



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard 2 March 1999

ROAD SAFETY

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.10 p.m.): Last Monday heralded the introduction of the new 50 km/h speed limit in built-up areas or suburban streets in south-east Queensland. It is timely, therefore, for me to raise some issues regarding the implementation of another important safety issue, and that relates to the school zone policy. Currently Queensland Transport is undertaking a review of this policy and it is in this context that I raise a number of issues which I believe will enhance the safety of children during the times when they arrive at and depart from school grounds.

The most important element arising from the school zone system is the reinforcement of the need to exercise caution and additional care when driving in the vicinity of a school. Currently, the school zone policy provides for a reduction in speed down to a maximum of 40 km/h in built-up areas and 60 km/h in rural areas, generally for a two-hour time frame between 7 and 9 in the morning and 2 and 4 in the afternoon. Heavily trafficked roads——

Mr Johnson: Eighty down to 60 and 60 down to 40.

Mr ROBERTS: The policy actually states that the maximum is 40 km/h in urban zones and 60 km/h in rural zones. Yes, there are some slight differences in some areas. Heavily trafficked roads, particularly dual carriageways, such as Sandgate Road, are generally precluded from the policy because of the difficulties of enforcing the school zone areas and also interruptions to traffic flows. I will say a bit more about that shortly.

In addition, the policy provides for a standard design of school zone signs. I have submitted a proposal to Queensland Transport to substantially change the existing school zone policy. I do not profess to be an expert or to have all of the answers, but I do believe there are a number of key issues that are deserving of more attention by the Minister and his department.

The particular issue in my electorate that has stimulated this interest in school zone policy relates to the speed limit on Sandgate Road outside the Boondall State School. Currently, the speed limit is set at 70 km/h. However, the records of the Department of Main Roads indicate that the average speed past that school is in the vicinity of 78 km/h. That is totally unacceptable outside a school. However, to date the department has resisted my endeavours to drop the speed and install a school zone, with a reduction in the speed limit to at least 60 km/h. I disagree with this view and have expressed that publicly under both coalition and Labor Governments. It has always been my contention that the high traffic volume and the extra speed of the vehicles travelling along Sandgate Road in the vicinity of the Boondall State School are reasons for implementing a school zone, not reasons for rejecting an application for a school zone to be implemented.

I turn now to a few specific elements of my proposal to change the current school zone policy. The first one relates to the time frame. A common time frame for school zones currently is for a two-hour period between 7 and 9 in the morning and 2 and 4 in the afternoon. That does vary in some areas throughout the State. In my view, that is far too long a period and is not conducive to encouraging compliance by motorists. A shorter period of operation which targets the times when schoolchildren arrive and depart schools will in my view improve compliance and sharpen community awareness of school zones as a safety initiative.

My proposal is that the times be shortened to one hour, with a general operating time frame of around 8 till 9 and 2.30 till 3.30, depending on the specific needs of particular schools. If the period of operation of school zones extends beyond the times it is usual for children to be arriving or departing

the school grounds, the community naturally becomes less accepting of the need to change their driving habits.

The other issue is the delineation of school zones. Presently, school zones are delineated by school zone signs placed at the extremities of the zone. The signs are quite bland and are not distinguishable generally from other speed limit signs. They are in need of improvement. Consideration should be given to increasing their size, changing their shape and adding more striking colours. Additionally, it would be worth while investigating the use of additional road markings, such as coloured stripes on the road, to mark the entrance and exit to a school zone. Enhanced signage and road markings could act as a visual reinforcing reminder that road conditions are different and that care is required. Ideally school zones should be delineated by either electronic sign boards, such as those used on major highways, or flashing lights. Of course, that is a more costly option. However, I believe it can be justified in some circumstances, particularly on busy main roads such as Sandgate Road. The school zone policy is an important initiative of Queensland Transport. The current policy is in need of review and I hope that my submissions will go some way towards improving compliance.

Time expired.
