



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Tuesday, 19 October 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Seatbelt and Helmet Offences

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.14 a.m.): Today the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and I will be launching a public education campaign to support the new penalties for seatbelt and helmet offences which come into force on 1 November. As members are aware, my department is undertaking a comprehensive review of all traffic related penalties and sanctions in Queensland. It is part of the Beattie government's Queensland Road Safety Action Plan to reduce our crash fatality rate by 30 per cent to 5.6 deaths per 100,000 within seven years. The Beattie government has already had some success. Queensland's fatality rate has reduced 22.7 per cent since 1997 to 8.9 deaths per 100,000. This decrease is better than New South Wales at 10.5 per cent and Victoria at 17.9 per cent. But we still have a long way to go.

Any death on Queensland roads is one death too many. Driving without a seatbelt contributes to around 15 per cent of the annual road toll, with almost 50 people losing their lives each year. From 1 November, we will more than double the fine for not wearing a seatbelt or a motorbike helmet to \$225 and three demerit points. For the first time in Queensland, passengers aged 16 and over who fail to wear a seatbelt or motorbike helmets who fail to wear a helmet will lose demerit points as well as receive the fine. Numbers of repeat offenders for seatbelt and helmet offences are alarmingly high. Nearly a quarter of motorbike helmet tickets issued in 2003 went to motorists who had been booked at least once for the same offence in the previous 12 months. It is a wonder that they are still around to tell the tale. This figure was 15.8 per cent for repeat seatbelt offences. Given the high number of repeat offenders, we are introducing a specific penalty to target repeat offenders. If a person commits a second or subsequent seatbelt driver offence within 12 months, they will lose an extra three points. This is an extra three demerit points in addition to the three demerit points incurred for each of the offences. This will also apply to motorbike helmet rider offences.

Car surfing will become an offence that carries a \$140 fine and three demerit points for the driver and a \$140 fine for passengers. There have been many incidents in recent years where young drivers in particular have been killed or seriously injured when someone is surfing or riding in the back of utes or trailers or in the boots of cars. Last year in Queensland overloaded vehicles involved in crashes killed nine people and hospitalised 84. A further nine were killed and 21 hospitalised in crashes where a person was riding in the back of a ute, car surfing or doing similarly dangerous acts. I was amazed to find out that drivers had no legal responsibility if passengers behaved dangerously, unlike the situation with seatbelts where a driver is fined if a passenger is not wearing a seatbelt. But they will from 1 November. The TV campaign starting on Sunday night focuses on seatbelts and uses an emotional approach to create awareness and encourage behaviour change. The ads show the tragic consequences for a young man who is now a paraplegic as a result of a crash in which he did not wear a seatbelt. I thank my colleagues for supporting this tougher approach and increased fines in a bid to save lives on Queensland roads.