



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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BRISBANE VALLEY HIGHWAY; RURAL ROAD FUNDING

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to address the House on the government's policy on road safety following a reply that I received from the Minister for Transport in regard to black spots on the Brisbane Valley Highway. I am astounded by the minister's reply to a letter that I wrote to him on behalf of the Esk shire asking for the highway to be upgraded with passing lanes at several locations because of the number of fatal accidents that have occurred on that road. The minister replied to my letter on 7 October to inform me that Queensland Transport is 'running public awareness campaigns to draw attention to the dangers of speeding, driving while tired and drink-driving'. That was not what I asked. The minister went on to state, 'it is difficult to justify such a project' and further that 'the traffic volume on this road does not meet the assessment criteria for the installation of overtaking lanes'. Can the minister be serious? He should travel this road more often and see how few overtaking areas are available for people to possibly pass. Does the government know just how important a link this Brisbane Valley Highway is to not only the residents of the Burnett who constantly travel on this road but also the tourists as it is an important link to inland route Highway 17, which is used as their main access road through the Burnett on their way to Bundaberg, Rockhampton and far-north Queensland?

I ask the minister: is there a number of families who must suffer before anything is done? The minister also advised in his letter that officers from Queensland Transport and Main Roads, police and the local community consultative committee met in Toowoomba on 19 September to find ways of improving road safety in the Esk shire. That was great, but what was the result? Still no passing lanes! The minister sums up his letter by saying that there is a possibility of obtaining funding from the Commonwealth's black spot program.

Why on just about every major issue that we talk about is the government intent on blaming the Commonwealth government for the lack of resources to fix Queensland's problems? Apart from other funds received from state taxes, what is the income generated by the GST, increased registration costs and income from speed cameras used for? The government denies consistently that speed cameras are revenue raisers. Why then does the government spend billions—and I mean billions—on creating three-lane and four-lane highways along the coast for safer travelling and then inundate those speed specific and supposedly safer motorways with speed cameras? Yet the government still claims that they are not revenue raising. Just what black hole does this revenue drop into? It is certainly not spent on the roads outside the coastal and urban areas that need upgrading or improving.

When will the government give back to rural Queensland some of the money that they raise through motoring income? More people are killed or seriously injured on rural roads than they are on city roads, and most of those killed are non-rural residents involved in major accidents while driving along country roads. If it were not for local governments upgrading shire roads in many of these areas, rural roads would be even more disgraceful than they are today.

The reason I am so angry is that I have constantly asked the Minister for Police for clarification about police staffing at Moore. The lack of a full-time police officer stationed at Moore is a well-known and continuing saga. The police resources in the region would not be so overstretched if postings occurred rapidly. Blackbutt police had to attend an accident at Harlin. It is ludicrous that Blackbutt police

have to travel so far to attend an accident when Moore is only half the distance away. I call on that minister to stop passing the buck as well.

People in the bush are finding it hard enough to make ends meet, but they are faced with the impost of paying higher motor vehicle related costs with no visible road improvement expenditure in their areas. The government should be ashamed of itself for advocating that not enough people have lost their lives to justify the necessary work. What road safety awareness campaigns are people subjected to interstate to show them how to travel along western Queensland roads? When accidents occur, the minister refers to sections of the Brisbane Valley Highway as being built only a few years ago. If that is the case, obviously they were not built adequately at the time.

I challenge the minister to travel with me not only over that section but also over other sections of the road between Kilcoy and the Blackbutt Range that I have constantly brought to the attention of this government as being deathtraps. With the increase of traffic, including semitrailers, it is very common for people to not be able to overtake anywhere. If people are unlucky to get trapped behind a heavy transport vehicle—and believe me, it happens all the time—it is no wonder they take risks. They are forced to travel between 10 and 30 kilometres an hour over several kilometres. The number of serious accidents that are reported on that section of road bears witness to that. There are also many near misses that are not reported to police but talked about in the local community of Blackbutt, which is situated at the top of the range.

I call on the minister and the government to start putting back some of the vehicle related taxes that they take from the bush and to build better roads for all Queenslanders, or do we have to wait until the kill ratio is high enough to get some action? The Brisbane Valley road network at Esk needs addressing and so, too, does the section of road—

Time expired.