

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 15TH MAY 2012

ROAD TRAFFIC (AVERAGE SPEED) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 2 May 2012.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:36): We are supporting the Road Traffic (Average Speed) Amendment Bill, and I note the comments made by the member for Morphett. The average speed that will be managed here will be ascertained by taking the time taken by a vehicle to travel between two camera sites and dividing it by the distance between the cameras. Obviously, if the average speed of the vehicle is in excess of the speed limit, then the driver of the vehicle has committed an offence.

I note that the government wants to introduce these detection systems initially on Port Wakefield Road, Victor Harbor Road, South Eastern Freeway, Dukes Highway (which concerns me because it is the road home and it splits my farm), Sturt Highway and the Northern Expressway. The expected distance between the cameras will be around 14 to 50 kilometres. We have consulted with the RAA, the South Australian Road Transport Authority and others, but those two groups certainly have no concerns with the bill and support point-to-point speed detection.

Some of the issues I have with what happens with speeding is that, a lot of times, when I go home from this place on the 130 to 140 kilometre drive home, you might see up to four or five speed detection devices. A lot of the road from here to Coomandook is dual lane all the way to Taillem Bend. I am not advocating speeding, but I think there are far more dangerous roads where people can be checked for their speed to see if they are breaking the law. I would hate to think it is just being used as a revenue-raising exercise.

I am also concerned about the roads close to suburban country roads (I will call them), such as the ones in my electorate, the ones up through the electorate of Goyder, and others on which the speed limit has been reduced to 100 km/h in recent times. I have roads that get me through to Goolwa, whether I come off towards Woodchester, or out of Murray Bridge or off the ferry at Wellington. A lot of these roads have been reduced to 100 km/h. Other roads in my electorate that head towards Mannum, right up through to Palmer, each side of the river to Mannum, have been reduced to 100 km/h. As I said before, many of these roads are in the member for Goyder's electorate.

What I find hard to understand in this day and age, when we have such good vehicles to drive, that the government's excuse for not spending money on road maintenance is to just bring the limit down. What happens? We will see the limits brought further and further down. There is a section of road between Mount Pleasant and Sandy Creek, and that is signposted 80 km/h. I am not saying we should not be thinking about road safety, but let's have some maintenance. We are not driving EH Holdens anymore. We are driving very good cars, latest model cars and, for the kilometres that especially country members have to do—and most do a minimum of 60,000 kilometres a year—time on the road is a longer time that you can be forced to keep awake and the more chance there is to go to sleep. It happens. Fatigue happens when you are out on the road for extended periods of time.

I look at roads throughout my electorate that need attention. There are roads through Wynarka, Karoonda, heading up through to the Riverland and Wanbi that all need attention and upgrading to bring them up to a suitable standard. There is another road between Pinnaroo and Loxton which is quite a thoroughfare where there is quite a lot of heavy transport bringing horticultural produce down from the Riverland through to Pinnaroo from Loxton. There is also a connecting route for many people that work at either end of that road. I know there are quite a few people who live in Pinnaroo and travel to Loxton for work. It is also because we do not have a resident doctor in Pinnaroo that we need to rely on doctors coming down from Loxton or the other way from Lameroo to conduct the health service at Pinnaroo.

Soon after I got elected, the ambulance crew at Pinnaroo said to me, 'We are going to give you a ride in an ambulance to see what it is really like going down this road.' There is a 10 to 12 kilometre section that is just shocking. It is really rough. A lot of transfers need to be done between Pinnaroo and Loxton and there could be people with hip injuries or other injuries and they need a gentle ride. The ambulance people said, 'We back off for patients. We back off to about 60 km/h through this rough section of road,' because that is probably about the comfortable speed, especially if you have someone strapped in the back as I was for the trial. They took me through it at full speed limit.

Mr van Holst Pellekaan interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Even with my amount of ballast, member for Stuart, I could not make that ambulance settle down. I am just so glad that our ambulance workers are good at strapping patients in because it could have got ugly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It would have, wouldn't it!

Mr PEDERICK: It would have got ugly. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It just showed me how bad the road was and they certainly wanted to make sure that I realised how tough it was for people who use that road. It is terrible.

I look at other issues as far as managing our roads with speed limits and that kind of thing and I see about \$100 million of mainly federal money that is being spent between Tailem Bend and there is some work down at Tintinara. A lot of that work is between Tailem Bend and where I live at Coomandook where they have put the 1.2 metre strip in the middle of the road which is a bit of a no man's land. I have said this to committees and I have said it in here before: why haven't we done the sensible thing and started dual-laning that road to the border?

I see all these projects here in Adelaide—\$800 million-odd for a superway and they are talking about perhaps another part of that for the same money. For close to \$1 billion, so not much more than that, we could get a dual lane on the Dukes Highway all the way to the Victorian border. It would be a far more sensible thing. In fact, the \$100 million would have paid for at least 20 kilometres of that.

Even if you build the road with four lanes right next to each other—in fact, there is enough bitumen laid down there that I think you could have done it—just put the wire rope down the middle, two lanes each side. It is simple. There is enough wire rope getting put up around the place. It is unbelievable.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, Mason Fencing. They do a great job and they are making a lot of money. The nub of the bill is the average speed and, yes, I think the average speed is a very good idea. We have to make sure that people are not just looking out for the odd spot where someone could be. Cruise control is a great thing, especially for those of us who travel any distance out on the road. It keeps us on the straight and narrow.

Something the minister may address in her response is what tolerances there will be in this average speed. For instance, if it is a 110 km/h zone, will the tolerance be somewhere where I think it is—the police will never tell you this—which is around the 114 or 115 km/h area? It used to be around the 119 km/h area, but there was an announcement that said they had pulled their tolerance back. I am talking about this in regards to 110 km/h zones.

So, I am just wondering what percentage of tolerances there will be in working out this average speed, because I can just see people challenging this if there is not enough tolerance in there. There are always differences and, as our shadow minister, the member for Morphett, was saying, tyre pressures and changes in conditions can alter the speed significantly. So, I would be very interested in the response to that.

Certainly, we are very keen for road safety at the appropriate speed limits, but I just think things could be done a lot better in this state in the maintenance of our roads, so that we can drive at appropriate speeds around this state and be able to do it in a safe manner. I commend the bill.