

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
THURSDAY 18TH JULY 2015

SPEED LIMITS

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:57): 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;

(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 four 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 road maintenance backlog.

I note, after moving the motion, that the backlog is probably at least \$1 billion at the moment. In 2013, the South Australian government made the announcement to review around 200 regional roads. The purpose of the review was to see if there was a need to reduce the speed limit from 110 km/h to 100 km/h. Before this review, many roads within 100 kilometres of Adelaide had already had their speed limits reduced, and many of these roads were in my electorate of Hammond, the seat of Goyder and also many other surrounding electorates.

This is not a decision you can be uncertain about, considering that it is people's lives we are talking about. Something I do not think the state government understands is that it is not the people who are travelling at 110 km/h and doing the right thing who are the issue: it is those who are under the influence of drugs and alcohol or those who drive in a

dangerous manner. That is what the government should be targeting and punishing, not law-abiding road users.

Another point I would like to touch on again from when I last spoke on the issue is the choice of some roads that are to be reduced, according to the government, to 100 km/h. I find it very interesting that it has identified certain roads for restrictions when they have had no deaths, no serious injuries and no minor injuries on them in the past five years. This goes to show that the state government has not really done its homework when investigating unsafe roads.

The government advise that they are making regional roads safer, but if you do the math on deducting 10 kilometres, you will find that the government's plan to make roads safer could possibly have the opposite effect. An example of this is the following: people in country areas will be forced to travel longer periods of time, whether it be to get to work, to go home, to shop, to do business, or to visit friends and family. These reductions will keep people on our roads for longer and will result in frustration and fatigue.

If I go into a more in-depth example: a 20-kilometre trip to work (which is quite common in the country) would normally take 11 minutes at 110 km/h. 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 this 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 an extra 15 minutes.

Moving on, I would like to speak about the recent transfer which Viterra made with their preferred form of transport, especially on the Mallee lines. Prior to the change, Viterra were carting grain via both Mallee rail lines; however, as of 1 August, they will be transporting grain on the Mallee and Karoonda highways. This will have a huge increase on the current traffic flow on these highways.

In my previous speech on this issue, I advised the government that if Viterra were to make this change, these highways would need significant upgrades. Viterra will not use Mallee rail lines from August. This now requires the state Labor government to implement further development and construction on the Mallee and Karoonda highways. This includes shoulder sealing work and overtaking lanes, which are desperately needed each way on both highways to make them safe, with the extra road freight that will come about because of this decision by Viterra.

I believe the government should make use of fixing these roads instead of trying to fix the issue with reducing the speed limit by 10 km/h. They have taken the easy option, but I cannot stress enough that this option is simply nothing other than a short-term fix. The Liberal Party fully supports any measure to make our roads safer, but we do not support measures that target the wrong people in the wrong areas. As I have stated before, this reduction will not serve its purpose, which is to reduce the road toll on our country roads. This is because the Labor government do not understand how regional South Australia works.

A report that was provided by the Murray Bridge council states that failing to look and give way to oncoming traffic, and careless or reckless driving, are the biggest contributors to road accidents, not the speed. I would like to remind the government that speed does not make a country road unsafe, considering you have road trains travelling at 130 km/h on certain roads in the Northern Territory. You make roads safer by keeping them maintained, not by letting them fall apart and dropping the speed limit, hoping the road toll will reduce.

I just note the recent online survey that the government did, and it was quite biased in its questioning in trying to mandate whether it was just a simple budgetary measure of paying a few million dollars—I think it was \$3 million or \$4 million just to put out a few signposts out rated at 100 km/h instead of the current 110 on these 200 roads throughout the state—compared to what was potentially a \$9 billion upgrade bill.

That just goes to show where the government are focusing their idea with regard to regional roads. They do not want to tackle the issue, they want to make it an easy issue to supposedly fix just by dropping the speed limit. Regional people will not put up with that. Regional people want their roads maintained. They want to be able to move around the state at a reasonable and safe speed to get to where they need to be, and they do not need the easy option. I will certainly be interested if the results of that survey ever see the light of day.

I believe that this reduction in speed limits is unnecessary, and that the government needs to rethink their intentions. I 100 per cent believe that reducing the speed limit will not result in the government's desired outcome. I commend the motion.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:42): A couple of brief comments before I close the debate on this motion, and that is the simple fact that you cannot analyse all deaths on the road just due to one attribute as the member for Newland just did in recognising speed. He did not talk about seatbelts, inattention, fatigue, drugs or alcohol.

Mr Treloar: Or road conditions.

Mr PEDERICK: Or road conditions. In saying that, this is a sensible motion. It is a motion that affects the whole state of South Australia, especially country drivers, and there should not be a blanket 100 km/h speed limit on South Australian country roads. I commend the motion.

The house divided on the motion:

Ayes20

Noes20

Majority0

AYES

Bell, T.S.	Brock, G.G.	Duluk, S.
Gardner, J.A.W.	Goldsworthy, R.M.	Griffiths, S.P.
Knoll, S.K.	McFetridge, D.	Pederick, A.S. (teller)
Pengilly, M.R.	Pisoni, D.G.	Redmond, I.M.
Sanderson, R.	Speirs, D.	Tarzia, V.A.
Treloar, P.A.	van Holst Pellekaan, D.C.	Whetstone, T.J.
Williams, M.R.	Wingard, C.	

NOES

Bedford, F.E.	Bettison, Z.L.	Bignell, L.W.K.
Caica, P.	Close, S.E.	Cook, N.
Gee, J.P.	Hildyard, K.	Hughes, E.J.
Kenyon, T.R. (teller)	Key, S.W.	Mullighan, S.C.
Odenwalder, L.K.	Piccolo, A.	Picton, C.J.
Rankine, J.M.	Rau, J.R.	Snelling, J.J.

Vlahos, L.A.

Wortley, D.

PAIRS

Chapman, V.A.

Weatherill, J.W.

Hamilton-Smith, M.L.J.

Koutsantonis, A.

Marshall, S.S.

Digance, A.F.C.

The SPEAKER: The result of the division is that there are 20 ayes and 20 noes and I cast my vote with the status quo, the noes.

Motion thus negatived.