

Question on Notice

No. 293

Asked on Tuesday 06 March 2007

MR FENLON asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS) –

QUESTION:

Will he outline the changes to driver penalties that have taken effect from 1 March 2007 and how this will reduce Queensland's road toll?

ANSWER:

From 1 March 2007, a range of penalties and demerit points were introduced to address the following key contributors to many road crashes:

- Driver distraction
- not paying attention while at the wheel of a car
- aggressive driving and
- heavy vehicle driver fatigue

In Queensland during 2005 there were over 2,500 infringement notices, 426 hospitalisations and 18 fatalities resulting from driver distraction. This was in addition to the 55,307 infringement notices, 991 hospitalisations and 27 fatalities resulting from driver inattention. There was also one fatality and 230 hospitalisations involving motorists considered to be following too closely.

The majority of the driver distraction, inattention, aggressive driving offences and heavy vehicle fatigue offences have been in place for 10-20 years and the penalties no longer reflected the severity of the infringement. An analysis of the penalty structure and the outcomes of the Road Safety Summit highlighted the need to strengthen the law to better address the responsibility of all drivers.

The Government's aim is to improve road safety and deter drivers from exercising these types of dangerous behaviours behind the wheel. A review was undertaken by Queensland Transport of this suite of infringements, and increased penalties were introduced for over 120 driver and rider offences. These increases bring Queensland closer in line with the penalties awarded in other States. However, Queensland now leads the way in introducing heavy vehicle demerit points for offences against the Fatigue Regulation.

None of the requirements relating to regulated driver, work and rest hours has been changed. None of the requirements relating to logbooks and local area records have been changed. It is the combination of monetary penalties, demerit points and the threat of licence loss that deters people from committing serious offences. The intention of these reforms is to focus on areas where the risk to road safety is greatest. It is for these reasons that fines and demerit points will be attached to these high risk offences.

In addition to the potential reduction in road crash risk and severity, the Government introduced these measures to reduce the commercial disadvantage faced by operators who operate within the law; promote greater respect for the risk fatigue driving poses; and, to reduce public concern over heavy vehicle drivers driving while tired.

I make no apology for getting tough on drivers who continue to flout the law and put other people's safety at risk.