

JOONDALUP DRIVER AND VEHICLE SERVICES CENTRE

Grievance

MS E.L. HAMILTON (Joondalup) [9.35 am]: I rise today to bring to the Minister for Transport's attention some concerns raised by members of my community regarding the closure of the Joondalup Driver and Vehicle Services Centre, commonly known as the Joondalup licensing centre.

The Joondalup licensing centre closed on 19 May this year. It was a place where people could acquire their learners permit, schedule practical driving assessments, renew their drivers' licences and pay car registration fees. All these services were vital to ensuring people developed the skills necessary for driving safely and legally. The licensing centre was located in the Joondalup city centre, within walking distance from our train station for those attending via public transport. Overall, the centre was a well-utilised facility.

I understand that our government made the decision to relocate the licensing centre to Butler, and that this centre opened one month ago. I would like to ask the minister whether consideration be given to reopening the Joondalup licensing centre.

Although I am sure the centre in Butler is welcomed by the community living north of Joondalup and it is wonderfully increasing the services available to residents living in the northern corridor, locals in and around Joondalup now need to travel to Mirrabooka or Butler to access these services. My office has received a number of calls and emails detailing what the Joondalup centre closure means for them, for their children trying to access a driving test or for their driving instruction businesses. A few locals and businesses wrote in, concerned to hear about the Joondalup centre closure, as it impacts on what should be the second central business district of Perth. Some businesses were concerned that with the closure of the Joondalup centre, there would be a decline in the number of people interacting with the location and the small businesses in the area. In a 12-month period, over 10 000 practical driving assessments were booked at Joondalup and one would expect that this had a significant flow-on effect to the number of visitors to our city centre.

I spoke with local mum Janette Marshall, who had been attempting to book a practical driving assessment for her teenage daughter over a period of three months. Her family were pleased to hear that a new licensing centre had opened in Butler. However, they were disappointed to find out that, when subsequently trying to book a test, the Joondalup location was no longer available. For Janette's family, the opening of the Butler licensing centre has not alleviated current availability pressures, because anyone who would have used the Joondalup centre is being redirected to Butler instead. Janette would like to see practical driving assessments available locally.

Other families will be impacted by the restricted availability of services resulting from the loss of the Joondalup centre. Local dad Fred Gilling recently found that the earliest booking he could make for his son was in Newman. As his children reach adulthood, Fred sees the impact that being able to drive has on a young person's independence and ability to work, as well as on other members of the family who no longer have to drive them. Speaking to Fred yesterday, I learnt that the soonest available appointment for his son to undertake a PDA is in Rockingham. Fred has spent the past few weekends driving the 70 or so kilometres—a two-hour round trip—so that his son can become familiar with the area.

Maria Byrne is a local resident and mother of five sons in their 20s, and has seen them struggle to secure and pass a driving test. Knowing how long it has taken her sons to get their licences, she is concerned that young people without a drivers' licence may be deprived of vital employment opportunities because they are unable to get to a workplace easily, or because driving is a requirement of the job. I am sure both the Gilling and Byrne families would appreciate having access to more driving assessments locally.

Sharon Brooke owns Ad Astra Driving School and has explained to me that the additional time to access Butler will mean that her business may no longer be viable. The additional travel time means that for a local student, an additional half an hour needs to be added to the lesson time in order to reach the Butler location for the lesson. Sharon is concerned that this is an additional cost for families and also indicated that for the businesses like hers, there are additional costs for petrol and wear and tear on the vehicle with the increased distance to travel.

Connolly couple, Bernadette and Andrew Russon have operated their enterprise Local Driving School as self-employed driving instructors for 18 years. They worked with the Joondalup Driver and Vehicle Services Centre and wanted it to be on record how disappointed they are to see this facility closing. They have seen firsthand the need for another licensing centre in the northern corridor due to population growth. Although they welcome the Butler centre, the Russons believe that closing the Joondalup centre will take away a facility that is a valuable asset to our Joondalup city centre. The Russons plead to keep the Joondalup centre open for practical driving assessments and administration.

I have personally experienced a child going through the assessment and licensing process. My daughter had her learner's permit and required several attempts at passing her driving test about 12 months ago. Services have been provided out of the Joondalup licensing centre since April 2002. After 21 years, it is a part of the Joondalup

community and I am hearing that locals really want it to stay. I understand that the Cook Labor government is taking several welcomed steps to address accessibility for people to complete a PDA. I would like to ask whether it is possible for the decision to close the Joondalup licensing centre to be reconsidered so that our northern suburbs community can continue to access all the services provided at this location. Joondalup continues to see significant investment by the state government, with state government offices relocating to and being built in our city centre. I ask whether the Joondalup licensing centre can be reopened. I would like to thank the minister for taking this grievance this morning.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [9.41 am]: I thank the member for Joondalup for the grievance. I want to state from the outset that we are trying to address many of the issues that the member raised, particularly the accessibility of driving assessments. We have made some changes to the booking system and are employing more assessors to try to make it fairer to get driving test appointments for families across the state. This is an area that my good friend the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport will also be working on. Over the coming months, he will take the lead to find out how we can continue to reform the system.

We have been looking at the availability of driving tests—that is, the supply and demand. We saw some unusual activity online. People had the ability to program bots to sweep the tests. We are working to try to prevent that from happening. Availability has been freed up, but we need to do more. Of course, the other issue is the accessibility of driving tests throughout the state. The Joondalup Driver and Vehicle Services Centre was seen as not big enough to cater to the enormous growth in the northern suburbs. As a result, a decision was made to close the Joondalup centre and move it to Butler.

However, I appreciate the feedback the member has had from her community and her acknowledgement of the Joondalup city centre being vital to the northern suburbs. We want to see the centre continue to flourish and businesses in that area to continue to grow. I understand the negative feedback the member has received in her community. She raised this with me and I will commit to relooking at the closure and seeing what can be done regarding the Joondalup licensing centre. There are options. For example, it could be looked at as a driving centre that very much focuses on practical driving assessments as we have seen in the south west corridor, which has one centre solely delivering driving tests. That may be something we will consider. I have asked my department to immediately investigate whether we can reopen centre to help with local driving assessments.

As I said, we are continually looking at all the reforms to improve the number of assessors we have. Of course, another key issue is further strengthening the information technology system to protect it from having appointments swiped early in the morning, which leaves them unavailable for people wanting to get one. Again, we are going to further strengthen that system. We are also going to introduce further security to access the PDA booking system. We will have a new two-factor authentication process in order to access those assessments. People will also need to have a DoTDirect account. All that is aimed to try to remove the bots on the system that continue to sweep up appointments. These are the new technology changes that we will be introducing to make sure that we can make the system fairer. I will take the member's point and concerns about the Joondalup licensing centre that she raised with me on board. I have asked my agency to see whether we can reopen that centre for the member's local community.