

SEATBELT WARNING DEVICES

366. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

Will the minister advise whether she is aware of the release today of the national road safety inquiry report and its recommendation to immediately introduce an Australian design rule providing for the fitting in all new cars of intrusive seatbelt warning devices?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Collie for his question and ongoing interest in road safety. I received a copy of that report today and I am very pleased that a strong recommendation has been included in the report, which calls on the federal Government to introduce an Australian design rule for the fitting of intrusive seatbelt warning devices. As the Minister for Community Safety, I will ensure that a comprehensive review of the national report into road safety will be undertaken by the Office of Road Safety, particularly of whether an Australian design rule for seatbelt reminder systems is included for all seats. This safety feature will help reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roads, particularly in regional areas. In April, I called for the Australian Transport Council to introduce an Australian design rule as an urgent priority. It is a small price to pay for enhanced safety. I am currently awaiting the release of a regulatory impact statement - it was to be released in May 2004 - which is the next crucial step in having an Australian design rule created for this important safety device. Increasing the level of restraint use in vehicles by drivers and passengers was identified as a key element in Arriving Safely, our Government's road safety strategy for Western Australia in 2003-07. In 2001, one-third of passengers killed in a road crash in Western Australia were not wearing a seatbelt. Fourteen per cent of those were in the metropolitan area and a staggering 36 per cent were in regional areas. I call upon the federal Government to act on this recommendation swiftly to improve road safety for not only Western Australians, but also road users nationally.