

ROAD SAFETY — LAKE GRACE

Grievance

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [9.51 am]: My grievance today is addressed to the Minister for Transport. I thank the minister for taking my grievance about a serious road safety risk occurring in my electorate. I ask that the Minister for Transport instigate immediate and urgent remediation to the intersection of Stubbs Street and South Road/Kulin–Lake Grace Road in Lake Grace. As is the case with many regional towns in WA historically built around the main road through the township, Lake Grace is no exception. Lake Grace, a wheatbelt town situated 325 kilometres south east of Perth with a population of 550, is the main commercial and service centre for Newdegate, Lake King and Varley, which comprise the Shire of Lake Grace. Agriculture is the town’s primary industry, offering a large CBH receival facility, agricultural machinery dealerships and merchandise outlets. The intersection is a crossroad for traffic from Hyden, Albany, Esperance and Perth. Heavy haulage and tourist traffic interact with and add to local traffic volumes through Lake Grace. A combination of compounding risk factors at the crossing of Stubbs Street and South Road/Kulin–Lake Grace Road contribute to its complexity for motorists to navigate. Such is its reputation as a potentially fatal crash site, locals agree it is merely a matter of when, not if, that situation unfolds. “When” was realised on Saturday, 11 March 2023, when a serious but not fatal crash occurred.

A 2017 road safety audit commissioned by Main Roads safety identified the following issues at the crossing. Stop sign locations created confusion; the proximity of a rail crossing north of the intersection does not allow stacking if a road train is part of the stack; rail crossing warning signs are inconsistently spaced from respective approach directions; paving markings are poor and short lived; a culvert wall head on the north east corner is only one metre behind the kerb line; there are no raised reflective pavement markers on the approaches; information signs on the south west corner are at an incorrect height; the pavement shows signs of deformation; road signs are faded; and vegetation caused some obstruction for drivers to read road signs. No major road works have been carried out at the crossing since this audit was completed. Even as recently as last week, Main Roads applied tarmac to the roads in question without adding any minor road safety treatments such as highly effective rumble strips on entry to the intersection.

I applaud this government’s *Driving change: Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030* to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured on WA roads by 50 per cent to 70 per cent. Personally, I spend a large number of hours each week on WA roads, metropolitan and country, covering my parliamentary and electorate commitments. As with most road users, I am abundantly aware that as a driver I must take personal responsibility for my behaviour when I am behind the wheel of a vehicle. *Driving change* recognises that even the most attentive, responsible driver may falter, which is why building safer roads and road systems is one of the five priorities in the strategy. I have been made aware of the ongoing efforts by the local Lake Grace community to elicit remedial action on the intersection as their biggest fear continues to be when, not if, a fatal crash will happen. The Lake Grace community is anxiously seeking a safer intersection in the very heart of their town. The Premier, in his *Driving change: Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030* foreword, states —

Our roads can be pretty dangerous places. Too many West Australians lose their lives in crashes; too many suffer from long-term injury.

The people of Lake Grace get this. They also know that working towards a reduced road fatality target involves the whole community. This community is working together to make change happen; they are screaming unheard for support. They are waiting for Main Roads to help.

There is no question that road users share responsibility in the almost weekly near-miss incidents at the intersection. Go to the Lake Grace Roadwise Facebook page to see video footage captured by a local business situated on a corner of the intersection to see examples of what is reported to be occurring frequently. On the afternoon of Saturday, 11 March, a family of five travelling from Perth to Esperance were T-boned at the intersection by a van driven by a foreign tourist. Both vehicles rolled. My understanding is that the family of five were all hospitalised but are going to be okay.

Permanent, more impacting road treatments will inevitably incur significant expenditure. Lake Grace residents are fearful that the “when” is drawing closer. They are fearful that it could be one of their own who loses their life at the intersection, or maybe even a bus full of their children will be cleaned up by a speeding road train.

I implore the minister to investigate immediate remediation at the Lake Grace intersection. At the very least, prioritise installation of rumble strips on the north and south approaches to the crossing, and illuminated speed signs at all approaches. I thank the minister for taking my grievance today.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [9.57 am]: I thank the member for Roe for his grievance. Initially, I offer my sympathy to the family involved in that shocking accident. I have seen the vision of

the white van T-boning the car, and I am very, very pleased that there were no fatalities, because the accident was shocking. I have also seen this morning vision of other incidents that have occurred at that intersection. I note that the member has raised this with me informally outside the chamber, and Hon Shelley Payne has also raised the issue of this intersection with me. I am advised that there are 830 vehicles a day on Stubbs Street and 320 a day on South Road, and that for five years, there were no reported crashes at this intersection. I note, however, that there have been a lot of near misses, and I have seen a lot of near misses that have been, basically, half a metre or a metre between two road trains that could have potentially crashed. I have seen a lot of near misses. It is an issue of concern.

Main Roads conducted a road safety audit in 2017. Some improvements were undertaken at the time, including the installation of additional advanced warning signage, the relocation of existing Stop signs, the reinstallation of line markings, the installation of a large guide sign and the clearing of vegetation. However, since this issue has been raised by both Hon Shelley Payne and the member for Roe, the director of Main Roads wheatbelt region, Mr Mohammad Siddiqui, and two of his staff travelled to Lake Grace yesterday to inspect the site and meet with the shire CEO and local police. As a result of the meeting, Main Roads will undertake some immediate actions, including the installation of new holding lines that will be completed by the end of this week. In addition, Main Roads will look at other minor treatments to further enhance safety at this location, such as the issues raised by the member for Roe, including rumble strips, pavement treatments and signage. As I said, I have seen the near misses. Trucks do not even stop. Of course, there was that terrible accident when a van did not stop at all. I am also advised that the intersection is scheduled to be sealed with asphalt in May this year, at which time the other line markings will be reviewed.

I thank the member for the grievance. I saw the vision. We need to improve the signage and the line markings and see whether we can install other pavement treatment to slow down vehicles and make drivers take care. I am not happy that there was an accident, but I am happy for the family that there were no fatalities, given the severity of the crash. We will be undertaking those works over the next few months.