

**SCHOOL CROSSING — STIRLING HIGHWAY, PEPPERMINT GROVE**

*Grievance*

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [9.29 am]: My grievance is to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Transport. I thank her for taking my grievance. I bring to her attention the pressing issues surrounding the children's school crossing on Stirling Highway situated directly outside Presbyterian Ladies' College in Peppermint Grove.

We all know that governments of both sides have encouraged students to walk or ride to school. However, students must be able to do that safely. Not only is this crossing vital for the safety of the students attending Presbyterian Ladies' College, but also it serves the nearby North Cottesloe Primary School. The parliamentary secretary may recall that this matter was previously discussed with the Minister for Police, Hon Paul Papalia. On that occasion, the main issue of concern was the resignation of the local traffic warden, which had caused the Western Australia Police Force to stop staffing the crossing due to requirements that two traffic wardens must always be present. This resulted in the school and its principal, Ms Cate Begbie, having to personally operate the crossing. As members can imagine, that presented all sorts of safety issues for students and staff alike. The staff had no power to stop the traffic and relied simply on the good nature of drivers to stop on Stirling Highway.

Despite efforts made since then, the situation has unfortunately deteriorated. Recent incidents including significant crashes and injuries to wardens underscore the urgent need for action. Last November, in a harrowing event, a traffic warden was struck by the wing mirror of a passing vehicle, resulting in severe injury that caused him to resign from his position as traffic warden. Consequently, the crossing was again closed, as two traffic wardens are required to operate it. This left the operation of the crossing once again to the school and its principal. Despite warnings from the WA Police Force advising against its use due to these safety concerns and recent incidents, the crossing remains indispensable to the large number of students who access essential transportation services. The main bus stop is immediately adjacent to the school on the other side of the highway. Attempts to redirect students to alternative signalised crossings have proved impractical, jeopardising their safety and disrupting transportation schedules. The controlled crossing points are both 600 metres from the children's crossing, representing a 1.2-kilometre detour for the students.

The gravity of this situation cannot be overstated, with over 31 000 vehicles traversing the dual carriageway daily at speeds exceeding 60 kilometres an hour. Efforts by law enforcement—that is, the police—including a recent speed trap operation have shed light on the alarming frequency of speeding violations in the area. The staggering number of fines issued within a brief time frame underscores the potential for catastrophic outcomes, especially considering the vulnerable pedestrians involved. I explained that the crossing is 600 metres downhill from a major set of traffic lights, and vehicles gain considerable velocity on that road. This speed trap resulted in the issuing of a shocking 401 speeding fines in a matter of only 80 minutes, with most cars travelling some 20 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. As I am sure members can imagine, hitting a child or a traffic warden at this speed would end in absolute catastrophe. Two cars during this period of 80 minutes were caught travelling at 30 to 40 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. We can only imagine the damage that would cause if one of those vehicles hit a student or a traffic warden.

Last year, I was invited by the school to come down at the end of the school day and personally assist in helping the girls cross the road so that I could see the chaos for myself. I personally witnessed the chaos during school dismissal, and I can attest to the urgency of finding a solution. The unique challenges posed by this crossing demand innovative solutions to mitigate risk and prevent a tragedy from occurring. I believe that the school's plea for a signalised pedestrian crossing or alternative infrastructure such as a bridge or tunnel across Stirling Highway is a reasonable and proactive step towards ensuring the safety of all stakeholders. These measures would not only safeguard students and traffic wardens, but also alleviate the persistent threat of traffic accidents. There is a significant number of accidents at the crossing due to traffic being stopped. In light of these dangers, I implore the parliamentary secretary to work with the minister to prioritise the enhancement of safety measures at this crossing point without delay. The lives and wellbeing of these children depend on swift and decisive action. I thank the parliamentary secretary for taking my grievance.

**MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.34 am]: I thank the member for bringing the grievance today. As the member noted, I am responding today on behalf of the Minister for Transport, who sends her apologies. She is unable to be here today to respond to it.

I thank the member for outlining his concerns. In doing that, he also referred to the grievance that he raised in this place I believe in February last year to the Minister for Police, in which he outlined the challenging circumstances that the students who rely on that crossing are experiencing.

The safety of our roads, and particularly the safety of vulnerable road users like pedestrians, is of great importance to our government. As the member noted, Stirling Highway is a primary distributor road and one of the key corridors

for people who travel in the western suburbs and through the Fremantle area. As he rightly identified, it is a busy highway. It has a posted speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour, with two lanes of traffic travelling in both directions. The advice I have been given is that Main Roads records indicate an average of about 31 064 vehicles travelling through that area every day, so it is a busy stretch of road.

I note the member's comments about the traffic warden who was injured I think he said in November of last year. Along with the member and everyone in this place, I wish that person well for their recovery. I appreciate the concerns that the member has raised about the safety of both pedestrians and those wardens.

I have been advised that the data is that in a five-year reporting period to 31 December 2023, there were about 11 crashes recorded in that location, and none of those involved pedestrians, as such. I agree with the member that we do not want to wait until there is a serious injury before taking steps. That is why the strategy has been to have in place a traffic warden-controlled crossing on Stirling Highway near the intersection of McNeil Street, which services primarily Presbyterian Ladies' College but also the primary school that the member mentioned as well.

The current arrangement is considered safe when there is a guard in attendance. I note the member's concerns about the lack of a guard, and I note that was the issue he raised in February 2023, and that there have been concerns about the lack of a guard for some time. I also note the member's concerns about speeding. I will not comment specifically on that because it is a police matter, but clearly some attention has been paid to that matter as well.

Unfortunately, the lack of traffic wardens is not unique to this intersection. I note that many other communities and members are also seeking traffic wardens for schools in their areas. I know that this is something the Minister for Police has been working very hard to address. Those concerns about shortages apply to not only that crossing but also others.

Specifically in relation to the crossing on Stirling Highway that the member has raised today, I can advise that in May 2023, Main Roads undertook a review of the school zone that has been established on Stirling Highway around Presbyterian Ladies' College. The review identified that a section of highway between Airlie Street and Forrest Street did meet the requirements for a school zone. That section includes the aforementioned crossing. That new school zone became operational in August 2023, and the speed limit for that section of Stirling Highway is now 40 kilometres an hour during school hours, slowing the traffic to improve the safety of children who are crossing the road. Static signs advising of the new speed limit were installed first so that the speed reduction would be in place as quickly as possible; shortly afterwards, they were replaced with the electronic school zone signs.

In the absence of a crossing guard, alternative signalised crossing locations are located approximately 500 metres either side of the crossing, as the member identified, at the traffic signals of Eric Street and Osborne Parade to the north and Napoleon Street and Leake Street to the south.

Main Roads works very closely with the police and the Department of Education around this issue in particular, and this specific crossing will be raised at the next Children's Crossings and Road Safety Committee meeting. I can also confirm that we will work with Main Roads and the school to see what further improvements we can make—notwithstanding that since the member raised the grievance last year, we have taken steps to slow the traffic in that portion of the road. We will see what further improvements, by working with Main Roads and the school, can be made. Signals could be an option that is considered as part of that.

In terms of member's specific recommendation about whether the installation of a bridge or an underpass could be investigated, I note that the site is a bit constrained, and that currently the future planning for this section of Stirling Highway does not include any kind of pedestrian overpass or underpass. The member would be familiar with this section of the road and would appreciate that it may not be easy to install or construct such a treatment that he suggests.

I want to thank the member for bringing this grievance today. Thank you for raising the issue. I assure the member that Main Roads will continue to investigate the most appropriate treatments for this area, and we will work with the school to find suitable solutions. The Deputy Premier will of course continue to liaise with Main Roads, the Minister for Police and Minister for Road Safety on options and initiatives that could improve safety right around the state for our most vulnerable road users—in particular, schoolchildren who we want to encourage to walk or ride to school. I thank the member for bringing this grievance. As I say, we have made improvements already, but we will continue to work with the member's school community and Main Roads to find further improvements to ensure the safety of those students.