

## SOUTH WESTERN HIGHWAY

### *Grievance*

**MR M.P. MURRAY** (Collie) [9.15 am]: I rise to grieve to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure about a section of the South Western Highway that is causing concern in a part of my electorate. I have carried out an inspection of the section with the Premier and also the member for Murray-Wellington. On the day we were there, we met with a parent of two children who were killed on that intersection. We also spoke with his mother and heard about the trauma that had been caused within the household and within the family.

The issues with this section of road have been raised on many occasions over the years; that is, the service station entry; the line of sight, whereby people cannot see when they drive up over the rise; and the speed limit. The school is on one side of the highway and the majority of the town is on the other side. All these issues raise safety concerns. In recent times many requests have been made of Main Roads and the police to exert pressure so that changes will be made. That has not happened, and people are getting frustrated. The shire has been involved. It has requested that the speed limit through that area of town be 50 kilometres an hour. That has been declined by Main Roads, much to the disgust of the shire.

As I said, the high school is on one side of the highway. I take the opportunity to thank the teachers from that school. When school finishes, they go down to the highway and direct the children across the road. When I was at school, one of the greatest times of the day was when I got out of school and ran home to do something else. I believe the situation is the same today. Therefore, the children do not take a great deal of interest in what is going on around them, but they must cross the highway. That is one part of a very big issue.

Another issue is the amount of traffic along that section of the highway. With the congestion in Mandurah currently, with the extra traffic lights, the bridge and the increased traffic, a lot of the heavy traffic has gone onto the South Western Highway. Cars queue up behind the trucks, and drivers try to gain an advantage when there is a bit of room to pass them. This results in vehicles travelling through the town at quite high speeds, even though the speed limit is 70 kilometres an hour. I know that the police spend a lot of time in that area. I have certainly paid my penance. I was caught by a Multanova that was at the bottom of the bridge one day, and I swore about that.

The locals have told me that there is a major problem in that area. As I said, the school is on one side and the town is on the other. Therefore, parents drive their cars across the road in that area. There is also foot traffic. This leads to problems. The major issue is that traffic-calming devices are needed to make people aware of the town traffic on the Uduc Road side of the town. Some sort of devices are needed in that area, particularly for people who travel through that area on a regular basis - I have been one of them for many years - but who do not understand the make-up of the town. I would like the minister to take action and make things happen in that area, and for that to be done on a sooner rather than later basis. We do not want any more accidents there, especially like the one in which two young children were killed. Recently, a semitrailer rolled over at the bottom of the rise on the highway in that 70 kilometre-an-hour zone - there is obviously something wrong with the road along that section. As motorists drive through the wide open spaces along the road entering the town area, they feel as though they are not moving into a town site, so they do not slow down accordingly.

Many plans have been put forward over the years, and many have been rejected. One argument is that trucks have to use extra fuel as they slow down and change gears to pass through that area. I do not think that is a strong case. The idea for a roundabout was put up, but considering the number of trucks that use a highway like this, a roundabout was not deemed adequate. I am sure that with a little work and foresight this matter can be dealt with reasonably quickly.

**MS A.J. MacTIERNAN** (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [9.21 am]: I thank the member for the grievance. We have had detailed discussions with the member about this issue. It is important to see this matter as a philosophical position between the priority given to traffic and the priority given to the community. This matter involves a highway; therefore, the view has been that the traffic must come first and the community second. Perhaps, there has been a lack of preparedness to say that it should really be the other way around. We all understand the importance of the highway for moving freight and for passenger transport. However, we must be prepared to look closely at these situations of conflict and ensure that rural communities built around highways are properly protected.

One of the technical concerns Main Roads Western Australia has had about the reduction of the 70 kilometre-an-hour zone is that the road environment, as it is currently configured, encourages people to travel at 70 kilometres an hour. When we talked to Main Roads about our desire to reduce the speed limit, it responded with a set of plans that would, at the same time, change the road environment. Changing just the speed limit in that area will achieve only more funds from Multanovas - the kerbside cash registers. However, if we are seriously talking about safety we need to do more than that. We need to strategically intervene and create an environment that

encourages the slowing of traffic to 60 kilometres an hour and provides improved visibility for pedestrians. As the member pointed out, of particular concern was the number of kids crossing the road at that point to get to school, and that has also been of considerable concern to Main Roads.

We have committed to reducing the speed limit to 60 kilometres an hour. By the end of April we will have painted 60 kilometre-an-hour speed limit signs on the road so that they are very visible - we will not simply put up speed limit signs on the side of road. We will also implement other measures - a suite of improvements - to change that road environment, and Main Roads assures me that they will be in place by the end of May. The visibility for pedestrians and motorists will be improved, the power pole on the north-western corner of the intersection will be relocated, and a splinter traffic island will be installed on the north-eastern section of the intersection. Those works will amount to a total cost of \$27 000.

Recently, in addition to discussions with the member, we have held some meetings. Last week, the Main Roads regional manager for the south west, Brett Bellstead, met with the shire to discuss further works and what could be done to better define the town site area. We are now looking at planting trees in that area along the South Western Highway to remove the perception of the open space and a higher speed limit. It is all about making it clear to motorists that they are driving in a town environment, and the landscaping will be part of that.

To summarise the list of works, a reduced speed zone sign will be painted onto the road, the power pole will be relocated, a splinter traffic island will be installed and a footpath will be built along the non-school side of the road, which I think is the eastern side of the road.

Mr M.P. Murray: The school is on the eastern side.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Okay. A footpath will be built near the service station, and, therefore, cars will not be able to park there so that visibility is increased for the students crossing the road. On the other side of the road there will be tree plantings. The intersection will be reconfigured, an extension of the island will be put in place to bring it right up to the intersection so that motorists cannot cut the corner as they turn, and more separation space will be created in the turning lane. Following the speed changes and those works, Main Roads will undertake to follow up on speed compliance to determine the effectiveness of the works and the new speed limit. It will then look at whether it is necessary to have any additional treatments to enhance the safety of the location.