

Question on Notice

No. 1376

Asked on Tuesday 6 October 2009

MS MALE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (MS NOLAN) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise how the national package of road safety laws will make car travel safer for young children and what changes parents in the electorate of Pine Rivers should be made aware of?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Pine Rivers for the question.

The new child restraint laws will commence on 11 March 2010 and are aimed at improving child safety while travelling in vehicles. The rules will ensure that parents and carers are securing their most precious cargo safely and correctly.

I am advised by my department that the use of seat belts and child restraints improve the chances of surviving a serious car crash by up to 50 per cent. This is the reason for the rule changes; to save lives and reduce the road toll.

The child restraint changes to the Queensland Road Rules derive from amendments previously made to the Australian Road Rules national model legislation. All Australian jurisdictions are in the process of implementing these laws and I am pleased to report that Queensland is only second to Victoria in progressing with these changes.

Under the old child restraint laws, once a child was over the age of one year old the law stipulated restraint in either a child restraint or an adult seatbelt. What we are introducing now are rules that more clearly define the appropriate level of restraint for a child.

The child restraint amendments will provide that:

- a child between the age of zero and six months must be restrained in a rearward facing child restraint
- a child between six months and four years must be restrained in either a rearward facing child restraint or a forward facing child seat with a built-in harness
- a child between four and seven years must be restrained in a forward facing child restraint that has a built-in harness or be seated on a booster seat which is restrained by a seatbelt or harness or be seated and restrained on a specially constructed additional seat suitable for children
- a child under four years must not be in the front passenger seat of a vehicle with two or more rows of seats and

- a child between four and seven years must not be in the front passenger seat if the vehicle has two or more rows of seats unless all the other seating positions are occupied by children under the age of seven years.

The amendments provide exceptions for children who are unusually small or large for their age to use an appropriate restraint for their height or weight. The new rules will help to ensure that children are appropriately restrained for their age, height and weight.

These rules were passed into legislation on 10 September 2009 and will commence on 11 March 2010. No penalties will apply until the date of commencement. This will allow time for a public education campaign to run its course. It will also provide parents and carers with plenty of relevant information and time to purchase new restraints if they need to do so.

There is a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions and answers relating to these new laws on the Department of Transport and Main Roads' website.

This initiative is part of the government's effort to enhance safety for all road users both young and old. The government is committed to ongoing efforts to reduce the road toll.