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MOTOR VEHICLES (LEARNER'S PERMITS AND PROVISIONAL LICENCES) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:56): I rise today to speak to the Motor Vehicles (Learner's Permits and Provisional Licences) Amendment Bill 2013. The minister is trying to provide for several categories in this bill. One is an increase in the time that young people must remain on their P-plates after being on their learner's. This means that, instead of being on their Ps for two years, it goes to three years.

I note the comments made by members on this side of the house. When discussing this bill with my colleagues I essentially said that because you can get your learner's as soon as you turn 16 and spend up to a year on that and then have two years on P-plates, if you can't drive after three years, you probably cannot drive after four years. So you have to wonder why are we imposing that restriction especially in the light of what some of our members have indicated here. The member for Schubert has expressed how he was driving from age four; I certainly cannot remember exactly when I started driving, but I know I was checking rabbit traps, the old steel-jawed ones, so you couldn't go checking them anymore.

An honourable member: It's illegal.

Mr PEDERICK: That is illegal.

The Hon. L.R. Breuer: All the fun's gone out of life!

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, exactly. You used to go out when you were about nine or 10 and I think the biggest damage I did was chasing a fox with the automatic one-ton ute and forgot to look out for the fence. But you do learn how to drive, especially in the country if you have a bit of land.

I was doing a bit of work several months ago putting a trough in on the farm and watching my sons—one is 12 (it might have been just before he was 12) and the other one is nine—and the 12 year old was driving the car with a trailer with some equipment on it, because I was driving the tractor. It is fantastic that they can do that to assist you with jobs. Plenty of country children are doing that at a very early age and gaining those skills which is a great credit to them and it helps them in later life as they venture on to getting their learner's and then on to P-plates.

So as far as extending the time, I think it is just wrong. As I indicated, if you cannot drive after three years on the road then getting a full licence, you probably should just pack up and forget about it instead of having that extra year and going to four years. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:34): I continue my remarks from before lunchtime today in regard to this bill. The main part of the debate that I had been talking about previous to the lunch break was the increase in time to be on P-plates. The point I was making was essentially that by the time you have got your learner's, and if you get your learner's as soon as you become 16, you can have a year of that and then you can have two years of P-plates. My comments were that if you cannot drive after three years, God help you if you think it is going to take four years to be able to drive appropriately. I think our opposition to that part of the bill is absolutely spot on, but I will go on to other provisions of the bill.

It will restrict P1 drivers to carrying only one passenger and there will be exemptions made for family members and when a fully-licensed driver is a passenger. Then we get to the other part that we do not agree with on this side of the house, which is about the curfew for P1 drivers from 12am to 5am. We are told that you can have exemptions for employment, training, formal volunteering and formal sports. As the member for Bragg quite accurately said, you will have to drive around in your car with either a glove box or a toolbox in the back full of all the exemption forms, just to be able to go about your daily duties.

The simple fact is that, in country areas, people can travel significant distances to get to work and their sport. Certainly in some of our basketball, netball and football leagues, you can travel well over 100 kilometres in my area, and I know that in the member for Stuart's area they would be a lot further. Hundreds of kilometres are driven on weekends and that is just for the sporting activities; then they have to turn around to get home from their sporting activities.

Certainly in regard to work, it is not unusual for many people in my electorate to have to travel somewhere between 50 and 100 kilometres, and that is something that a lot of people do every day. There are people who work at all hours now. We do not live in an 8 to 5 or a 9 to 5 world; we very much live in a 24-hour world. Certainly throughout my electorate, there are the obvious jobs at some of the eateries. We have KFC and McDonald's and there are plenty of others in the area that employ people who would have this licence category—young members of society—who need to get to work and get home.

Not only that, a lot of night work goes on. A lot of people on dryland farms are working tractors sometimes throughout the night, whether it be at seeding time or harvesters at harvest time. If you get a good night and you get a good run and the moisture is right, you can reap all night. Also, in the same vein, there are many hundreds of people who are involved in the vine industry, getting to work during the vintage. Obviously most of the grapes are picked in the late afternoon and through the night, so there is another example.

Many people who have to operate the grape harvesters, truck drivers, and obviously the people driving the bins that the grapes are picked into in the vineyards—what we in dryland farming call chaser bins—will have to operate all night and these people will be going home and moving up and down the roads during the hours of this proposed curfew. Quite frankly it is just unworkable. It will become a bureaucratic nightmare, and people will have to have a swathe of documents on them so that they do not break the law.

There are also points about bringing forward the hazard perception test from the P1-P2 stage to the learners P1 stage. This will effectively reduce the number of times that people have to attend a Service SA centre and it can certainly get interesting just attending a Service SA centre at times. Another part of the bill provides for the removal of regression to a previous licence stage.

Around motorcyclists, what the bill is aiming for is that learner motorcyclists will be knocked out with the curfew provision. I have already said that we are against the curfew provision in the bill. Previous speakers earlier today have talked about the statistics and they certainly indicate that between 12am and 5am fatalities have dropped off to the point where there are actually zero up to August in 2013, and that is a great result. It is sad to lose anyone on our roads. Further statistics provided by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure show that more crashes involving P-plate drivers actually occur in the evening, before midnight. The department has admitted that that bit is impractical, as you would need a truckload of exemption notices at that stage.

In general, in regards to driving and what we need to look at in this state, people talk about road conditions. Sadly, we see again the department looking at bringing down the speed limit on more roads to 100 km/h. Other members have brought up today, as I know the member for Schubert did, the fact that many of us regional members travel a minimum of 60,000 kilometres a year.

I know that in my busiest year in this role I was up well into the 70,000-odd kilometres, and I think that the member for Stuart would drive a lot more than that to get around his electorate. Quite frankly, we are not driving EH Holdens anymore. We are driving very, very good motor vehicles with our work. It is a real privilege to have access to these vehicles, I must say, and we pay our lease arrangements on them.

There are roads throughout my electorate that are reduced to 100 km/h and, quite frankly, it is ridiculous. There are roads just outside of my electorate heading up through to Gawler, through the back of the Palmer, and places like that, up the back of Mount Pleasant, where speed is reduced to 80 kilometres for very, very long sections of road. It will not be very much longer that in this place we will be legislating to have a man with a red flag walking in front of our vehicles.

Mrs Redmond: There'll be no road deaths.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes; there won't road deaths, but people will be dead from boredom. It is just getting ridiculous. The problem we have in this state is that the state Labor government has not spent the funding on these roads to keep them up to the necessary standards. It is pretty easy for the department to get around and say, 'Oh, these roads don't match 110 km/h anymore; we'll just reduce the speed limit.' Well, it is just madness—just spend some money on the roads. The member for Schubert talked about the Dukes Highway, and I have talked about the Dukes Highway many times in this place. I have also talked about the absolute madness where \$100 million has been spent on putting a 1.2 metre section in the middle of the road between Tailem Bend most of the way down through towards Coonalpyn and Tintinara. It is just crazy. Yes, there were some more overtaking lanes, and, yes, that makes it better, but that \$100 million would have put in 20 to 30 kilometres of dual lane.

Yes, I will make a point and note my interest. I live at Coomandook, which is about 40 kilometres south-east of Tailem Bend, and it would have benefited me greatly. It is just a waste of money to put in these band-aid solutions, spending \$80 million of federal money and \$20 million of state money on something that is just a band-aid, when over time we will need to duplicate that highway. I am sure other members will bring up many other roads around the place that need work on them.

In regard to road conditions, there are some issues around native vegetation and its removal. I do not want to see blanket clearing of native vegetation, but we have seen some instances where overtaking lanes have been put in terrible positions, on corners, because a few trees would have had to be removed if the lanes were put on the straights. I can name one just south-east of Ki Ki that has claimed many lives, and one life is one life too many.

I believe it is partly because of where the overtaking lane is located: it is right on a bend. People are a bit confused, late at night—it could be any time of the day; they could be a bit dozy in the mid-afternoon—and next thing there is an accident because people do not realise you have a merging lane and they run into the front of a truck, and there is only one way from there.

In regard to things like our mining industry in this state, I hear the mining minister talk long and loud about the benefits of the Cooper Basin. Yes, the Cooper Basin is a great place—I worked there 30 years ago—but the problem is access to it. I wonder how much work we are losing because of the state of the Strzelecki Track. It is an absolute disgrace when you compare it to the road from Queensland. The Queensland side is virtually bitumen all the way to the border near Innamincka, bar about 20 or 30 kilometres. I can imagine how many regional jobs we are losing because service companies like Halliburton and others in the Cooper Basin believe it is rattling their equipment too much to take it down the Strzelecki Track, so they are bringing staff and equipment through from the Queensland side.

I will look at how people have gained their licence over time. My 93-year-old father certainly had some health tests for his driving licence, which are compulsory when you get a bit older, but he has never

had a driving test in his life. When he first got his licence he just wrote in, applied for it and they posted it out. He has had a pretty successful driving career until he decided on his own advice to give up his car and forfeit his licence. Over time things have changed. Back in the late 1970s we only had to get a learner's permit for a little while and then we would go down, do a quick run around the block with the local police officer at Coonalpyn and you would have your driver's licence. I think that things have improved, in that people do need to do more to make sure they can drive appropriately.

However, as I said earlier in my contribution, on the land we learn to drive at a very early age and it becomes almost natural by the time you are 16 and get out on the road. There is more than can be done with respect to driver training. Bob Weir and his group from Murray Bridge came to me and said, 'We've got this great plan.' I have had a look at the site where they want to have a driver training centre in Murray Bridge. I wrote to minister O'Brien to see if I could get some money for a scoping study for this projected driver training centre and, sadly, we were not able to get any funds, but there are certainly good people who have the right idea in advocating for driver training in the area.

In that regard, we have the Taillem Bend Motorsport Park, which is land that the Coorong council currently owns. Thirty years ago it was a drag strip when it first came into being. There are many events held out there. I know there are a lot of sporting motoring events held out there, like drifting and that kind of thing, but there is also a lot of driver training. I know the police do some driver training down there and I know there are groups from Queensland who come down to do driver training, and the Taillem Bend Motorsport Park is to be commended for the facilities that it is supplying.

I know the Taillem Bend Motorsport Park is currently undergoing a sale process through the Coorong council and expressions of interest went in the other day and over the last couple of weeks. I know they will be scrutinised in the next couple of weeks to find out who the successful bidder is to buy that large section of land. They have over 600 hectares there and it will be a great venue if it comes to its full potential, but it will need a massive investment of up to about \$40 million to bring everything into play that could be brought into play at that park.

At the end of the day we do need to make sure that people in the bush especially are not put offside by legislation that is completely unworkable. In the city, in most areas—and not all, I must say—there is access to public transport, but that is not that reliable either, as we have seen recently. In the country, we just do not have that access. We get buses out to Mount Barker, which I think go about once every hour, and that is a great thing, but you do not have to go that much further down the freeway to Murray Bridge and there is no public transport there.

If you go out the south side towards the other end of my electorate, towards Goolwa and Victor Harbor in the member for Finniss's electorate, there is no public transport there. What do these people do if they have a job where they have to run into Adelaide or even travel distances throughout the electorate? They might be running through to Strathalbyn, Goolwa, Victor Harbor, Murray Bridge or Taillem Bend. Certainly, there are other people in my electorate who are out in the potato growing area at Pinnaroo, Parilla, Lameroo and Peebinga—all those areas where people do not work standard hours.

This is something that the government needs to address, and that is why we are opposing the issue of curfews in this bill. I think there are far more sensible things that can be done, and I certainly endorse my previous remarks: if you cannot drive within three years of getting your learner's permit and your Ps, I think there is a real problem; you probably should not be driving at all.

That is not to say that people do not get the appropriate driver training. I appreciate that things have tightened up since a lot of us got our licences many years ago. A licence is a privilege, and it should be treated as such, but we must do the right thing so that we do not completely stall the economy, where we have people basically having to go on unemployment benefits because they cannot get to work; that is what parts of this bill will do.

If we cannot get our young people and our children into work, next they will lose their drive and become a drain on our community forever, and that is the last thing we want. I endorse most parts of this bill and I look forward to the rest of the debate, but I would like the government to certainly take notice of our amendments.

- Ends-