by road trauma.

For example, the corner of Butterworth Avenue and Beach Road, Koondoola, an area that I represent, has a history of road accidents. When a motorist comes out of the Malaga industrial area on Beach Road, the road is uphill. Frankly, it is a high area that has a great view over the city. I am always amazed that Koondoola does not have better land prices. It has fantastic views, it is a 15 to 20-minute drive from the city; it is a great part of the world to live. If motorists want to turn into Butterworth Avenue, which takes them into Koondoola on the right, or perhaps coming down to their left, there is oncoming traffic from Beach Road. On 14 October 2009, a motorcyclist and his wife, riding pillion, were travelling down that road. They were not speeding; they were not doing anything they should not have been doing. A mother taking her child to school pulled across the road and killed those two people. She would have been devastated. The families of those people would have been devastated.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** She might not have been speeding either.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** She did nothing wrong, other than the fact that she could not see as she was driving into the sun. The sun comes up in the east. Maybe the accident was in the afternoon. I know there was an aspect of the sun. For those whom this happened to, I would like to say that I send my deepest sympathies and compassion for what they dealt with. I hope they do not mind me using these as examples. I am trying to express the impact that it had on the community.

On 25 September 2004, five years earlier, five people, including an eight-year-old boy, died at the same intersection. That community was shaken by those fatalities. There had been quite a few minor accidents, but those fatalities have so shaken them that when it happened again in 2009, the community wanted to put a stop to it. They put up the crosses that we so often see on the roadside. A public campaign was started to end the trauma; to find a solution. Those people needed assistance and counselling. Those people needed help to put into words why they did not want to go through this again. Thankfully, because of the previous state government and the

generosity of this state government to keep \$1 million that was allocated for the Koondoola redevelopment project, which could not be allocated because of issues with property ownership, money was allocated for lights to be installed at the intersection of Butterworth Avenue and Beach Road. That meant some resolution for those people. Resolution is not just about installing lights; often resolution is about talking about fears and emotions. It is about bringing some sort of resolution.

I would like to read something that moved me to tears when I read it. To tell members the truth, I am easily moved to tears. It relates to how someone came to terms with their grief. At the intersection of Mirrabooka Avenue and Reid Highway the current government has committed funding to build an overpass. It is about time too; and I thank the government for it. So that it is on the record, on 12 August 2008 there was an article relating to black spot concerns in Mirrabooka Avenue. Members have heard me talk about the Balga Action Group before. It is a major community group that lobbied for that overpass. The group, quite rightly, says the building of the overpass is the result of community action. The heading reads —

Why can't \$72 million, an incredible amount of money, fund two bridges? ask puzzled Balga Action Group members Colin Tyler, Cr Leonie Getty, Alan Stafford, Keith Merritt and Keith Jones.

They have been justified in their questions because now the discovery is that \$72 million could indeed fund two bridges. The Labor state government made the Mirrabooka overpass possible by ensuring that \$72 million was available for Alexander Drive. Thankfully Main Roads WA ensured that the additional money, gained because the Alexander Drive overpass ran under budget, was allocated to this area. It is amazing that it was not done before. Three times in a year motorists had been taken to hospital after serious crashes at the intersection of Reid Highway and Mirrabooka Avenue. Bob Kucera stood in this house and spoke about the accident that occurred on 30 May 2008. An elderly man, riding a power-assisted tricycle, left the footpath on Mirrabooka Avenue, crossed Reid Highway to a pedestrian island and into the path of a Mitsubishi van. Those traumas also had a massive impact on that community. Thankfully that community could act through the Balga Action Group, which was able to get a result. There are many families that do not. Many families need a counselling service to ring or some support group with knowledge of how peer support works.

In the union movement we have this thing called co-counselling. Sometimes quite a few things have to be dealt with; for example, loss of employment. A phone call may be received on a Friday night to say, "I just got sacked. I've got my mortgage to pay and this and this." On a Friday night the boss is not likely to be available. The stress of a person thinking somehow they are responsible for someone's welfare and wellbeing can be quite hard. There are many people who provide peer support counselling. They can talk about the good work that is done and the good things that happen in the community; not just the bad. The benefits of roads are pointed out during counselling. How can we better educate people in the area of road safety? How can we better deal with those issues? It seems to me that that is a perfectly reasonable area into which to direct money from the road trauma trust fund. It is certainly worthy of the fines members in this place would pay if they received any speeding infringements, as I did some years ago.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I also recently dealt with an Ethiopian family who came to grief at the Mirrabooka Avenue–Yirrigan Drive–Nollamara Avenue intersection, one of the black spots. The minister might be aware that this was, I think, reported on by Channel Seven at one stage. Knowing how to deal with their situation was far more mystifying for them than for any of us. The unfortunate factor attached to that accident was that the mother was likely to have been at fault. This poor, poor woman lost her life and the family was left to deal with all the issues involving the legal system in Western Australia while they were grieving. They were relatively recent immigrants—they had been here for only about five years—in the Ethiopian community, a long-established community in Western Australia. Again, only three or four weeks ago I sat next to a young African woman who had been in a minor accident. She had just dropped her child at child care and a young P-plate driver ran into her in his car. Not only was it terrible for him because he was feeling guilty, but also she was bewildered about what should happen next, even about how to get her car off the road and call a tow truck. We were able to assist her with that. It would help to have even a phone line available to help sort those things out, so that people can ring and say, "I've just had an accident." Sometimes help with road trauma can be as simple as advising people whom to contact. With that help, people involved in road trauma can be in control and can make the next judgement about what to do. I discovered when I was dealing with workers' compensation that stressful issues cause people to feel that they have lost control. They feel they have lost control of their working lives, their personal lives and many other things. My work was about trying to help them become empowered to regain that control. I think it is vital we think about that.

I found on the internet Victoria's Road Trauma Support Services website. A story on that site about a chap called Martin moved me to become teary. I will not tell it now because a girl crying in Parliament is not a good look. Frankly, I urge members to look at that website, [www.rtssv.org.au](http://www.rtssv.org.au). Martin's story is about the death of his young

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son, who had done an apprenticeship in horticulture and was pursuing his career. Martin was confident his son had done all the right things as a novice driver. He had driven the required number of hours and practised driving with his parents in the car. Martin tells how he used to worry about his son when he rode his motorcycle, yet Martin had to deal with the death of his son in a car accident. Martin went to trauma counselling support groups and met people who had unresolved traumas. I challenge members to read his story; he told it in a beautiful way. With the counselling, he felt he needed to move on. There is no doubt he felt all the pain and grief that goes with that sort of loss.

I was recently at a family function when I walked over to speak to one of my very distant relatives. I come from a large extended family. As I think I have said in this house before, we have a five-year reunion at Toodyay with about 700 people. As a result, we all wear hats and certain types of tops to remind us of where we come from. That is just one side of the family. I went to another family event that happens every Christmas.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** They could be the population of Tasmania!

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** I hope you don't have to send them all a birthday card!

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** No. I love being part of an extended family; it makes me aware of the difficulties Indigenous people felt when they were removed from their families. Sometimes I forget my all family members' names, so I have to take my sister with me, who says, "That's Aunty so and so and that's cousin so and so." She should be the politician because she remembers names!

The story I have to tell is about a third removed cousin, who was taking off his jacket by his car at the side of the road in Crawley just outside the University of WA. I think he worked at the university. He was about to hang his coat on a coat hanger in the back of his car, when a young man, who had been drinking at the university tavern, drove into him and killed him. I was amazed at the intensity my other cousin showed when he spoke of the injustice of our cousin's passing due to that accident.

When I was a workers' compensation officer, dealing with people under stress, I learnt very quickly to say to people, "I'm not a counsellor; I can tell you about how the law works and I can advocate for you at the conciliation and review, but I do not have the skills to help you deal with your trauma." Although we can talk to our friends and the people in our workplaces, we need trained people to help us work through our anger, our grief, our feelings of hopelessness and our inability to find a satisfactory resolution. This bill seems to me to be a very, very good way of providing those trained people.

I also found on the internet a site called "Support at the Time of Need", a joint project between Road Trauma Support Services and Victoria Police, which is well worth looking at. As part of this project, after someone has had a car crash, they are given a pamphlet that describes the symptoms of trauma and suggests how to access counselling support. It enables early intervention. When I was working in workers' compensation, the Department of Education refused to wait until the Insurance Commission of WA accepted liability for workers' compensation claims. As soon as someone lodged a claim, the department would intervene early by providing rehabilitation people and doctors to work intensely with the person who was absent from work. The department did not want to know at that stage whether workers' compensation would come into play because the department believed that early intervention would help. The cost of the department's claims to ICWA—although workers' compensation in government is self-insured, workers' compensation premiums are paid to ICWA—halved because it did the early work.

The cost of trauma in our community is enormous. We do not always notice it because they take it home, but it has an impact on their work and on their lives. But, as members of Parliament, we can do something really worthwhile by ensuring that some of the money that goes to the Road Safety Council goes towards funding to help people deal with trauma. Something that is life changing does not have to be life destroying. We should make sure we give people the capacity to ring a counselling line to talk to a counsellor; to go on line and know they are not alone in what they are experiencing.

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston)** [4.58 pm]: I too will tell a few stories about when I was growing up, and of some recent events that have occurred since I have been in public life. I have seen some terrible things and probably been made more acutely aware of what can happen than perhaps I would have had I been part of the general community. It is my view, firstly, that funding should be made available to groups such as trauma counselling groups because, as I say, I have seen some of the consequences of road trauma. I am sure that most people in public life have stories to tell about people asking for help—not just monetary help, but also physical and mental help. Those are the sorts of things that result from road trauma, whether it be a death, a serious injury or a minor injury. People may have a lot of trouble adjusting to their new way of life, or to the loss of a loved one, which is always very difficult to deal with.

I am sure that most people in this place are parents. They, like me, would dread to hear a knock on the door in the early hours of the morning or to see a police car pull up, knowing that something has gone wrong, and to



then have to go through the pain of being told about an accident down the road or on the highway and deal with the trauma that comes with a death or a major accident.

Recently, six people from the Collie community were killed in very quick succession on the Coalfields highway. I knew five of those six people personally. It is very difficult to deal with that trauma. But we also have to deal with the aftermath. I will tell members one of the stories. Quite some time back, a very popular young footballer in town decided that he would get in a car after a party, which my daughter was at, and go to Bunbury with some friends. On the way back, there was an accident and his life was taken. His parents, who are very good acquaintances through football and from my schooldays, found it very difficult to adjust. Health issues came to the fore. They needed the support of a trauma group. They needed someone to be on the front foot to help them deal with the loss of their son, a very popular young bloke. The side issue to this story is education. That young bloke was great friends with my daughter. My 16-year-old daughter was at the same party and they asked her to get in the car and go with them to a nightclub in Bunbury. She declined because dad had said, "The damage that I will do to you will probably be as much as having a car accident! You don't do those sorts of things." I am talking about education. My daughter had the sense to say no to some guys who were going to a nightclub in Bunbury, 60 kilometres away, and then returning to Collie. I was thankful for my harping, pushing, poking, prodding, ear twisting and every other threat that I could think of about getting into cars at a young age with someone who has been drinking and travelling in the early hours of the morning. I was thankful in one way, but I was certainly distressed in another. There was a lot of crying in our house by the young girls when they got the phone call telling them that one of their friends had passed on. They were great friends with a growing relationship. As a parent, I was glad that I had pushed that barrow.

I am certainly not one to brag about my driving record or the way I drove cars. When I was doing my apprenticeship in Perth, I got pulled up in Murray Street one day for going over the double white lines. I was given the choice of going to an education session on road safety or paying a fine of about \$15, which I certainly could not afford on my wages. I vividly remember the program that was shown on that night out—I call it a night out because it was somewhere up that end of town; it was so long ago that I cannot remember where it was—because people vomited and the young bloke next to me fainted. It was an American program. The realism of and make-up used in today's movies cannot compete with this real-life program. It had horrific accidents, and I can explain each one of them. Remember, what is on television and in the movies has changed a fair bit over time. These accidents were realistic enough to cause people to vomit and faint. We have moved on. The Sunday before last, one of the news shows had a story about a similar program being run in a school. The girls and boys at that school became distressed by what was shown to them. I will bet members that the imprint that was left in their minds is the same as that left in my mind when I was about 18 years of age. I have carried it with me throughout my life. Maybe we are not doing enough of that. Maybe we are being a bit soft by saying that that may cause young people distress. But it is far better if the distress affects them in the right way because they have seen what happens in real life when there is an accident and they have seen the blood and guts—certainly not the glory—that goes with a bad accident. It is far better to have that out in the open and for young people to be educated on these issues before an accident. Young people might lose a mate in an accident or he might have severe physical or mental injuries that he may never recover from. They might say that they will pick him up or go around and see him, but we know that people become resilient to the initial impacts of a person's injuries because those impacts do not affect them and so they put a gap between themselves and that other person.

They are the types of issues I would like money to be spent on. We should be a bit more brutal with some in-your-face educational programs. Some of the ads I see on television may impact on young people, but sometimes I wonder about that. Research has been done. I understand that and I do not criticise that. Sometimes we have to be a bit blunter, as members in this place are, to get the job done. People try to cope with friends, relations and even children who have had an accident. The problems are more obvious in country towns, as people who have been involved in an accident have to travel to get physiotherapy or medical treatment. One story that comes to mind is about a young bloke who had broken his leg. Because the leg was badly broken, each week he had to have the bolts adjusted to stretch his leg. It made people sick to look at his leg. Every week he had to go to the doctor to get the bolts adjusted to stretch his leg. Happily now, he still has his foot—at one stage they were going to cut it off—but there is no flexibility in his leg or ankle. He is back in the workforce now, but I think he was out of the workforce for nearly two years. That also impacts on families. Who supports those people? Sickness benefits do not provide support. It is an assistance package; it certainly does not support those people all along the line.

People from country towns who have a severe injury may be in intensive care for quite some time and may need to be relocated to, or have to travel long distances to, Royal Perth Hospital or Shenton Park for rehabilitation. There is family dislocation, so the impacts are felt all along the line. What I am trying to point out is that we need to spend as much money as possible at the front end to try to prevent accidents. People do not realise the full impacts until they are affected—until it hits home and they live and breathe it. If we can do one little bit to

stop that along the way, we should. Reshuffling the deckchairs—taking them from one area and putting them into another—is not the answer. I agree wholeheartedly that the majority of the money collected from speeding fines should go towards education or even road improvements when there are some problems in that respect.

There are trauma and support groups out there. We see the work that they do, but we just do not appreciate it. In country towns, the volunteers who go in the ambulance to attend an accident may know the person who is lying on the ground. I could tell members some stories about what they do to make life a bit easier for the person who has to go and look at their child who has been killed in an accident. These volunteers comb the children's hair and tidy them up before the parent looks at them. That plays on that person's mind also, because that person cares. It is not only the parent, but also the volunteers who are affected. They have obviously shown that they care by doing those little things that make it a bit easier for the parent, brother or sister—whoever it may be—to look at the child. We must be aware of how we can bring the accident rate down and how we can support the people who, unfortunately, are involved in or affected by an accident. We must make sure that the funding is sufficient.

Can anyone in this chamber imagine this situation: they are in Perth with their child, and the rest of their family is in Collie—I will use Collie as an example—which is 200 kilometres away. The other children have to go to school; they have to be helped. But all of a sudden the focus is on someone else. Therefore, the children in Collie miss out. We need those help groups so that they can help people adjust to the changes in their lives and make sure that they do adjust. Because of the mental trauma that some people suffer, they just cannot adjust. I have seen that. Then there is the blame game. I have seen that also. These people think that maybe they should not have been there at that time, or maybe they should not have been driving that car because it was a mate's car. Then the blame game goes on and they think, "He shouldn't have lent it to me." That is a mental adjustment that a person has to make, and we need these counsellors to be out there so that they can help people to move on. When people come into my office with a pile of books, and the same issue has been going on for quite some years generally, I have a saying that they are jammed in gear: "Here comes another one who's jammed in gear." They have a pile of books on a little trolley and they have been everywhere. I see the pain in their face, and I know that to them the issue is huge. To us it is a little thing, but to them it is a huge issue. However, because they have not previously had trauma counselling, or counselling of some sort, the issue is still with them. It is very difficult for those people. In some cases we cannot just say, "Get over it." Most people can, but some people cannot; it is an issue that has stuck with them. How can they express their feelings? Do they think they are being listened to? If we do not have the sorts of people who can support them, there will be more and more cases of people who are, as I call it, jammed in gear.

There is a great deal that we can do to help people with trauma issues. However, I stress again that in the first instance we should be educating people, and putting a lot of effort into that. In some cases, with the number of people on our roads and the speeds that cars can do, the situation is quite different. I listened to the member for Mandurah, who talked about the different hand signs and signals. I remember an old Morris that I had. It had a little flicker on the side that used to come down. I would use one hand to change gears to go around a corner and, bang, the little coloured flicker on the side would poke out. The trouble was that I then had to wind down the window and put the flicker back in. We can now buy a Hyundai car, which will do 160 kilometres an hour, for \$2 000, or probably less—\$750 if it is for sale on a corner block. However, when we buy it we do not know whether its brakes work, whether the suspension has been tampered with or whether it has been in an accident previously. I am sure the Speaker would understand this very well because of his involvement with the speedway and those sorts of things. At 17 years of age, a kid could jump into that car. He does not have to get his parents' permission to get the car because he is buying it off the block. All he does is get the papers and off he goes. Again, we need to be educated about what we are buying. Are we buying a real bomb that is ready to explode? The tyres may be fairly bald and there is a shower of rain. What happens? I believe that we can do more work in that area to try to avoid the trauma that people suffer when these cars crash. There is a lot of plastic in car bodies these days so that they are light and have very good fuel economy, but they can still do 100 miles an hour, to use the old term. Think about the cars we had. If we had a Ford Prefect and it got to 50 miles an hour, we could not see out of the windscreen because the car shook so much. But we say to these kids, "Oh yes, it'll be right." It was not right then, because the cars were not good enough to do 50 miles an hour, and it is not right now that a person who has just got their licence can buy a car off a block on a street corner and be able to drive it at 100 miles an hour. Do not say that banning V8s is an issue because, as I am saying, a small Hyundai can certainly do 100 miles an hour.

The other road safety issue that I want to refer to is 12-hour shifts. We have a very large number of drive in, drive out workers in Collie.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I am pleased to say that some companies are finally working out that they cannot afford to have their workers on the road if they have to travel more than 50 kilometres from their work area. The reason is that these workers have a pre-start, so they will arrive at work at half past six in the morning. However, they may have already travelled for two hours to get to work. If we add those two hours to the 12 hours, that is 14 hours. Then they will take two hours to go home again. That is 16 hours, and maybe more, a day, and it is generally a four-day shift roster. Therefore, we have these people out there on our roads who are time bombs. When we work here very late and go home, we know that the results of the research are correct: when a person is suffering from lack of sleep, they are like a drunk-driver. They get home and wonder where the hell they have been. They think, “I don’t remember passing that; I’ve missed the turn-off”, and that sort of thing. However, it is really good to see that some companies, but not all, now recognise that they cannot have people on the job working 16 hours a day, four or five days in a row. I am including in that 16 hours the travelling time to and from work. We have people out there on the roads who are like zombies, looking into space and not reacting. I believe that a lot of the road trauma now is a result of people working longer hours and having to travel large distances to and from work. There is no reason for those cars to crash. The roads are straight, but they just veer off the road, and there are no skid marks.

Unfortunately, another acquaintance of mine was killed on the Bunbury road just recently. He was a very nice young person with a young family. He pulled up on the side of the road to help a bloke who had a flat tyre. A truck came across the road and cleaned him up. That has happened twice on Forrest Highway: once down towards Mandurah and once near Bunbury. Again, it is the impact that such an accident has. Why did that truck cross the road? How many hours had that driver worked to be in that condition? I take my hat off to Greenbushes Tin and its contractors. Its employees must live within a 50-kilometre radius of the workplace when they are working. That does not mean that employees must relocate their families; it means that people must not travel for more than three-quarters of an hour when they knock off after their 12-hour shift. They do a pre-start of a quarter of an hour, and they have a quarter of an hour cool down after their shift. That is 12.5 hours on the job. Some people were travelling as far south as Margaret River or up to Mandurah. The company worked out that that was just not good enough. So we have those responsible groups. But other groups do not care; they just want the workers on the job. That is also an issue that we must look at. Again, there must be education, and we have seen a bit about that.

I wish to speak about a couple of issues relating to the family group and something dear to my heart that is often mentioned in my house; that is, the need to educate other families, in an effort to save their children or young adults who are starting to get cars, about keeping the pressure on: “Do not buckle to peer pressure and say it is all right to take the car to the party. You find another way to get to the party.” It is good that more young people are once again starting to use a skipper or a designated driver. Sadly, the skipper concept dropped off; it used to appear on television adverts all the time: please take a skipper; please get someone to drive you; and please get picked up. I believe that concept should be taken up again. Why has the pressure on that concept dropped off? The impact of that campaign was obvious. The ads on telly were great. Young kids used a skipper. Even now, young and older people have designated drivers when out for the night.

A disappointing proposal of the liquor bill is that it will make it illegal for people travelling on a bus to have a drink. I think that it is one of the stupidest rules that I have seen. The idea is to encourage people to be responsible and to use that sort of transport when going to functions—be it a vineyard tour, a movie or travelling from Collie to Bunbury for a dinner. However, if people want to drink on the way, the bus driver and the individual having the drink can now be fined. That is overregulation and it discourages people from doing the right thing. They will let their wife drive or they will take a risk and drive themselves. We still catch many people who are over the drink-driving limit.

Opposition members understand that a lot is still to be done in and that a lot of money is needed for the area of road safety. However, I believe we should support people who now support those who have had problems. We should support those who put in hundreds of hours over and above what they are paid for; in many cases, these people are paid only a token fee when providing counselling. They put in many hours in their own time to support the families of trauma victims. Country towns are known for strong support groups because of the personal knowledge of family groups and what needs to be done. The whispering pines, I suppose, quickly tell us if someone is suffering, and people help. However, we need the professional support of paid-up trained counsellors to help us do that.

As I have said, I am very, very strong on not just shuffling the deckchairs. We should fund roads such as the Coalfields highway, and we should fund the trauma support groups that work well and truly above their paid status to help people get through what many of us know firsthand happens after a car accident.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington)** [5.23 pm]: I do not intend to speak long about the Road Safety Council Amendment (Functions) Bill 2010. Before I begin my remarks on the bill, I acknowledge in your gallery, Mr

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Speaker, my nephew Albert Eichholzer, who is joining us from Canberra today. I welcome him to the city of Perth. He is here on business, and I appreciate your allowing me to place him in the Speaker's gallery.

Like you, Mr Speaker, I have always been interested in motor vehicles. They are fascinating things. Along with that interest is a necessary focus on road safety. I wish to tell a personal story. I always hesitate to tell personal stories, because I think members drawing analogies from their own lives limits us in certain ways. However, I want to talk about my family circumstances in this regard. I grew up in a working-class suburb in Canberra. My family lived in one street and my cousins lived one block over. My father's brother and his wife and family lived very close to us and we were, as little kids, quite close to my cousins, which was very good. In some ways my family situation was tragic—my father died when I was very young. But I always felt that my cousin's family had it much tougher even though they had both parents.

One of my cousins, when aged 18 years, had just finished school and he liked riding motorbikes. One day he was in the forest with his friends who had borrowed his bike. It was broken and he was trying to fix it for his friends. He had no intention of riding his bike that day. He was quite safety conscious. However, as you would understand, I am sure, Mr Speaker, when people fix mechanical equipment, they see it as an obligation to test it first and to not let other people test their repairs. It was his bike, but because he had no intention of riding it that day, he did not have his helmet with him. He took off on the bike in the pine forests near Canberra. After a little while, the other people thought it strange that he had not returned and went out to search for him. One of the people searching was his younger brother. My cousin was aged 18 and his younger brother was aged 15. His younger brother found him. He had hit a tree. He had come off the bike, but that did not kill him; it knocked him out. He fell onto the Canberra clay soil. He fell into what would have been a puddle in winter. A fine layer of dust was in the bottom of what would have been a puddle, and my cousin fell in such a way that the dust covered his nose and mouth and he effectively drowned in the dust. It was my young cousin, aged 15, who found his brother dead in the dirt like that after coming off his motorbike.

I raise this because this bill addresses the exact outcome experienced by my cousin's family. The trauma of finding his brother dead in the forest in that way so affected my 15-year-old cousin—at this time I was aged about 10 or 12; they were a few years older than me—that he started drinking. He was a sportsman. He was a champion volleyball player, and he ended up being selected for Australia's volleyball team, but could never shake off the effects of his brother's death or the drinking he started as a 15-year-old. That led to his health deteriorating. When he was in his early 20s, having married and had a child and with a pregnant wife, he was bitten by a spider in his garden and died later from pneumonia that resulted from the spider bite. Clearly, had there been in place back in the 1970s the sort of proposal that the member for Girrawheen has brought to the house today, such counselling may not have saved my cousin who died as a result of his fall off a motorbike, but it may well have been able to save my cousin who as a 15-year-old found his brother dead in the forest. I do not try to use personal experience to illustrate points in this place because I do not think is appropriate. However, in this particular case, it is exactly apposite to the proposal brought to us by the member for Girrawheen. This proposal is very, very valuable.

I acknowledge the government's expenditure of \$30 000, or whatever it is that is being spent, to examine the need for this support system. I think we all expect a certain outcome. The member for Girrawheen is very clever to get us to the point that shows us where the government can fund this proposal. We have had a lot of discussion in the chamber today about death, taxes and other matters. Here we have an opportunity to fund this important work from the road trauma trust fund, particularly given the expectation from the government that the funds available to that trust will increase over the next few years as the number of red-light cameras expand and photo radars are used more frequently in the streets and highways of Western Australia. It is a great idea from the member for Girrawheen and I hope that the government does not see some political reason to reject what is clearly a very sensible suggestion.

Last year I was very pleased to get a briefing from the Road Safety Council. As I say, I am very interested in this because I feel I am obliged as a person interested in motor vehicles to think about road safety all the time. Therefore, I was very pleased to get a briefing from that organisation. One interesting point was about the need to encourage the government to buy only four and five star-rated vehicles. That is a very significant issue. I drive a Captiva that is four star-rated. I hope that when the government is providing vehicles to public servants for use in their various jobs in Western Australia that the government ensures that it buys only four and five star-rated vehicles. That is one way to cut down road trauma in Western Australia.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** That is our policy now.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I am pleased to hear it.

Another issue I discussed with the Road Safety Council when I met with it last year was the question of Western Power infrastructure. Every evening when I drive home from Parliament, I turn left into Gresham Street off

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Shepperton Road, and there is a Western Power pole no more than five centimetres, probably less, from the edge of the road. I asked the Road Safety Council whether it has any statistics about the number of people killed or injured in collisions with Western Power infrastructure.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Can I clarify something: you're saying the Road Safety Council, but do you mean the Office of Road Safety?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The Office of Road Safety, certainly, minister.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Okay—because they're two very different offices.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The Office of Road Safety points out that there is no research in Western Australia about how many people die or are injured against Western Power infrastructure. I do not understand why. We imagine that given there is such a clear issue with people getting wrapped around electricity poles that there would actually be a bit of research on that matter. We know the saying in motorsport that it is not the speed at which you have the accident; it is how fast you stop. That is the case with Western Power infrastructure. If a pole is next to the road, a vehicle hitting that infrastructure even at 60 kilometres an hour will cause problems; people will be injured, if not killed. But every metre or half-metre back from the road such poles are placed gives a car an opportunity to slow, and that is very, very important in terms of the amount of trauma. When we see pictures of Australasian New Car Assessment Program testing of a motor vehicle, that test is usually done at about 37 kilometres an hour because apparently that is about the average speed at which a car impacts a solid object. Even though the car might have been travelling at 60 kilometres an hour, the driver will have started to brake or whatever before they actually hit another car, a wall or whatever. Therefore, if Western Power infrastructure is placed further from the edge of the road, it will actually have a big effect on the number of people killed and injured on our roads, particularly when we consider the 70-kilometre-an-hour speed limit roads in the metropolitan area that often have driveways and other things with Western Power infrastructure really close to the road. Travelling at 70 kilometres an hour, a person will be very seriously injured when their car hits a power pole because even if the car weighs a tonne or a tonne and a half, there is no way in the world that it is going to shift that pole. We all talk about undergrounding power in our suburbs—I lobby for it, too—but actually the best thing would be for Western Power to underground the infrastructure on all 70 and 80-kilometre-an-hour roads in the metropolitan area. That would be a real genuine advance for road safety in the state; therefore, I hope that there will be some investigation and proper research into that aspect. As I say, the Office of Road Safety said that there is no research on that issue at this stage. That research needs to be done, and I think, as I am sure you, Mr Speaker—I am not putting words in your mouth—would probably agree with me, that the result would be a major change to road safety in Western Australia.

I commend the bill. I congratulate the member for Girrawheen for having the foresight to come up with a proposal to fund a necessary project that will have a direct effect on people in the community. Members know how I gave my family's case study. The government always challenges the opposition to say not only what we want done but also how to pay for it. This is an example of how a proposal can be paid for because we would not want to have the revenue from the increased use of red-light cameras and Multanovas and the increased number of these devices around the place being tipped into government coffers to subsidise the ordinary activities of government. This bill presents a way to make a real difference to people in very tragic circumstances, so I commend the bill to the house.

**MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [5.35 pm]:** I really appreciate the comments by the members who have spoken so far on this very important issue of road safety. I am sure that every member in this house is conscious of road safety and the effects the death or critical injury of a loved one has on people. Let me make it clear that I am responding at the moment from the government perspective. The Road Safety Council Amendment (Functions) Bill 2010 is the member for Girrawheen's private member's bill that we are discussing in private members' time. It is important that I make a contribution to the debate on this bill, which she brought into the house some time before Christmas.

I must say from the outset that I have a great deal of sympathy for the proposition that the member has put up, and I think that the member is probably aware of that. However, I should also point out that we will not go to a vote on this bill today and the debate will be adjourned. As the member for Girrawheen is acutely aware, there is a report and an investigation taking place at the moment that has been funded through the Office of Road Safety.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** That's not going to address how we fund it; it's just how the service will be set up. That's my understanding.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I think that it includes what options there are for funding a counselling service for victims of road trauma. I am pretty sure that is included and that it is all part of the business case.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Can I just pre-empt you? If it recommends that it be funded out of the road trauma trust fund, you would be in a better position to support a bill like this.

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**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** As I have already said, I have great sympathy, as the member is aware, for the content and the proposition in the bill. However, I cannot support it at the moment because it would be irresponsible to do that.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** I just asked you if a report came back and said that that will be the mechanism by which it should be funded.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I would obviously have to give that very serious consideration. As the member is aware, it cannot be funded at this stage because of the constraints of the Road Safety Council Act. The funds that go into the road trauma trust fund are specifically designated for the prevention of road trauma.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** That is a very narrow argument, minister, and I actually do not agree with that interpretation.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Okay; the member does not agree with it, but that is the advice that I have as the minister. I have to take the advice that I am given, as the member would have done when she was a minister. Notwithstanding all that, the member is probably aware that the funds going into the road trauma trust fund in this last financial year have been depleted somewhat because of the change from the old type of camera to the new digital cameras. While that changeover was taking place, the operators had to be trained to use the new dual-lens cameras so that they get the front and back of vehicles, including motorbikes. Motorbikes have been getting away without being identified for many, many years because they do not have a front numberplate. That is and has been a very contentious issue out there for many years. I had a motorbike when I was a young fellow. I had a numberplate on both the front and back of my motorbike. Some of the arguments put forward by people who are advocates of motorbikes that there cannot be a numberplate on the front any more is somewhat spurious because the material that is used for a registration number on the front of a motorbike could be such that it would not be deemed a danger. The old-fashioned motorbike had a numberplate over the front of the mudguard. They were a bit like a knife that could slice somebody and cause serious damage in an accident. There are alternatives, but that is something for another day.

I have looked carefully at the member for Girrawheen's bill and I am aware of the individuals who are championing this bill. The member mentioned them in the speeches she has made so far; namely, Glenda and Alan Maloney. I appreciate the comments that they have made to me; I assume they have made them to the member. It is not the first time that this subject has come up. Some time last year or the year before, the member for Mindarie threatened to bring in a private member's bill to do the same sort of thing. That never happened. The member for Girrawheen took the initiative to do that, and I commend her for that. However, I cannot support the bill at this stage. I have outlined the reasons why. We must wait for the report to come down. That report is costing \$25 000. I await it with great interest.

Counselling facilities are obviously available at the moment but there are not enough of them. There are counsellors within the health department for people who need counselling services. There are counselling services within FESA, as the member would be aware.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Again, that's not enough either, minister.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** There are counselling services within the police department. There are probably never enough police officers, nurses or doctors but we have to try to get to a stage at which we can do the best we can with the funds that are available. I personally feel that a counselling service for people who need it is necessary. Some members have already said that some people can get through a time of distress of their own volition simply by having the support of their family and friends. They manage to get through those periods. I know that some people would benefit from having a trained counsellor help them get through that period. Counselling facilities are available in some organisations dealing with road trauma such as Headwest and the head injury unit in which relatives of people who have been involved in road traffic accidents, particularly accidents in which there has been a head injury, have meetings and they get together and they help each other. They talk about these things and they try to work through what is a terrible situation. I know of that service because I have been there.

Some people would argue that counselling should not be funded out of the road trauma trust fund because that is used to try to prevent accidents.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** One of the things that the Victorian group does is sanctioned by courts or the courts get them to give training sessions on road trauma to offenders. That is actually aimed at prevention. It is incorrect to say that these services don't have some prevention component within what they do.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am sorry, but I thought the whole ethos and the whole purpose of the bill, from what I have seen from the comments the member has made in the past, was to introduce counselling services for people affected by road —

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**Ms M.M. Quirk:** It was to set up a service such as those in Victoria and Tasmania, which includes this very valuable tool of preventing. It is also for groups such as the Paraplegic Benefit Fund, which has the party program, to also receive some funding through that source.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am more sympathetic to counselling services for families, relatives and friends who are affected by road trauma involving a loved one than I am in providing a counselling service to those people who commit offences on our roads.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** No, it's not counselling; it's explaining to these offenders what the implications of their actions could have been. In other words, if someone is done for speeding, a magistrate might order that they go and talk to this person from the service who is in a wheelchair and tell him what he might have done, either to himself or someone else. That is the preventive side of it.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I do not know whether I particularly want to see funding come out of the road trauma trust fund for that purpose. I am more than happy for the courts to try to ensure that those people who have committed a road traffic offence or been convicted of dangerous driving, excessive speeding, drink-driving and so forth face some sort of sanction by the court such that they have to be counselled. Some people will accept that and some people will not. However, a lot of the education and the advertising that comes through the Office of Road Safety about road trauma is aimed at those people to stop them driving the way that they have been driving—namely, causing mayhem and distress to other people. The “tree of life” advertising campaign was a classic one. It showed that it is not about just the person one kills or critically injures; it is about their whole family, their friends, workmates and so forth. A whole tree of people are affected by one crash, as the member will be aware. That is a very important part of the advertising function of the Office of Road Safety and the Road Safety Council. It has proved to work elsewhere. Most of the advertising that comes through the Office of Road Safety is very often plagiarised from other states and other countries that have seen that those types of advertisements work. I saw a great one from the United Kingdom. The star of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*—I cannot remember the actor's name—

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Hugh Grant.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, not him; it was the other fellow. I cannot remember his name. It was the Irishman. He was the gay partner of the Scotsman who died. He narrated this advertisement. If members have not seen it, I suggest they try to see it because it is very moving and very thought-provoking. I have seen another one that came from America. I have looked at lots of adverts relating to road safety and there are some that I could certainly use. I would love to be able to use that one from the UK in WA because I found it very thought-provoking, and that is what we need. A couple of the member's colleagues said that people need to see a true accident firsthand. It would be very difficult to cope with but if we could have something along those lines, that would be a good move.

I have been looking at the counselling service. If it is possible for it to be done—in my view, anything is possible—it is something that should be done. It is a question of who should appropriately fund it. Should the funds come from the road trauma trust fund, the Minister for Health's budget or the Minister for Mental Health's budget? We have to see where it is most appropriately funded. If there are inadequate funds in the road trauma trust fund, I would not necessarily be averse to a portion of those funds being spent on counselling, even though at the moment they cannot be because that is after the event —

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** One legal opinion.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** It is not just my opinion.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** No, no; the minister is saying it is a legal opinion. It is not the only legal opinion.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I heard a debate in this house last night between three lawyers. It seemed to go on forever. They do not always agree on everything. If the member had taken part, there would have been four lawyers! There cannot always be agreement between trained lawyers. They are not necessarily the fountain of all knowledge. I have certainly received advice that that is the situation and that is the way it should go.

When this report is handed to the Road Safety Council, it will come to me for consideration. Around that time, June or July, whenever it might be, the member might be pleasantly surprised. I will be honest with the member: I may well make other changes to the Road Safety Council Act.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Of course the obvious one is about maybe diverting more of the speed and red-light camera money to the road trauma trust fund. That is the other burning issue.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I will always try to persuade the Treasurer and my colleagues that the more money I can get into the road trauma trust fund, the better it will be.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** The minister might have better luck with this Treasurer than with Speedy Gonzalez!

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**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Many people have promised to do that. The Labor Party did it in the past—not the member personally but the member for Midland; I remember well. She promised that all the money from the Multanova speed and red-light cameras would go into the road trauma trust fund. It never happened.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** I think the minister did as well when he was in opposition.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No; I do not think I did, actually. The member might like to find a quote of me saying that. I might have said I would like to see it but I do not think I ever said that I would do that.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** You just said you would like to see it but you would not do it if you were in government.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, I did not say that at all. Please do not put words in my mouth. The member is being very mischievous now, as she gets at this time of day! She is a very mischievous person. I am joking now! The member knows this is a very serious issue. Road trauma is a very serious issue that affects so many people. Members know that it has affected me personally.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Minister, I hope to be pleasantly surprised in the not-too-distant future.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I can only do my best. I will continue to try to acquire as many funds as possible to enable us to do whatever we can to prevent road trauma. It is not about just those people who die on our roads; it is also about the people who are critically injured. Day after day families go through the trauma of living through it, which can be a living hell. I assure the member that I do not discount the purpose behind the bill and I do not discount the suggestions that she has put forward. I may not agree with every part of it. I would be very happy to support some of it if I knew I could afford it. I am not going to make promises I cannot afford to keep. To be responsible, I must see the report that will be handed down in June to the Road Safety Council, and onto me. Like most of those reports, it will be made public. It will go onto the website. The member will be able to see it; everybody will be able to see it.

This has been a very interesting debate so far. I appreciate the comments of the member for Girrawheen. I appreciate the member for Nollamara's comments, who has had experience in this area, and indeed the comments of the members for Collie and Cannington. I also appreciated the member for Mandurah's comments. They had no resemblance whatsoever to the bill before the house but they were very amusing!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** That is not uncommon!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I have to say I appreciated the member for Mandurah's comments about the problems of traffic wardens. We must try to ensure the safety of children. I thank him for his support for my plea that the Western Australian Local Government Association take over that particular function because local governments, local schools, local children and local families —

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** I talked to them recently, minister—they are not too keen.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I know they are not too keen. I have years of local government experience. I have been a mayor in both hemispheres and a councillor in both hemispheres —

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Tell Troy, the president of WALGA, you will not retire unless he comes across!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I have no intention of retiring at this stage. I am much too young!

**Mr P.C. Tinley:** He is only halfway through!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Exactly.

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I know I disappointed all members opposite when I said I had no intention whatsoever of retiring at the next election. I do not want to disappoint them!

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** It's not me you're disappointing. I'd miss you!

**Mr M. McGowan:** I have a funny feeling about that one—you want to do jury service! You want to get out of Parliament so you can do jury service!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I enjoy my parliamentary life; I really do. I enjoy the job I am doing. I have always enjoyed being a member of Parliament. I like to feel I have given a lot of commitment to working on behalf of my local community. I must be doing it right because they seem to elect me every time.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** We were talking about cars earlier. What was the first car you drove?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I think it was a Ford 8 Model Y. We are talking an old car here.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** A Model T!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, it was not a Model T; but it was a Ford. It cost me £10.



**Mr R.H. Cook:** Did someone walk out in front of it with a red flag?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** I can see you in a Bentley with a cigar!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I used to have a Rolls-Royce.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Did you really?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Yes, I did.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** He is an aristocrat!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Some people call me Lord Johnson, but I try to ignore that!

**Mr R.H. Cook:** You are a man of the people, aren't you?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am just waiting for a message from Her Majesty, obviously!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** You didn't get an invite to the wedding?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I have been to Buckingham Palace. I have had tea with the Queen, yes, if you want to know!

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Did you get an invite to the wedding?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Funnily enough, I am going over for a wedding at the same time. I will not tell you where I am going and who has invited me. If you want to ask these questions, I am happy to give you honest answers.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** I have always found you very obliging!

**Mr M. McGowan:** Are you paired?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** It is when we are not sitting.

**Mr M. McGowan:** Can you make it when we are sitting?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, not at all. You would miss me sorely if I were not here when we were sitting.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Things would probably run much smoother if you weren't here!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am like a thorn in your side at times!

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Minister, getting back to the bill —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** That would be a refreshing change. There have been so many digressions here. It will be interesting to bring it back and respond to my good friend the member for Nollamara.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Getting back to the bill, because I was not here and I apologise for that, I am wondering what the minister's view of the bill is. Is he supporting it or not supporting it, in those two small words?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I explained that and the member missed me. I will very quickly go over it. I know that the member for Girrawheen wants this debate adjourned rather than voted on, to keep it for a later date—I would imagine after June, when the report is handed down. Do I support the bill? I certainly support the concept of much of what is in the bill. It is a very small bill. I do not agree with all of it, but I agree that a counselling service offered to people who have been affected by road trauma—families and friends et cetera—would be extremely helpful and comforting for those people.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** What about the bit that talks about the employees being assisted?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** That is a different area. I think those sorts of things should be covered within places such as the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, which has its own chaplain, who counsels —

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** They have just a chaplain. A chaplain is not a counsellor.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** But he is a counsellor.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Chaplains are not usually trained counsellors.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am not going down the union demarcation line of who can be a good counsellor and who cannot be. I will tell the member about a police officer I came into contact with who was an extremely good counsellor. He did not even know it. He assisted me enormously. Member for Girrawheen and member for Nollamara, I support some of the concept of the bill. I cannot support it at the moment; I do not support it all. If we had to go to a vote, I would have to vote against it. I am happy to leave it there. Of course, if it is good news that comes from the independent report, I will introduce my own bill that will be more in keeping with what I think we need.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 23 February 2011]

p989b-1006a

Mr David Templeman; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Rob Johnson

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Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr M. McGowan**.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*