



**Adrian Pederick MP**  
Member for Hammond

**House of Assembly**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014**

**Country Roads**

**Mr PEDERICK ( Hammond ) ( 12:20 :55 ):** I move:

That this house—

(a) opposes mandatory maximum speed limit reductions on country roads when there is no safety-based evidence to support the change, and

(b) calls on the state government to—

(i) make public its review into maximum speed limits on regional roads in South Australia;

(ii) undertake a comprehensive safety audit of all country roads where the speed limit has been reduced from 110 km/h to 100 km/h in the past three years and, where there is no evidence to support improved road safety outcomes, immediately change the speed limit back;

(iii) commit funding to upgrade regional council and arterial roads currently posted at 110 km/h rather than further reduce speed limits; and

(iv) prioritise regional road maintenance when addressing the \$400 million on road maintenance backlog.

It seems to me that it is the desire of the government to continually make life more difficult for those living in regional areas. For years now, this government has been trying to reduce the speed limit in country areas and last year they announced a review of around 200 regional roads to see whether they should be reduced from 110 km/h to 100 km/h. I also note that roads within 100 kilometres of Adelaide have already been reduced to 100 km/h, many in my electorate and many in the member for Goyder's electorate and other surrounding electorates.

The government has had more than enough time to finalise this review, and I call on the government to make its review public. Let the evidence speak for itself. If the review finds that there is no evidence, the government must back down and scrap any proposed changes to speed limits. Make no mistake: the opposition supports any measure to make our roads safer, but we do not support arbitrary measures that target the wrong people in the wrong

areas and which will not serve the purpose that it set out to do—namely, to reduce the road toll on our country roads.

This review, I believe, is a complete overreaction and will do very little to reduce the road toll in this state. Instead, people in country areas will be forced to travel for longer periods of time to get home, to work, to shop, to do business and to visit friends and family. These reductions will increase fatigue, frustration and keep people on our roads for longer.

For example, a 20-kilometre trip to work, which is quite common in the country, would normally take 11 minutes at 110 km/h and at 100 km/h the same trip would take 12 minutes. If that is extrapolated across only 5,000 people in the state, it means that country residents are on the road for a combined 83 hours extra per day across the state, 83 hours where fatigue from a hard day's work can set in, 83 hours where a drunk driver has the opportunity to swerve into oncoming traffic, 83 hours where someone high on drugs has the opportunity to total their vehicle and possibly take innocent lives with them.

If you want to take it even further, if a family takes a holiday to the city and has to drive 300 kilometres to Adelaide along country roads, then that trip will take at least an extra 15 minutes. How can this government possibly believe that in order to make our regional roads safer, we need to keep people behind the wheel for longer? Quite frankly, it is ridiculous. In short, such a measure will only cause our country roads to be busier, potentially increasing the possibility of serious accidents.

What the Labor government needs to realise is that it is not the people who are travelling at 110 km/h who are a danger on our roads but those who exceed the speed limit, those who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, those who drive in a dangerous or erratic manner, and those who refuse to wear a seatbelt. These are the people the government should be targeting, not those travelling within a speed limit agreed by all to be a safe and responsible speed to travel.

Furthermore, some of the roads that have been earmarked for restrictions have had no deaths, no serious injuries and no minor injuries on them in the past five years. If these roads are already safe, under what possible logic can such restrictions be implemented? I can understand what the government is trying to do here, but taking a scattergun approach to such an important issue means those who have done no wrong will be the most affected. Unless there is substantial safety-based evidence that supports the change, there is no logical reason for the change to go ahead.

We also make mention that the Minister for Regional Development must step in here; he must, and I do not believe that he has no choice. He would understand that changing the speed limit of country roads would do nothing to improve road safety and instead would inconvenience country people and force them to spend more time behind the wheel. I call on the Minister for Regional Development to oppose the government's policy.

There are a number of roads in my electorate that will be affected if the changes come into effect. I particularly want to speak about the Mallee Highway, the Karoonda Highway that goes out from Murray Bridge, as well as the Mallee Highway that extends up through the

Mallee from Tailem Bend through to Lameroo and Pinnaroo. I mention the Karoonda and Mallee Highways in particular because of what is happening with the negotiations between Viterra and Genesee & Wyoming.

These roads do need a lot of work done on them, especially with regard to the Mallee Highway. There are a lot of corners on that road (and there are all sorts of rumours about why there are so many, one theory being that when they were built there were bonuses paid to put the corners in). Be that as it may, if this state loses the ability to transport grain on rail, especially in the Mallee area, and in regard to my electorate and the member for Chaffey's electorate, this will just put far more traffic on our roads and cause far more issues on our roads than worrying about whether the speed limit is 110 or 100 km/h. It will have a massive impost on our communities.

Already, for the last couple of years roads like those on each side of the river from Murray Bridge through to Mannum, or if you want to go from Wellington through to Goolwa, or the freeway through Strathalbyn to Goolwa in my electorate, are back to 100 km/h, where there could be money better spent on road infrastructure upgrades, overtaking lanes, some straightening out of sections of road. But, no; the government says, 'Let's take the easy option and just bring the speed limit back to 100 km/h.'

Many constituents come to me and just shake their head, saying 'Why is this happening?' I say 'I'll tell you why. It's because you have a state Labor government that doesn't understand regional South Australia, doesn't understand the time lines and the distances that people have to drive on these roads, and the impact that has on people with fatigue and inattention that can come in after having to spend so much extra time travelling to their destinations.' It certainly needs to be addressed.

I note that all the local councils in my electorate—and I wrote to them all—explained their position to me, and they oppose any changes to the speed limit on roads that are already safe. My local councils were unanimous in their correspondence back to me in regard to decisions by the state government to have roads that are either already back to 100 km/h or seeing future limitations put on highways back from 110 km/h to 100 km/h.

Minister Brock would have heard similar views from his own councils, so he would be well aware of the arguments against such changes. Councils, police and constituents all agree that imposing a 100 km/h speed limit will do little to improve road safety on our country roads, but obviously this state Labor government believes it knows better.

Many of the roads that this government wishes to impose these measures upon are safe, visible and in respectable shape. I was provided with a report by the Murray Bridge council which stated that failing to look properly, failing to judge a vehicle's path or speed, and careless or reckless driving were the biggest contributors to road accidents, not speed. Country roads can be perfectly safe when travelling at 110 km/h. In the Northern Territory they have a speed limit of 130 km/h in quite a few areas, yet we do not see them imposing a 100 km/h limit. In fact, in February this year they opened up a 200 km/h section in the Northern Territory to trial the open speed limit, which they had for many years in the NT. They are trialling that for 12 months because of the safety record on that section of road.

Most of the time the safety of the road comes down to its condition, and then it gets down to people driving to the weather conditions at the time, and other conditions that impact on driving. We have seen a trend here, though: instead of maintaining and upgrading our country roads, this Labor government neglects them and lets them fall into disrepair. Then, instead of spending money to upgrade these roads, the government lowers the speed limit.

The government does not have the money to repair our country roads, they keep telling us, so they let them deteriorate and drop the speed limit to cover their backs. What we need is better country roads, not shoddy roads with artificial speed restrictions prompted by kneejerk reactions. This government needs to invest in making our roads safer to drive upon, repair damaged roads, improve road infrastructure and install more overtaking lanes, rumble strips and guardrails where appropriate. This is how you make our roads safer; not by letting them fall apart, dropping the speed limit and hoping for the best. That is a short-sighted and lazy way of governing but, then again, what else do we expect?

The government must instead commit funding to upgrade our regional council and arterial roads rather than further reduce speed limits. We have a \$400 million backlog of road maintenance in this state, which needs to be addressed immediately. I also call on the government to undertake a comprehensive audit of all the country roads where the speed limit has been reduced from 110 km/h to 100 km/h in the past three years. If there is no evidence that the measures have supported improved road safety then the speed limit should immediately be changed back.

In regard to the country roads that are applicable to the Minister for Regional Development (the member for Frome), he has the following roads under review in his electorate: Farrell Flat Road, between Clare and Hanson; the Barrier Highway, Manoora and Saddleworth; the Barrier Highway, Burra and Manoora. These are just a some of the 200 roads under review. We also have: the Horrocks Highway, between Stone Hut and Laura; the Horrocks Highway, between Laura and Gladstone; the Horrocks Highway, between Gladstone and Georgetown; the Horrocks Highway, between Georgetown and Yacka; the Possum Park Road, between Laura and Hughes Gap; and the Wilkins Highway, between Gladstone and Caltowie.

We have the Hughes Gap Road between Hughes Gap and Crystal Brook; the Goyder Highway at Crystal Brook access north; Venning Road—I am sure named after a very popular man—at Crystal Brook access south; the Spencer Highway between Port Pirie and Port Broughton; and Clements Road between Merriton and Clements Gap. We also have the Wilkins Highway between Warnertown and Gladstone; the Goyder Highway between Crystal Brook and Gulnare; the Marrabel-Waterloo Old Burra Road/Main Road 45; the Hill River Road to Andrews, northbound; and the Abattoirs Road at Port Pirie, eastbound.

Those are just the roads that I could find out of the 200 that are linked to the member for Frome's (the Minister for Regional Development) own electorate. These are roads that affect every regional member in this parliament. It is absolutely ridiculous to think that a speed limit change of 10 km/h will achieve what the government thinks it can achieve. The government needs to have a real rethink, and get out and drive around these regional roads to see how much extra time people have to spend on the roads, if that 10 km/h speed limit goes missing.

