

TOW TRUCK INDUSTRY — REFORM BILL

821. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Transport:

The minister is back, alive and well, following her recent exposure.

I refer to the recent crackdown on the tow truck industry by the Western Australia Police Force, which has highlighted strong links between some operators and outlaw motorcycle gangs.

- (1) Given that the presence of these links is not new information to the government and Western Australian drivers are constantly falling victim to unethical behaviour by members of the industry, what is the status of the long-promised reform bill?
- (2) After nearly seven years of Labor, why are motorists still waiting for these long-promised reforms?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question.

- (1)–(2) Of course, it is a policy area that the assistant minister is leading now, but let us go through what we have been doing. First of all, the member's government was in power for eight and a half years and it never touched the issue. Wheel clamping was everywhere. Do members remember that? Innocent people would come back and their wheels would be clamped and they would have to pay thousands of dollars to get their vehicle unclamped. What did we do? We came in and we removed the ability to clamp vehicles. That has changed. That is done. Of course, as a result, we do not have those situations anymore.

We understand and understood that the tow truck industry is an area that needs regulation and reform. That is why we sought to do that. The reforms are in two parts. Reforms have already taken place in relation to, first of all, requiring a better system of regulation for vehicles and drivers and also in relation to transport costs. Now the tow truck driver will have to show how much the cost will be before the agreement is made to tow the vehicle. An education program has also commenced to inform drivers about their rights in confronting the situation in which they need a tow truck. There is also legislation that we need to change, and that work is well underway under the new minister.

We have always said that this is an area that we want to work on, and I am glad that the police are involved and are undertaking their own operations. If something is happening that is illegal, the police should be involved. I congratulate the police for being involved. This is another area that we want to clean up, and that is what we are doing. The member was there for eight and a half years. His government did nothing—zero, zero, zero. When we compare what we have done in banning wheel clamping, bringing in reforms to the tow truck industry and undertaking further reforms, and working with police to have a crackdown, we can see that we are doing more. Of course, the Attorney General is cracking down on bikies across the state. No government has done more to crack down on illegal activity undertaken by bikie gangs in this state than this government.

We will continue to work very hard. As I said, when we look at what we have already done compared with what the previous government did, we can see that there has been a 100 per cent increase, and there is more to be done. We are drafting legislation to include a new regulatory authority. We will also create new regulations in particular to cap fees to make sure that people are not vulnerable to not only the transport cost, but also the storage cost, which we know has been a bit of a hidden cost. It also impacts insurance, and insurance companies are very keen to continue to work with us.