

PERTH MOTORPLEX — JUNIOR DRAG RACING

Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [9.05 am]: I rise today to inform the house that the suspension on junior drag racing at Perth Motorplex has now been lifted following the full implementation of all recommendations in the coroner's report and the introduction of additional safety measures that go above and beyond the coronial recommendations.

Following the tragic death of eight-year-old Anita Board in 2017, I immediately suspended junior drag racing at the state government-run Perth Motorplex whilst the police and the coroner conducted investigations into the circumstances that led to the accident. As I announced following the release of Coroner Sarah Linton's report in August this year, the state government would not allow junior dragsters back on the track at Perth Motorplex until all the report's recommendations were implemented. The recommendations were for improvements in the following areas: venue infrastructure, licensing and training programs, safety equipment, vehicle inspections, engine cut-off devices and CCTV equipment to record drivers' movements. These recommendations have been put in place in a joint effort by the venue owner, VenuesWest; the Australian National Drag Racing Association, the sport's sanctioning body; and other stakeholders. ANDRA is also rolling out these recommendations nationally.

With the safety of competitors our number one priority, five supplementary items in the report have also been implemented to provide additional safety enhancements on top of the full suite of coronial recommendations, including increasing the minimum age for competitors from eight to 10 years of age. This is a step above and beyond the coroner's recommendations and in line with community expectations and testimonial evidence given by Mr Iain Cameron, chair of the WA Road Safety Council, who stated that a body of evidence accepts that the cognitive development of children under 10 —

... does not allow them to judge and perceive speed and distance in the way that an adult can.

Raising the minimum age of competitors to 10 will see young drivers better equipped in terms of their ability to make the kind of risk assessments and judgements required to race and drive safely.

Once again, I extend my deepest sympathies to the Board family on the loss of Anita. I am confident that junior dragsters will return to the track safer than ever as a result of these changes, and I thank everyone involved for their patience during this process.