

ROAD SAFETY — SOUTH WESTERN HIGHWAY

Grievance

MRS R.M.J. CLARKE (Murray–Wellington) [9.40 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport and concerns speed limits on South Western Highway through Murray and Waroona in Murray–Wellington. I thank the minister for the opportunity to express the concerns raised by the constituents of Murray–Wellington, Alcoa union representatives and the Shires of Murray and Waroona regarding recent speed limit increases, and calls to reduce speed limits at notoriously dangerous sections along South Western Highway. I also thank the minister for taking the time on Friday, 4 August to visit these areas.

Firstly, I raise concerns regarding the recent speed increase from 90 to 110 kilometres an hour on the South Western Highway through North Pinjarra and past the access road to the Alcoa Pinjarra refinery.

One of the many letters from concerned residents of North Pinjarra states, according to my notes —

Previously, the South–West Highway departing from Pinjarra had a speed limit of 50km/h until shortly after the train tracks. It then increased to 70km/h near the service station and transitioned to 90km/h past Alcoa Road and Carcoola Avenue before reaching 110 km/h.

The speed limits have been reduced to 50km/h until the service station, then immediately increasing to 110km/h.

As a result, traffic entering and exiting Carcoola Avenue now needs to blend with other vehicles, including cars and large trucks that may or may not be moving at 110 km/h.

The same merging challenges apply to traffic on Alcoa Road. Residents of Carcoola have to already deal with the considerable traffic hazards when accessing the South–West Highway, such as kangaroos near the intersection, a large number of heavily loaded trucks entering Alcoa Road or proceeding through Pinjarra, and heightened traffic due to shift changes at Alcoa.

Moreover, we have a significant number of elderly residents who mostly reside between Carcoola and Pinjarra, and they are now dealing with faster traffic.

I fear that without the immediate action, an unfortunate, potentially tragic accident is inevitable.

I have also been contacted by the Shire of Murray and union safety representatives from Alcoa, who have also raised their concerns with the local police. In nearly all the correspondence and calls received, the community is calling for further speed reductions at that very busy section of the highway. I ask the minister to consider the feedback from my community and seek a review of the speed limit so that we can improve road safety outcomes for my local community.

The next section of the highway that I raise is at the Placid Ark Roadhouse outside Coolup. I appeal to the minister to reconsider the speed limit along South Western Highway. This section of the highway has proven perilous, witnessing multiple accidents and fatalities. One recent incident occurred on 21 July this year, involving two vehicles that were written off due to the extent of the damage. This accident involved two local residents, and immediate concerns were again raised through social media and community pages and with our office from constituents voicing their concerns.

I also want to speak about the heartbreaking impact of the Mounsey family's tragedy. Their daughter Kahlia lost her life in a crash at this section of the highway on 2 May 2019. Kahlia was only 18 years old. The tragedy of her death devastated her family and the small tight-knit community of Coolup, where the family reside, and rocked the neighbouring communities of Pinjarra and Waroona. I ask the minister to consider this feedback and seek a review of the speed limit on this section of the road starting 250 metres north of the Placid Ark Roadhouse.

Last of all, I bring the minister's attention to the intersection of South Western Highway and Willowdale Road, which is the access road to the Alcoa Wagerup refinery. This is perhaps one of the most notorious intersections of the highway, and the issues at this intersection have been ongoing for years. Again, countless accidents and fatalities have occurred there. I have heard from many local families whose lives have been impacted by accidents at this intersection—parents whose sons are lucky to still be alive after near-fatal accidents. A recent letter from one such parent, Joe Dwyer, states, according to my notes —

My son, (Kane Dwyer) was involved in accident on the Southwest Highway at the Alcoa Wagerup turn off (Willowdale Road)

At approx. 5:30 am on 07/06/2023 my son, Kane Dwyer was traveling to work from Waroona to Harvey (start time 6:00am) as he has done for the past 2 years, on this morning as he was going through the Alcoa Wagerup turnoff (Willowdale Road Intersection) and another vehicle was traveling Northbound

proceeded to turn right, right in front of my son heading to the Alcoa refinery, both cars connected with both drivers luckily escaping uninjured on this occasion, and both are only kids and lucky to be alive.

As my son travels through this intersection daily it is common practice to slow down to 90km as this is a very congested intersection this time of morning, as he also did on this morning but if he was going the speed limit of 110km/h there may have been a very different outcome for these two young boys.

Another letter I received from the union and safety representatives at Alcoa states, according to my notes —

We are seeking your assistance with an urgent matter that is affecting the Alcoa workforce at both Alcoa's Wagerup Refinery, Willowdale Minesite and the broader community regarding the Southwest Highway—Willowdale Rd intersection in Wagerup.

We understand that the intersection has qualified for the federal Blackspot Program and that funding has been allocated. Our reason for concern is that until this major road Project is undertaken, we are still at a high risk of there being another serious accident and fatality.

At this intersection in the last month, we have now had another two serious multiple motor vehicle accidents involving both Alcoa workers and members of the general public, with the latest occurring on the morning of Friday the 14th July just before 6am where one of the vehicles was literally torn in half.

What we are seeking is your support and assistance in getting the speed limit lowered to 80kph from both the North and South directions entering this intersection as soon possible for the safety and protection of all who use this road.

We as joint union representatives of the Alcoa workforce believe that every single person has the right to be able to come to work and return home each and every day to our families and loved ones safely.

Due to the seriousness of this issue, we have now come together in unity to get a positive outcome for all. We are confident and believe immediate actions can be achieved to assist us with this critical safety issue that we constantly face and are having to deal with on a daily basis. We are eagerly looking forward to your assistance.

Brandon Hill—AWU Wagerup Refinery

Kevin Prowse—AMWU Wagerup Refinery

Matt Jauncey—ETU Wagerup Refinery

Phil Rozman—AWU Willowdale Mine site

Rob Letto—AMWU Willowdale

Brad Taylor—ETU Willowdale Mine site

Ryan McKenzie—CFMEU Wagerup Refinery

I thank the Franco family, the Dwyer family, Alcoa management and constituents who have raised issues about these sections of the South Western Highway. I ask the minister to continue to review the speed limits on these sections of South Western Highway and consider the feedback that I have presented today from my community and stakeholders. I know that we can work together to improve road safety for all drivers on these roads.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [9.47 am]: I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for her grievance. Last Friday, I spent some time with the member as we went through Pinjarra and surrounding districts, and then, of course, off to Harvey to visit the bakery. That is the end of every trip I do with the member for Murray–Wellington! But, in particular, we were looking at the concerns that have been raised by her community members about speed limit changes and road safety in her electorate, particularly along South Western Highway. I know that there continues to be a tension or balance between the drivers who use South Western Highway to deliver freight or move around the area and of course the townships themselves. We need to make sure that there is safety in those townships and speed limits that help reflect the level of activity that occurs in those townships and the surrounding areas.

I think that we firstly went to the Carcoola intersection on South Western Highway, where the member explained that there had been some speed zone changes. There has been a speed limit increase in that area from 90 to 110 kilometres an hour. My notes show that there had been some changes to comply with Australian standards for buffer zones in that area between the highway and the township. But after visiting the area and listening to the member explain particularly the busy intersection and the fact that there is a school that accesses South Western Highway, and seeing the level of activity in that area from both the workers and school families, I have asked Main Roads to review the speed limit in this area as a top priority to see what can be done with that speed limit.

Of course, we also visited a number of other sites, including the Willowdale Road–South Western Highway intersection. I thank the member, workers from the Alcoa refinery and members of the community who came to visit to talk about the site and that intersection. We have been successful in securing black spot funding and some work has been developed—a draft concept plan—for that intersection. We have secured \$1.57 million for work on a plan to improve the intersection, and the project development is underway.

Talking to members of the community and to the member, I know some concerns were raised about the current design, in particular, whether there is enough differentiation between the through traffic and the turning traffic, which was the cause of a number of awful accidents in that area. I have encouraged Main Roads to work with Alcoa to see whether a different design can better accommodate the concerns and make sure there is differentiation between the through traffic and the turning traffic.

These projects take a while to deliver. In the meantime, there is a keenness to either drop the speed limit or have some other warning signs in the area, in particular, during the shift changes, which I understand are at six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening, when hundreds of vehicles enter and exit that intersection. They are peak times, and there is a lot of traffic. Working with Alcoa, I have asked whether we can help deliver some signs or flashing lights for those times, so people are aware that drivers are entering and exiting at particular times at this intersection.

There is also an issue about the Placid Ark Roadhouse. This is another issue about whether the speed limit can be dropped before the Placid Ark Roadhouse, not after it, and the speed-limit reduction can be extended to help protect motorists coming in and out of the roadhouse. I have asked Main Roads to conduct a safety review of that area, too.

I thank the member for all that work and for spending time with me. Obviously, it has been a big issue of concern in her community, so it was a great pleasure to meet many local representatives and visit the entire district with her to listen firsthand to her concerns about road safety, in particular, how we can manage the balance between people driving through the area and people living in the area who want to access local amenities. I thank the member very much. We will be undertaking those reviews, and we hope to get back to her shortly about them.