

MAIN ROADS AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms R. Saffioti (Minister for Transport)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.23 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023. This bill will bring Western Australia in line with other states that have modern road authority legislation. There have been very few amendments to the act since it was first passed in 1930, with the last substantial amendment in 1996. Even then, the scope of the act has remained fundamentally unchanged and is limited to road construction and maintenance activities.

This bill will modernise key elements of the act and broaden powers and functions particularly in a commercial sense. Community expectations have changed substantially since the act was put in place nearly 100 years ago. Back then, Main Roads was simply required to build and maintain roads. Now, it must manage modern highways and freeways with complex technology infrastructure and operate a vastly improved and extended regional road network with much higher traffic and freight volumes.

In the 1930s and 40s, the travelling public expected little, if anything, in the way of roadside services. Now there is the expectation of commercial fuel and food stops and other services, including, ultimately, electric recharging stations, at regular points along a journey, particularly in rural or regional areas. The amendments in this bill will allow Main Roads to maximise the use of a \$55 billion state asset that lies under-utilised and generate a return for government and the community. The amendments will also bring the powers and functions of Main Roads into the twenty-first century and provide the foundation for it to operate and manage the road network in a way expected by the community.

This bill will provide Main Roads a power to enter into a wider range of commercial arrangements, including profit sharing and innovative business arrangements, with those business arrangements to be subject to minister and Treasurer approval; expand the functions and powers of Main Roads to reflect a modern road authority, with respect to managing land and roadside activities; and provide Main Roads the ability to facilitate the operation of road service centres, or roadhouses, and to acquire and lease land for any purposes under the act. The bill will also update the definition of “works” to capture a wider range of activities; update penalties so they are a deterrent and provide the means to enforce them through an infringement process; provide expanded regulation-making powers, especially around managing land and the roadside; provide the power to conduct works on land adjoining the road reserve; remove outdated barriers to administrative efficiency; and provide legal protection to Main Roads officers who are doing their jobs.

By giving Main Roads the powers to more effectively manage the road reserve and act in a commercial fashion, it will be able to operate like a modern road authority and serve an ever-increasing demand well into the future. This bill will improve the way in which Main Roads operates, open up opportunities for the state, and lead to improved efficiencies and delivery of services, to the benefit of the community and the economy.

I commend this bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle**.