



Speech by

Steve Wettenhall

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard Tuesday, 24 November 2009

ROAD SAFETY

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (12.14 pm): Road safety is an issue that affects all Queenslanders and discussion and debate in our community about the causes of road crashes and the most effective ways to reduce fatalities and trauma is widespread and also finds space in our media. Today is no exception, with two articles in the *Courier-Mail* canvassing, among other things, government policy around speeding and the enforcement of speed road rules. Paul Syvret's commentary centres on the widening reach of road rules into our daily lives whilst Police Commissioner Atkinson makes an impassioned plea for a change in community attitudes and a strong defence of police enforcement of road rules developed by government and made by this parliament, and I seek leave to table that.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Copy of articles from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 24 November 2009, by Paul Syvret and the Queensland Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson titled 'Snap goes the cash...' and 'but the speed cameras are there to save lives' [[1464](#)].

Mr WETTENHALL: As I reported to the parliament before, 2009 has been a particularly tragic year on Queensland's roads. In the Far Northern region, 40 people have been killed—12 more than the total for 2008. In an effort to focus community attention on this issue of road safety and bring forward community feedback and input to government on road safety issues in the Far North, a Road Safety Summit was held in Cairns half the week, which was attended by the Minister for Transport, the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services, the Police Commissioner and key road safety experts. The summit provided an opportunity for the government and road safety agencies to explain and interpret government and agency policies and programs.

Most importantly though, the summit provided a forum for members of the community to have their say. Around 160 people attended the public forum and over 800 people took part in pre summit telephone and online surveys. The survey results provided a framework for discussion in the government and stakeholder session as well as the public forum. Some very interesting results emerged from the surveys. For example, 64 per cent of respondents thought that it was okay to exceed the speed limit. As the Commissioner of Police has noted today in the *Courier-Mail* article that I have just tabled, driving too fast for the conditions is the single largest causal factor in death and injury in road crashes around the world and four of the seven fatalities that occurred in the Far North this year have been speed related.

This concerning attitude to speeding in our region provided the backdrop for transport minister Rachel Nolan to launch the Bligh government's new state-wide road safety speed campaign. In my electorate two controversial speed limit reductions have been implemented: the reduction from 80 kilometres per hour to 60 kilometres per hour on the Kuranda Range Road, which has resulted in a significant reduction in crashes, and the recent reduction from 80 kilometres per hour to 60 kilometres per hour on the approaches to nine roundabouts on the Captain Cook Highway north of Cairns. These roundabouts have produced some of the highest intersection crash statistics in the Cairns area. Not surprisingly, excessive speed featured in most of those crashes.

I support those speed reduction measures, even though they have not proved to be particularly popular. They will save lives and prevent serious injury and property damage. In both cases, the reduced speed limits have extended travel time by less than a minute. I have lobbied for road upgrades on both highways to underpin the reduced speed limits and the state government has invested significantly in safety measures on the Kuranda Range Road. In fact, this week work is continuing with slope stabilisation works using innovative machinery and technology and strategic widening on narrow curves that are difficult for long vehicles to negotiate. Three of the roundabouts are being upgraded to improve safety, particularly for cyclists. I am lobbying our main roads minister for funding to complete these important safety measures on the remaining six roundabouts.

A wide range of ideas and suggestions were put forward at the Road Safety Summit. Somewhat surprisingly, strong support was indicated for a zero blood alcohol level for all drivers. I note that the Premier announced yesterday an extension of the zero alcohol limits for all L-plate and P-plate drivers regardless of age. All Queenslanders will have an opportunity to put forward their ideas about drink driving generally when the government conducts a major review of drink-driving laws next year. A range of other issues were canvassed, including the compulsory retesting of drivers after licence suspension or disqualification, driver education training in schools and on a continuing or refresher basis, rewarding good drivers and good driver behaviour, and allowing speed cameras anywhere any time.

I record my thanks to everyone who organised and attended the summit, particularly the three ministers who supported the idea and who are committed to improving road safety in Queensland. For the information of members of the House, I table the Cairns Road Safety Summit package of materials that were provided to attendees of the summit.

Tabled paper: Bundle of documents by the Queensland government relating to the Cairns Road Safety Summit [[1465](#)].