

ROAD TRAUMA

Motion

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.24 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that 175 people lost their lives on Western Australian roads in 2022, which is, tragically, the highest toll since 2016;
- (b) acknowledges the impact of road trauma on individuals, families, first responders and communities and the benefits of access to trauma support services;
- (c) notes that the closing balance of the road trauma trust account at 31 December 2022 was \$89 million; and
- (d) discusses strategies and initiatives to improve road safety outcomes, including how to address the disproportionately high number of fatalities on regional roads.

I rise as I have done on numerous occasions to raise the important issue of road safety in our state in a motion that I hope will be embraced by members across the chamber as we discuss this wicked problem that has plagued governments of all persuasions over many decades.

The first thing I want to acknowledge is that although Australia's road safety record is constantly improving, that should never stop us from striving to do better. As I have said before in this place, it may take a technological revolution before we see the real next step change that is required to reduce the incidence of deaths and serious injuries on roads in Western Australia and, indeed, more broadly.

The 2022 data for Western Australia shows a trend up in the short term in fatalities driven by deaths on regional roads. In the same year, there was a decline in metropolitan road fatalities. That is an important point because often when we talk about road safety, we focus our time on issues in regional areas, but it is also important to recognise that approximately one-third of fatalities occur on metropolitan roads.

Recently I had the opportunity as the shadow Minister for Road Safety to visit the City of Wanneroo at the invitation of Councillor Jordan Wright. We inspected an intersection on Wanneroo Road that has become increasingly dangerous, largely due to the volume of increasing traffic and ageing road design. However, road safety is much more than just roads. Often when we talk about road safety, the debate can easily become fixated on roads themselves. To provide some context, last year's road toll was the equivalent to the death of every member of both houses of Parliament—twice. If that is not compelling enough, I draw members' attention to the government's *Driving change: Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030*, which has placed an economic cost on road trauma. Each fatality costs an estimated \$7 million, each hospitalisation some \$300 000. Road trauma costs Western Australia approximately \$2.4 billion each and every year. I bring this motion today, as I have done on previous occasions, because I genuinely believe that we need to continue to engage on this issue. It is not a condemning or congratulatory motion, as is my preference; rather, it is a genuine attempt to advance road safety outcomes in Western Australia.

I now turn to the second limb of the motion, which states —

acknowledges the impact of road trauma on individuals, families, first responders and communities and the benefits of access to trauma support services;

It is pleasing that the government's *Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030* contemplates this in the section categorised as "Post-crash response", which recognises that whilst we strive for improved road safety outcomes, we still need to deal with the consequences of road trauma, and those consequences are many. Road trauma impacts many in our community, as this limb of the motion outlines. Currently, road trauma support services are delivered by an organisation called Injury Matters, through Road Trauma Support WA. From all accounts, this is a good service. However, it is entirely a metropolitan-based offering, providing outreach by telephone or videoconference only. Given the prevalence of road trauma on regional roads and in regional communities—as I said before, two-thirds of fatalities last year occurred in regional Western Australia—there is unfortunately an opportunity to expand this service beyond Perth. Families grieving the loss of a loved one have shared their experience with me that in seeking access to this specialised trauma counselling service, they often have to travel long distances away from their community, support networks and family, and probably, more tragically, along the same road that took the life of their loved one.

Late last year I had the opportunity to meet with a bunch of dedicated volunteers behind an organisation called Heart Hub South West—an organisation that was born from tragedy, is community-funded and driven, and delivers a person-centred approach to road trauma support across the south west more broadly. Sadly, the demand for its services has exploded, resulting in Heart Hub delivering services across the south west region from its Collie base.

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It is much more than a counselling service; it is a road safety advocate, an educator and a promoter of general wellbeing. This organisation reminds me, and should remind all of us, that whilst we should remain focused on preventing and, indeed, avoiding road trauma, in the interim, we still need to support those left behind. That is why I am glad to see a focus on this issue in the government's 10-year road safety strategy. Heart Hub South West is an innovator in service delivery; it is nimble, it is flexible and it achieves results quickly on very limited funding, as we know not-for-profits and community-driven organisations are prone to do.

The other cohort that I want to touch on are the first responders, who often deal with the aftermath of road trauma. We know the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among first responders is much higher than the population average due to their exposure, and often sustained exposure, to trauma. It is disappointing in the extreme that on Boxing Day 2021, the state government announced PTSD presumptive protection to ambulance officers, paramedics and ambulance 000 call centre operators, yet, to this day, no such protection has been extended to volunteer ambulance officers, firefighters or others who serve our community, often at significant sacrifice. I put this on the record again as an opportunity for the government to immediately address this inconsistency and matter of gross inequity.

This takes me to the third limb of the motion, which notes that the closing balance of the road trauma trust account at 31 December 2022 was \$89 million. That information was obviously sourced from the quarterly financial statements published by the WA Department of Treasury. The road trauma trust account has long been a matter of some controversy. I am sure members who have been here long enough would be aware of some of the even recent history. The initial observation I will make, which the government ought to reflect on, is that in a year in which we recorded our worst road toll in six years, we had a closing balance in this account of some \$89 million. There will always be project slippage and there will always be lumpiness in the expenditure of funds, particularly when projects are not necessarily controlled by the Road Safety Council. In fact, probably more often than not it relies on other agencies, departments or, indeed, the not-for-profit sector to deliver projects and initiatives funded by the road trauma trust account. But there is always room for improvement, as there is always room for improvement around transparency and accountability, as funds increase year on year in the road trauma trust account.

We have seen some questionable expenditure. At one stage, the advice of the Road Safety Council to government was against an investment that, in its words, provided no demonstrable road safety benefit. The example I am referring to is the procurement of a replacement police helicopter. This was at a time when the midwest and, indeed, other regions in Western Australia had been advocating for a dedicated rescue helicopter service. According to Western Australian research, such a service would increase survivability from major road trauma. I am sure that some members in this house would be aware of the research conducted by Mr David Ford of ECU in 2020—both Western Australian and recent research—that found that people were 50 per cent more likely to die from major trauma if transported by road rather than helicopter. An article that appeared in *Air Medical Journal* says under the heading “Conclusion” —

Our results suggest there was more than a 50% increased risk of death for major trauma patients who were transported indirectly to a rural hospital before retrieval to a tertiary hospital compared with direct HEMS retrieval from the incident scene to a tertiary hospital.

People are 50 per cent more likely to die from major trauma in regional Western Australia, where there is not an available and dedicated rescue helicopter. This initiative would surely have been a higher priority for expenditure from the road trauma trust account than a police helicopter that has, in the words of the Road Safety Council, no demonstrable road safety benefit. There are, of course, opportunities to increase the capacity of the road trauma trust account. At the last election, we put forward two specific policies. One was to commit all traffic infringement revenue to the road trauma trust account. What people may not realise is that the road trauma trust account is effectively made up of funds collected from traffic infringements relating to speed and red-light cameras in Western Australia; it does not collect all the revenue that is raised from traffic infringements generally. If the government were to adopt the policy that we put forward, it would increase the funds flowing to the road trauma trust account by, on average, \$30 million each and every year. The other thing that would do is allow government to say that traffic infringements are not about revenue raising because we have a fund called the road trauma trust account, and its purpose is to reinvest the money from people who do the wrong thing in saving lives and preventing serious injuries on Western Australian roads.

The other opportunity that the government has and that we presented and proposed at the last state election is that the Insurance Commission of Western Australia can do more. In other states, its equivalents are actively engaged in road safety initiatives and road trauma prevention. Recently, on 24 November 2022, I wrote to Mr Rob Bransby, who is the chair of Insurance Commission of Western Australia. He was appointed chair in October last year, so he had only recently been appointed, but I recognise that he had been a commissioner of ICWA for some years before.

In part of the letter, I said —

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I note in 2021–22, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia (the Commission) received almost \$900 million in motor injury insurance premiums and across the forward estimates are forecast to deliver some \$370 million to government in dividends and tax equivalents.

In 2019–20 the Commission contributed just \$1.2 million to road safety initiatives whilst its counterpart in Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) contributed some \$181 million. Notwithstanding the fact that the TAC has roughly twice the premium revenue, I think the above figures demonstrate that there is capacity for the Commission to play a larger role in road safety prevention but also in supporting those impacted by road trauma.

Time is escaping me, but that takes me to the fourth limb of my motion, which I think is probably the most important part and for which I hope there may be some diversity of views because we should all endeavour to make real progress on this terrible issue. If one looks at the *RAC state budget submission 2023–24*, the first recommendation of this esteemed road safety organisation is to fully fund the regional road safety program. Here is another budget initiative that could be taken up by the state government. It is \$73 million unfunded from a \$900 million 10-year program, and it has been rated as having a benefit–cost ratio of 4.05, which is a very high BCR. According to the RAC’s pre-budget submission, the BCR assessment of the Morley–Ellenbrook line was 1.1. If we look at the regional road safety program, its BCR was 4.05, and it is still not fully funded. I hope that, when we return from the autumn recess, we will be presented with a budget that resolves that issue. This program is estimated to save 2 100 people from being killed or seriously injured, and it would reduce regional road trauma by 60 per cent, not to mention it would create thousands of jobs in our regions.

Before I move on from the RAC, I want to recognise the imminent retirement of Patrick Walker as group executive, social and community impact. I am sure that Pat is a friend of many in this place. I know that Hon Steve Martin, Hon Darren West and potentially others were at his retirement farewell last week. I want to recognise his 12 years of service not just to the RAC, but also as one of the best advocates for road safety that I have come across in my time in Parliament. I wish all the best for him and his family in the future.

Obviously, fixing roads and dangerous intersections is one thing. It is often the easiest thing to fix; it just takes money. Cultural and behavioural change in delivering road safety outcomes is much more difficult; it is generational. Whereas once driving without wearing a seatbelt or while intoxicated were the focus, today’s challenges particularly relate to increasing levels of distraction within the motor vehicle and the environment, and they are just as difficult problems to face.

That takes me to road safety campaigns. Obviously, they are just one way of trying to resolve some of the challenging issues we face in this area. Changing behaviour is hard and slow, but we must be consistent. We must be consistent in our resolve to achieve results. The government’s road safety strategy that I mentioned earlier, *Driving Change 2020–30*, has a bold target of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured by 50 to 70 per cent by 2030. Unfortunately, road trauma will affect all of us, if it has not already affected some of us at some stage in our lives. It is for that reason—for our friends, families and communities—that we must strive to be bold and to be better.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.45 am]: I rise to make a contribution to this excellent motion brought before us today by Hon Martin Aldridge. It is something that as a chamber we ought to discuss often because road safety has many different aspects and putting our minds to some of the different opportunities that exist can only be a good thing.

I have some particular aspects I want to focus on, but I was reminded of cultural change by the contribution of Hon Martin Aldridge, just towards the end when he talked about it. That is something that I did not plan to talk about, but I want to talk about it because I think it is incredibly important in the whole aspect of road safety. I will talk about my experience and some observations I made years ago when I had the privilege to drive in other countries, specifically in Europe. I drove several thousand kilometres across a few different countries in Europe, and one thing I really noticed there was the attitudinal difference across the different countries compared with Australia, particularly Western Australia. I know members probably have plenty of examples of having got into an Uber, a cab, a DiDi, an Ola or whatever they are called, and they have had drivers from other countries or other states who have made the observation that Western Australians are the worst drivers in the world. I hear that very often, and in some ways I agree that we have some attitudes here that probably need adjustment. One observation I make from the time I spent driving across other countries—in particular, Germany—was that it took me a while to get used to the fact that the drivers were all aware that the road was not their road; it was everybody’s road, and they were sharing it with other people. Their attitude was so different that if they overtook or passed a vehicle on a multilane road, they would always move out of the way to the slower lane, in fact, to the slowest lane if they could, assuming a truck or something else was not travelling quite slowly in there. Everyone would always simply overtake and move back out of the way. The other thing I saw was that as they approached an accident, roadworks or something like that, hazard lights would be flashing on all the cars in front for kilometres. It took me a while to work out what it was. It was simply the other drivers letting everyone else know that something they ought to be aware of was up ahead so

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slow down and be bit careful. That was quite profound in many ways because it demonstrated an awareness that those drivers did not think they were the only people on the road; they were acutely aware that other people were around them and that by assisting their fellow drivers they could perhaps prevent accidents and, therefore, trauma. I am not sure what the road trauma statistics are in Germany; I just make those observations.

I will make a final observation about when I crossed the border from Switzerland to France. If I thought Western Australian drivers were bad, well, they have nothing on the French! Literally, within 50 metres of crossing that border, there were fingers out windows and all sorts of profanities in French. It was a totally different attitude, and I thought that contrast was very interesting.

Hon Darren West: They are even on the wrong side of the road, member.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I was on the right side of the road. I had probably got a kilometre down the road when I saw the first road accident that I had seen in all those thousands of kilometres of driving. Anyway, it was an interesting story.

I think that attitudinal change is very hard to do, as Hon Martin Aldridge said, and it starts with our kids when we are teaching them to drive. Programs like Keys4Life are a good start. Both my two daughters, who have their drivers' licences, did that program and it helped with their awareness and attitude; however, I think people can slip into bad habits pretty quickly once they start driving on the road, see what other drivers do and mirror their patterns.

I will move on. As Hon Martin Aldridge said, there have been significant deaths on our roads, in particular on regional roads in Western Australia, and that rate is around six and a half times more than in the Perth metropolitan area. Since 2012, 1 069 people have died on our regional roads, and that is unacceptable. That obviously has a devastating impact on not only the families of those involved in those tragic accidents, but also the first responders for those communities, because so often the myth is not true that people who die on regional roads are city drivers who do not know what they are doing. It is often country drivers and young country drivers who die on those country roads, and that has a devastating impact on their small communities, especially when we consider the fact that many of the first responders in those instances will know that person or know someone who knows that person. I cannot imagine having to respond to an incident like that and coming across a child or a loved one of someone I know. It is just unimaginable and something that we, as a community, need to work to improve. We do not capture those sorts of statistics and impacts in the road trauma figures. We do not capture the impact on those communities. The statistics do not talk about that. I think that again identifies the importance of why we have \$89 million in the road trauma trust fund. We need to use that money for genuine efforts to improve outcomes for people on our roads. We need to expend it on things that will deliver a return in reducing the road toll. Hon Martin Aldridge commented about the regional road safety program. That is probably the low hanging fruit that needs to be funded completely. I hope we see that funded completely in the forthcoming budget. That would be an excellent start in trying to reduce road trauma figures in our state.

Some of the other issues I can talk about include some of the highways and the traffic on those roads. A lot of tourism happens on our roads, and that increased over the COVID period. A lot of people took the opportunity to look around WA, which is fantastic, but the mix of heavy traffic and the quality of those roads means we need to spend significant money on work to improve those roads. In terms of the improvements that we can make, I know that Main Roads has done some work on improving the shoulders of roads, improving line markings and —

Hon Darren West: Audible edge lines.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: — audible edge lines. That is exactly the comment I was going to make, honourable member.

That sort of work, which is relatively inexpensive, can be done and will have an impact. Consider, particularly, the road between Esperance and Ravensthorpe. I will talk about that road in the brief time I have left. There is a lot of traffic on that road. A lot of tourists head down that way. Esperance recently had its busiest tourism season ever. A lot of people went down there to visit that beautiful part of the world, but of course there has been a record grain harvest, which saw a lot of trucks on the road transporting grain. There is mining as well, which obviously has all sorts of different products on that road, adding additional pressure. The other aspect of that is gas. I am not laying the blame here at the government, but unbelievably—it is mind boggling to me—we now need to truck gas to Esperance for the power station, when we already have a pipeline from Kalgoorlie that was delivering the gas. As I said, I am not laying the blame here at government, but those extra trucks on the road —

Hon Darren West: You would have thought they would have tendered a cheaper price.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: I would have thought there would be some contemplation of the additional cost of road maintenance and the potential risks to people's lives from trucking gas. As I said, I am not blaming the government here, but I think everyone would be confused about how it could be cheaper to truck gas all the way from Perth, rather than push it down a pipeline that is already there. I am sure other members might know more about that than

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I do. It is just one of those other things that adds additional pressure to our road trauma, and potentially creates extra hazards that we do not need to have, in addition to creating a need for extra maintenance, which of course costs money. Having said that, a significant amount of money needs to be spent on our road network. We have many thousands of kilometres of road that need funding at a state and federal level.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.55 am]: I rise to speak to this motion as well. As outlined by my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge, disproportionately, the impact of road trauma is on regional Western Australia. The number presented regarding the calculated cost of each fatality is around \$7 million. It is a very important number, even though the impact of the trauma and loss on every family cannot be valued; that is just an incredibly painful and terrible experience for the many families who are affected by road trauma across our state.

I believe there is an underinvestment in our regional road network. One of the challenges we face in assessing the value of road improvements is making business cases for road improvement. Prior to coming to this place, I worked as an economist in the north and did a number of business cases on road improvements for local authorities and Main Roads. This is part of our challenge. Let us take a particular road, Duncan Road, which runs from the Northern Territory through to Halls Creek. That road is very quiet; it does not have a lot of traffic. Some work is underway and it is great to see the investment now in play in relation to the mine site south of the community of Ringer Soak, which is allowing for some investment, but there is a problem with the assessment of much-needed road improvements. The comparison rate of fatalities for the number of people who travel that road is horrendous. I do not have the exact number, but if the same rate of accidents occurred on Leach Highway, it would be in the order of about 15 000 car crashes. The problem is that so few cars travel on these roads that those few cars are much more exposed to risk because of the horrendous driving conditions. It is hard to make a case based on the statistical values that were presented by my honourable colleague around the road trauma impact. This is a challenge for us. We have to look at it more from an equity point of view. There has to be an adjustment when Main Roads or other policymakers assess the value of those improvements. There has to be a further adjustment from the point of view of equity and the impact on those communities. It may be true that the statistical cost of a fatality across the nation might be around \$7 million, but those costs and the ongoing trauma are concentrated, particularly within our remote Aboriginal communities and right across the remote areas of Western Australia.

RAC has some data online and there is data available through the Road Safety Council as well, but I will give members a comparison of some actual data, which was over the period up to 2017. It is the only readily available data I could find on a map, but it reflects the general trend. The fatality rate in metropolitan Perth over a five-year period up to 2017 was 2.2 per 100 000 people. In regional communities like the Kimberley, it is 40 per 100 000. It is a very similar number for the Pilbara and likewise for the goldfields. That is broad data that we know just from the highways. We are not talking about those gravel roads—for example, those that go from Balgo to Halls Creek or from Ringer Soak through to Halls Creek where the rates are much higher. We are talking about the highways across our network. Even so, the fatality rates are in order of about 20 times higher per head of population.

I do a lot of kilometres and drive huge distances. One of the good things about having this job is the ability to get around and speak to people. I have travelled right across the state in my region. I note the different road conditions across our state. I have seen the North West Coastal Highway in pretty good condition. There are some challenges relating to a section from Munjina Gorge through to Port Hedland. There has been an incredible increase in the number of quads and road trains operating up there. I know there is some investment on the cards to create more passing lanes. However, with the huge value that has been ripped out of the Pilbara region through royalties, it would be good to see more passing lanes. It is incredibly difficult when there is a road train over 50 metres long and a person is travelling at 110 kilometres per hour and that road train is doing 100 kilometres per hour. There is a large amount of time that is actually spent on the wrong side of the road just trying to get past that vehicle.

These are some of the challenges that we have. We need investment. I note that down in the goldfields there has been some widening work undertaken by Main Roads Western Australia, such as on the Coolgardie–Esperance Highway. However, there are long sections of the road that are in accordance with the old standard of eight metres over 10 metres. That is a way of saying there are eight metres of sealed road with a metre of shoulder on each side. That basically means that each lane is four metres wide. There are a lot of road trains on that road, operating out of Widgiemooltha, for example, to take ore down to Esperance. These are huge challenges. I have driven that road several times in recent years. I spoke to the Shire of Dundas about the concerns about the edges. I have stood on the side of the road and taken photos. There are gaps of up to 300 millimetres and drop-offs at the edge of that seal where the grading has probably not been kept up to the standard that might be expected because of the constant stream of trucks. I know that there have been rollovers. I have taken photos of that. I have seen trucks go by with their left wheel literally right on the white line, only millimetres away from the edge of the road. If there is a little bit of wobble and something happens, that trailer can just spill off into the edge and unsettle the truck.

This is creating massive issues. I mentioned Widgiemooltha. That is a spot showing some good data on trafficmap online. If people want to inform themselves of what is going on, look at what is going on there. There used to be

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just 300 vehicles travelling back each way over the period of a week. It has now gone up to 500. There has been an incredible increase in vehicle traffic on those roads, and yet those roads are still trailing behind in terms of upgrades. We need to upgrade them faster. There is incredible wealth coming out of that area, so we need to upgrade those roads. We know there are a whole range of issues reducing safety on our roads. I certainly urge the government to look more thoroughly at that.

Of the traffic on those roads, 43 per cent of it consists of heavy vehicles. It is constantly just truck after truck. We need our trucks, the heavy transport industry and the mining industry, and we need to support them. However, we need to make sure that we invest in and fortify our road network. We have seen the events north and what is happening with the huge challenges resulting from flooding. The roads are not open and people are having to travel thousands of extra kilometres through South Australia. People are being put at a greater risk. There has apparently been a 20 per cent increase in traffic through Norseman in the last period since the floods because of all those trucks having to move around.

The Liberal Party took a proposal to the last election to speed up the safety program with the commonwealth. We wanted to accelerate it from completion in 10 years to just four years. I urge the government. We need audible edges and 12-metre sealed road platforms.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [11.05 am]: I rise to put forward the government's position in response to the motion. I thank Hon Martin Aldridge for moving the motion. I think in his contribution he made the point that everyone in this chamber will know somebody who has been, or be, in some way, personally affected by road trauma. I am certainly in that category. Some people know that before I entered this place, in 1994, just three months short of her sixtieth birthday—younger than I am today—my mum was in a catastrophic motor vehicle accident. It happened here in Perth on Newcastle Street, just near the Water Corporation. She went through a red light. It was a Sunday morning and also my grandmother's birthday. She was going to pick up my grandmother to go to the family celebration.

Nobody could ascertain what actually happened. The most likely cause was that she had some form of an aneurysm or something like that. Neurosurgeons could not put their finger on it. She was certainly not the kind of person who would drive through a red light, but she did. She was hit side-on on the driver's side by a four-wheel drive with a bull bar. That had its consequences on her little Datsun.

She lived for another 20 years, but with an acquired brain injury. It had an effect not unlike a stroke; it slurred speech, limited movement, particularly down her right side and caused some cognitive deficit as well. For most of the 20 years that she lived after the accident, she lived at home with my dad. We arranged for carers for the most part of that time. We paid for those ourselves. My father was known to some to have worked in the resource industry and was the CEO of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia. He will not mind me saying this—I have said it publicly before—he used up all his superannuation and the family resources. They sold the house and moved into residential independent living where we continued to pay for care until that became impossible financially, and certainly, mentally and emotionally for my dad. She was moved into an aged-care facility and passed away in 2013.

Obviously, that had a devastating impact on my mother. I am my mother's daughter, so imagine my personality writ large. That was my mother. It had a devastating impact on her, and an equally, in a different way, devastating impact on my father and the rest of us. I had to take out a second mortgage. It had significant consequences for us. It is the case that we always need to do more to strive to get better at how we stop, where it is possible, road trauma. I do think we need to acknowledge this point, and I think that former ministers including Terry Redman have made it: I just do not think we will ever get to the point where we can be able to stop it completely. As in the case of my mother, we do not actually know what caused it. It is the case that young people think they are invincible, particularly young men. It is also hard to convince people to not drink and drive. We are getting better at those sorts of things and we need to strive constantly to do more. Whenever I talk about mum, I try to do a shout-out, so I am going to do it again, to all the people who helped my family. We were so lucky that on the day of her accident Professor Bryant Stokes, known to some as "Bar" Stokes, was on the roster at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, and I am forever grateful to him. We still see him occasionally. He continued to look after my mum for the next 20 years as well. So a shout-out to Bar Stokes.

I will talk a little bit about what the government has done and what the government is doing and I will address the elements of the motion before us. In part, the motion refers to \$89 million. That was the amount of cash in the fund at the end of December 2022, but that does not reflect the funding commitments that had already been made. The Road Safety Commission advised that of that \$89 million, \$58 million is committed to road safety programs, \$10 million is being kept aside as a prudential reserve, leaving \$21 million available for new spending commitments. The \$89 million on the current budget will fall to \$53 million by 30 June 2023, and that \$53 million will fall to

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\$31 million by the end of the forward estimates period. It is important to note that although there is cash in the account, this is not reflective of what has already been committed.

I will talk a little bit about the Road Safety Commission and what it has been doing. The Road Safety Commission has responsibility for reducing road trauma by supporting a range of strategies to deal with road safety. The Road Safety Commission also works in collaboration with the key stakeholders within government agencies, the private sector and the community through community education campaigns and community engagement and grants. Members will have seen the advertisement that started playing in December 2022, the “No one plans a crash” campaign. The ad follows two typical Western Australian households—a family home and a share house. The ad shows a member of the household setting out on one of their typical everyday journeys, while another member is gripped by a premonition of a crash awaiting their departing loved one. It is quite a confronting ad. The 12 commercials highlight a number of everyday tragedies, each of which could have been avoided or had a lower impact if a better one-off choice had been made. The campaign was backed by research and was deliberately designed to provoke the kind of conversations that we need to have in our own households.

The other thing to note is that this year WA will be the host state for the National Road Safety Week in May. It will be an opportunity to raise awareness, and ministers for road safety from around the country will be meeting in, I think it is, Perth—I cannot tell; I will check whether that is correct.

It is important for people to know that the road trauma trust account receives 100 per cent of the revenue resulting from photographic speed and red-light camera fines. Some people use the term “revenue raising” when referring to red-light cameras as if that is a bad thing, but people need to understand where that money goes; it goes into the road trauma trust account. Those funds are managed by the Road Safety Commission and allocated to the range of programs that fit within the *Driving change: Road safety strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030*. We are aiming for a reduction in road deaths and serious injuries of between 50 and 70 per cent by 2030. That is a very ambitious target but it is one that we need to strive for.

The Road Safety Council is made up of members from the Western Australia Police Force, Main Roads Western Australia, the Department of Transport, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia, RAC WA and the Western Australian Local Government Association. Submissions on how to spend those funds are reviewed by the commission and then recommendations are made to the minister. These submissions and projects vary every year.

The Road Safety Council has adopted a practice of holding a \$10 million prudential reserve, firstly, to guard against unanticipated cost increases for funded road safety programs and, secondly, to guard against unexpected volatility in infringement revenue. This means that \$21 million is available to fund new road safety projects and initiatives across the forward estimates period. In a perfect world, there would be no funds in that account because nobody would be running through red lights and everyone would be adhering to the rules. Some of the programs such as the road trauma support programs are supported by this account. An important point is that we need to look to evidence-based programs for some of the things that were canvassed in paragraph (d) of the motion regarding new strategies and opportunities.

The road safety research centre is located at University of Western Australia. It was developed by a multi-agency committee, and is supported by the Road Safety Council and the Road Safety Commission. Some of its research is on driver behaviour; the impact of speeding, safe vehicles, road safety infrastructure and a safe systems foundation. The honourable member who moved the motion made the point that technology can assist us to a certain extent; people will be familiar with vehicles that self-lock when triggered by the driver’s behaviour. Technology will get us so far, and I certainly support research going further, but I think that a lot of it is about behaviour and then acknowledging that I do not know what we do about young people whose brains are still not fully developed when they are given formal permission to drive a vehicle. I am not sure how much more we can do in that space.

It is important to note in the time that I have left some examples of the drawdowns from the road trauma trust account in 2022–23. Main Roads’ regional road safety improvements project is \$20 million. The delivery of camera operations and infringements by the police is \$17.7 million. Main Roads’ metropolitan intersections project is \$14.3 million. The continuation of the impaired driving detection program is \$10.4 million. For the research that I referred to, it is \$8.9 million. The community education and engagement program, delivered by the Road Safety Commission, is \$8.4 million. Each year, decisions on how to spend that funding are made independently by the Road Safety Council.

I thank the honourable member for moving the motion. I could talk more. I have a note somewhere about regional roads funding because it is the case that disproportionately that is where the many road traumas occur. There is \$827.5 million on the regional road safety program to provide important road safety improvements to 8 500 kilometres of road network by June 2024. Between 2020–21 and December 2022, \$518.47 million worth of road safety improvements were completed across just over 6 000 kilometres of our regional and remote road network,

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comprising a completed stimulus package of \$121 million and a completed road safety program of \$398.47 million. Tranche 1 was completed in the first half of 2021, tranche 2 was completed in the second half of 2021, and tranche 3 was completed in 2022. The current delivery of regional road safety upgrades worth \$170 million commenced in July 2022 and is expected to be completed by June 2024. In addition, the delivery of the \$134 million road safety program is expected to commence in 2023–24. Overall, the works commenced will see an additional 1 300 kilometres of network improvement across 2023–24. We are pleased to continue to work with the new federal government on joint funding arrangements to continue to improve our road safety. There is more to be done in this space and we need to continually strive to do better.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [11.20 am]: I rise to make a contribution on this excellent motion moved by my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge about the very sad data that he and other members have presented to us. I would like to thank the Leader of the House for her personal reflection on how this issue has affected her family. I was unaware of those details. Very sadly, that story is way too common across our society.

I was fortunate enough to be a member of the Road Safety Council more than a decade ago. It is a role that I seriously enjoyed. I am certain that I was the only regional member of the body at that stage. Before I moved on from that position, I got to make a brief farewell speech to the other members of the council and some of the staff members of the Road Safety Commission. I took the opportunity to thank them for the enormous amount of work they do, and to also point out that in my circumstances, over a decade ago, more than half of my neighbours had lost someone on the roads. The other members of that body were all from the suburbs, which, of course, is okay. I said, “Go home tonight and as you drive up your street in Dianella or Armadale or wherever, imagine that in every second house is a family who has lost someone.” That is what regional Western Australia can look like. That is the impact. We have heard some of the data presented today. The impact is far greater in regional WA, very sadly. That is not to diminish the impact of these awful accidents and deaths in metropolitan Perth—absolutely not. It is a tragedy wherever it strikes, but because of the scale of the communities in regional Western Australia, I think that the impact is much, much more severe. If I threw in the number of neighbours who were seriously injured who had been in a serious accident, it might not be every neighbour, but it would be nudging close to it. I think Hon Colin de Grussa mentioned volunteer ambulance officers earlier. I also had another neighbour who was a volunteer ambulance officer who attended a fatality of a very close friend. Like Hon Colin de Grussa, I simply cannot imagine how that evening progressed for that young man. That is just one of the tasks we ask our volunteers to do in regional and metropolitan Western Australia. We need to support them, particularly after the event. That occurred some time ago and the young man was pretty much left to deal with it himself, and with the support of the locals, of course, but that would have been an awfully traumatic set of circumstances for him and his family and obviously for the family of the deceased person. That is what we send them out to do on a far too regular basis.

I will add to the data that has been presented. We know that it is bad in regional Western Australia. The number of people killed and seriously injured in the Perth metropolitan area is 58 per 100 000 and 107 in regional Western Australia, which is almost double. That is very bad. We are not quite sure why, but, extraordinarily, in the wheatbelt, 219 people are killed and seriously injured per 100 000 head of population. That is the worst in Western Australia and almost the worst in the country, I believe.

Hon Darren West: And it is the worst for not wearing a seatbelt—30 per cent. That is the difference.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: But regional Western Australians all over Western Australia are doing a better job. There is something about the wheatbelt. I will come to some of the things that I think explain it.

Hon Darren West: It is seatbelts.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: It is not entirely about seatbelts.

Going back to my time on the Road Safety Commission, I came to that body with the normal opinions that most people have about how people behave on our roads. I think Hon Colin de Grussa mentioned them. People believe that it is city drivers loose in the bush or young people and this and that. The chair of the Road Safety Commission at the time was a wonderful gentleman called D’Arcy Holman, who was a scientist. From day one he said, “We look at the data. We don’t make a decision or make a recommendation unless the data tells us it’s the case.” Shortly after that, we arranged a visit to parts of the great southern and the wheatbelt to look at a few sites where fatalities had taken place. We stopped the bus and got out on the road between Wickiepin and Narrogin and stopped at a memorial, as there often is around those sites. Whilst I was standing on the bitumen, I could touch the white gum. Mr Holman asked what the speed limit was and I said it was 110 kilometres an hour. He said okay and I quickly said that speed was not an issue. Mr Holman said to me, “Well, Steve, if he was doing 20 kilometres an hour, he’d still be here.” His scientific mind thought that speed was always an issue in a fatality, and he was very right. But his point was that we need to look at the data on all sorts of issues.

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One of the things that we were confronted with on that body then, and I am sure it is the case now, was passing lanes. People say that we must have passing lanes because they are very important for all sorts of reasons, including speeding the flow of traffic, thereby avoiding anxiety for drivers, and making it easy for truck drivers. However, the data is simply not there when it comes to stopping fatalities. The data that is there is on audible edge lines. A trial was done on Albany Highway and the fatality rate dropped by 50 per cent. Audible edge lines on the edge and in the middle of the road, and an extra metre of seal, is enormously effective and not expensive. That saves lives. They are the sorts of initiatives we can implement. It is interesting when we think about why it saves lives. It stops someone from running off the road. In the wheatbelt and regional Western Australia, those accidents involving fatalities and serious injuries are almost all single-car run-offs. People go off one side, overreact and flip the car or fall sound asleep and hit a tree. We can do a lot in response to that.

Like Hon Martin Aldridge, I would also like to give a shout-out to Pat Walker from the RAC WA, who has retired after an outstanding career in that important organisation. Pat was a true believer in road safety, so thank you very much. I would also like to give a shout-out to Roger Farley from the Road Safety Commission, who retired early last year, I believe. I will mention Roger and explain why. Roger's role was to market and promote the road safety campaigns that we see. I believe the Leader of the House mentioned the latest one. He was a genius at doing that. That is one thing we can continue to do to change people's attitudes.

Hon Darren West mentioned seatbelts. Staggeringly, wearing seatbelts is still a substantial issue. I had a conversation with my local police officer recently in Wickpin and he said they had two or three issues recently around seatbelts. If we think that the messaging is done, it is not. Roger Farley has moved on to other things. I think he is a counsellor for RAC. We need to continue the great work that he and his team did. We need to convince people that accidents usually occur because of them; it is not usually because of the road conditions. It is either a lack of attention, speed, alcohol or not wearing a seatbelt. All the obvious stuff is still killing people at an alarmingly high rate on our regional roads. We need to keep working on those issues.

I have held a view for some time that is not particularly popular. I believe in road reserves being for roads. One thing we can do is clear a few trees. I think that is why the wheatbelt is significantly worse than other parts of regional Western Australia. Almost all our road verges have very large trees right up against them. We spend a lot of time in our cars. Up north, there a lot more vacant road verges. I am constantly harassed by shires asking for permission to clear their road verges because they simply are not safe. It is very hard and very slow to get permission to clear those trees. Apparently, the safety of the people who use the roads is not high on the list of reasons to put forward if people want to clear them. I think we simply need to do more to clear those spaces.

I do not know this for a fact, but I am guessing that one of the safest roads in Western Australia is Forrest Highway, running from Rockingham out to goodness knows where. If we look at the number of kilometres travelled by the number of people, it would be one of the safest roads in this state. People are endlessly doing 100 kilometres an hour, bumper-to-bumper, but the stats on that road would be spectacular. There are no white gums on that road, it is well lit and it is well regulated. Lots of wheatbelt roads are not.

I congratulate Hon Martin Aldridge for bringing this motion to the house. I would like to finish by thanking our first responders and the efforts they make, and will continue to make, on our behalf. I commend the motion to the house. Thank you.

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [11.30 am]: I rise to speak in support of this excellent motion moved by Hon Martin Aldridge. I was sorry to hear about Hon Sue Ellery's mother. Last year a person very dear to me acquired a spinal cord injury in a traffic accident and it is hard; it is really hard. Any death due to traffic accidents is too many, although I am fully aware that there is an inherent risk in driving. I do not doubt that there are many contributing factors, some more complicated and others less complicated, but the simple ones I come across quite regularly in the south west are the issues of potholes, visibility and trees, as has already been mentioned. I think those issues could be easily fixed.

Road signage is another issue. My dad always said that the road signs here in Perth were very useful if you were a local and knew where you were going! I agree with him. Coming from Europe, we had a lot of overhead signage that allows people to preselect the lanes they need to take much earlier than does a sign on the side of the road. It just makes it clearer.

This is speculation on my part, but I have also wondered whether certain videogames falsely inflate confidence in children. They mimic the roads; they are driving a car and in their minds they are being trained to believe that they will survive every accident in those games. I have not seen any evidence for this, but I would be really interested to know whether there is any evidence around that.

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WA people are notorious for our lack of ability to merge and I would love to see more education around that. Other countries have managed to master that; it basically works like a zipper, but that does not seem to be the case here. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

HON JAMES HAYWARD (South West) [11.32 am]: I also stand to support this motion. I must say that it is good to see another member for South West Region in the house to help lobby for better road safety outcomes. We are slowly building the numbers on the crossbench here; we will be wining and dining Hon Martin Pritchard and Hon Stephen Pratt to get them to come and join the team as well. We will get the numbers to about 17 or 18, and that will make life in the house far more exciting!

I digress; I turn to the motion before us. I want to talk specifically about the South Western Highway at Picton East. There is a caravan park there called Waterloo Village Caravan Park and its residents have been lobbying Main Roads, members of Parliament and the state government for some time to reduce the speed limit along their section of highway. There were some industrial developments along that section of the highway, with some large factories being built, so the number of road movements increased significantly and it became a much more competitive space in terms of vehicles travelling along that section. The speed limit was 100 kilometres per hour. I would describe that section of the highway as a very, very long S-bend, if you like; it is on a bend, and there would be near-misses every single day.

The residents of the caravan park began raising concerns about the road from probably about 2015. On 23 June 2020 a resident of the caravan park, Anne Rennie, was killed as she turned onto that section of the highway. That really motivated residents to start a bit of a public campaign to bring about some change. I got involved in helping to run that campaign and raising that issue and we had a number of meetings with Main Roads. However, those meetings were very difficult. Main Roads was completely inflexible. Although it took the time to meet with the residents, and that was appreciated, there was simply not going to be any support from Main Roads to drop the speed limit, despite the fact that there had already been a fatality on that section of highway. Every time we went to the site for a meeting with these people, we would witness a near-miss, with people's cars skidding. It was quite a scary environment.

There was another fatality in August 2020. A cattle truck rolled over and spilled cattle all over the highway, and the driver was killed. At that point, the campaign really ramped up. I do not know the exact figures, but a significant amount of money was raised by the local community; we are talking tens of thousands of dollars. They started taking out full-page ads in newspapers and they lobbied GWN. They erected their own road signs, urging people to slow down, and they became very, very active in the media. In the face of all that pressure, the view of Main Roads was: "Nothing to see here. We don't change speed limits because people think it's a good idea. We want real data and real science." There had already been a couple of fatalities, but Main Roads said that the fact that somebody had died on a section of road was not enough for it to respond and drop the speed limit. It just seemed like a completely ridiculous situation. It was completely obvious to anyone who visited that space that the speed limit was simply too high.

There were a lot of truck movements on that section of the highway also, and although they were not speeding, they were doing 100 kilometres an hour, so with people pulling in and out of the Waterloo Village Caravan Park, Condello's Liquor, which is the shop next door, and the caravan business and all the industrial lots on the other side of the highway, it was a really contested space. Members can imagine B-doubles racing through there at 100 kilometres an hour; it was a fairly scary experience. In the end—probably because it was during the lead-up to an election—the Minister for Transport made a decision on 27 November 2020 to change the speed limit. I have to say, that was a terrific outcome. Since the speed limit was dropped there has not been another fatality on that section of the highway, and I hope that that remains the case moving forward.

I raise this issue because one of the things the government could do is to encourage Main Roads to engage more proactively in listening to people's concerns. There is a problem. The simple answer is to just slow everyone down and make the state speed limit 80 kilometres an hour instead of 110, and all the rest of it; let us make residential areas 30 kilometres an hour. People do not like that because it is inefficient and frustrating, and I have some sympathy for that position. But I think Main Roads has gone too far the other way. The government could encourage Main Roads to be a bit more flexible and a bit more engaged in trying to solve some of these issues before there are more fatalities.

Since then, concerns have been raised about the Albany Highway at Narrikup, with six fatalities at the black spot there. Residents in Capel also have concerns and could not get any action from Main Roads. There ended up being a fatality related to speed, but I am not sure whether the accident that happened there was specifically because of the condition of the road. However, there was a fatality and that became the impetus for the minister, the department and Main Roads moving to drop the speed limits at both Narrikup and Capel.

I think that demonstrates that there has perhaps been a bit of a move on the part of the government, but it could certainly do some more in this space in terms of encouraging Main Roads to be a bit more proactive. There is no

doubt that local people have local knowledge—they are on the road all the time. Their greatest concern is that everybody thinks that the solution to all the problems is to reduce the speed limit; many people do not want that outcome. One of the jobs that I did on the campaign was to help with the social media page. I was amazed by the number of attacks on that page from people who did not like the idea of dropping the speed limit. Dropping the speed limit effectively added 18 or 19 seconds to the journey; it was not a significant change, but it has made a significant difference. I encourage the government to do more work in that space.

Hon Colin de Grussa talked about drivers. I drive up and down Forrest Highway all the time and I cannot work out why drivers do not understand that the left-hand lane is the lane they ought to drive in; it is frustrating. There is no excuse for drivers who scoot along more quickly than they ought to. It is not about facilitating drivers to scoot along faster than they ought to; rather, it is about creating a safe driving environment in which everyone knows where they will be. It is bit like playing football and reading the play. A person becomes a great football player by working out where the ball is going to be next and making sure that they are there. Football players need to have good skills to work that out; it is not supposed to be so difficult on the road. The left-hand lane is there for people who have reached their speed. They can sit in the left-hand lane and only use the right-hand lane when overtaking.

Another frustration on country roads is when a driver gets to an overtaking lane but a big truck with two trailers decides to overtake another truck with two trailers and it can only do about three kilometres an hour faster than the truck it is overtaking and it battles to get past. We need to do more work in talking to heavy haulage operators about the way they operate. They all have radios and can talk to each other. If a guy in one truck needs to get past another, surely the other truck driver can just slow down. It is about those practical things.

Ultimately, the real change that needs to happen is in people's attitudes to the way they drive. I have a young 17-year-old boy; I am terrified about what the next five years have in store for him. As parents who have gone before me have done, I am doing the best I can to make sure that he is as prepared as he can be and that he understands the absolute serious consequences of being silly, not concentrating or looking at his phone to read a message that says "Laugh out loud" instead of concentrating on driving. These things are modern problems and hopefully technology can find a way to help arrest those types of behaviours.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [11.42 am]: In the short time remaining, I would like to make a quick contribution in support of the motion. It is an important topic and certainly one that affects us all. We live in a vast state, with a spread out, sprawling city, for those members who live in Perth, so we all have a relationship with our cars. We certainly know of someone who has directly or indirectly been involved with road trauma.

Since returning to WA about two years ago, I have been a personal contributor to the road trauma trust account. When I went through a red light camera and it flashed, I uttered under my breath "This is just a revenue-raising exercise." I was glad to learn that the funds that I would contribute would go to a good cause. Despite a few speeding infractions in my time on this planet, I have been very fortunate enough to have not been involved in a serious accident, but I have witnessed a serious accident. A couple of months ago, I was driving northbound on Kwinana Freeway. A car driving southbound became airborne and flipped through the air. I think it rolled about six or seven times. When it finished rolling, it landed on its roof and flames started to come out of the vehicle. I was with my partner at the time and we both thought that no-one would walk away from that accident. We had basically just witnessed a car full of people die. It was very triggering for my partner, whose friend had passed away in a vehicle accident when she was 17, which was very tragic for her. We have heard some moving personal stories about those who have been directly involved in road trauma incidents. It is a very important topic, one that is worth raising from time to time. As a regional member, I hope to become more familiar with the topic over the term. I thank the honourable member for raising this issue today.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.