

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016

### ROAD TRAFFIC (ROADWORKS) AMENDMENT BILL

*Second Reading*

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 22 June 2016.)

**Mr PEDERICK ( Hammond ) ( 12:24 ):** I rise to debate the Road Traffic (Roadworks) Amendment Bill 2016, and I come in after that blistering attack. The amendment bill seeks to prevent inappropriate and incorrect usage of roadworks speed limits and other traffic control measures which cause congestion on our roads. It comes on from a private member's bill, the Road Traffic (Work Area Speed Limit Signs) Amendment Bill, introduced into the house by the member for Unley in March this year. This government bill has covered off on roadworks and signage, and it covers areas of the legislation that could have been tidied up a long time ago.

There has been some debate in this house this morning about the congestion and disruption to traffic caused by roadworks and the increasing problems in Adelaide. We need to remember that the state is far bigger than Adelaide and that, when we have these major disruptions for up to a year at a time on some of our major highways, it is a real disruption for the effectiveness and the efficiency of getting our material transported to where it needs to go. This bill is primarily working to minimise the impacts of roadworks on commuters and to prevent inappropriate and incorrect usage of roadworks and other control measures that cause congestion.

As I indicated, we need to not only address the economic impacts and the lost productivity of this disruption and congestion but also ensure that people who work on our roads remain safe. We need compliance and we need the standards worked through to prevent situations where drivers may be subject to fines for exceeding posted speed limits at works where there are no workers present at the site and there is no safety need for those road signs to be there. There needs to be a permit regime whereby the Commissioner of Highways may issue a permit to a business or entity requiring to use speed signs for roadworks that may cause congestion where noncompliance would potentially void the permit.

The bill will introduce better coordination between utilities and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure when planning major upgrades, including timing and avoiding duplication. Penalty levels are updated so that breaching conditions or incorrect use will result in penalties from a maximum of \$20,000 for the first offence to a subsequent \$50,000. I note that the Civil Contractors Federation has voiced some issues around the level of the fines, but I think a lot of that is being dealt with in regard to when they will be applied.

The bill will also authorise officers to remove speed limit signs used inappropriately—for example, when workers are not engaged at the work area—and give rights of appeal to the District Court for any party aggrieved by a decision of the Commissioner of Highways. It will exempt the RAA and emergency services and others who, temporarily, as part of their role, obviously need to control traffic speed when stopped to render assistance.

When you are going down the freeway, the Dukes Highway or the Mallee Highway, and you see blue and red flashing lights—whether it is an ambulance or a police car that has

pulled someone up—and you need to get back to 25 km/h, that is a fair change from when you are sitting on 110 km/h. I understand the safety aspect, but a lot of people, especially on our highways, pull up in one heck of a hurry and the anchors are thrown out. I have been present when some people have not realised what the speed is and they are wondering why you are backing off. They then see the flashing lights and realise that you do have to get back to that speed.

Public authorities will also be subject to the permit regime, except where the roadworks are a matter of urgency. As I said, there were some concerns with the Civil Contractors Federation. They certainly support reasonable measures to ease traffic congestion and improve road safety, but they are concerned that some elements of the bill are over-regulatory and unnecessarily complex. In saying that, there certainly is some need for compliance, but there is also a need for roadworks to be completed in a timely fashion.

In regard to some of the major roadworks in my electorate—and I met with staff from the department about four weeks ago, and I thank the minister for allowing them to meet with me—there are some significant issues around the constant disruption to traffic on both the Mallee Highway and the Dukes Highway around the motorsport park development near Taillem Bend. It is a significant issue on each road. On the Mallee Highway, there is only a small area where you have to slow down to 80 km/h because roadworks are being conducted, and I believe this has been in place for up to 12 months. It has been ongoing for many months.

The Dukes Highway is worse, where on multiple occasions you have to slow down to 80 km/h, go back to 110 km/h for a few hundred metres, go back to 80 km/h, and so on about four or five times. It causes massive congestion. It is disregarded when truck drivers realise that there is no compliance happening. The radio buzzes and there is discussion about whether speed cameras, or the 'flash for cash' as they are known, are in attendance, and people disregard the speed limits. I know why the 80 km/h speed limits are still in place, even though not a lot of work has happened in the previous few months.

The excuse has been that it has been raining. Well, it has not been raining to any great extent for a little while now, for quite a few weeks. The issue is that the road has a partly damaged surface. I can understand why the 80 km/h signs are in place where there is an excavated shoulder—fair enough. But I did stress to the department staff that we need to get on with it, because at the time the hay season was in motion, and underway now is what I believe to be the biggest harvest in South Australia. It certainly has the potential to be the biggest harvest.

There are many trucks on the road as Taillem Bend is an inland strategic port, a strategic site. Viterra does a pretty reasonable job of receiving grain there, especially now they are manning their so-called unmanned weighbridge at the exit to the site, but that is another point. The issue for the Mallee farmers is that there will be many hundreds of movements per day of trucks because there is no access to the Mallee railway line anymore. In its last years of operation, it was getting down to where it could only operate in the cool weather, and then it was down to 25 km/h.

Trains would be loaded at Pinnaroo or Lameroo during the day, and then the trains would operate at night because of the poor maintenance of the track. Sadly, from both the Loxton line and the Pinnaroo line, we do not have any rail transport. That will put many hundreds of extra trucks on the road over time, thousands during harvest, and create another complication. It is complicated more by these roadworks that have been ever present on the Mallee Highway near the intersection with the Dukes Highway.

As I indicated, the issue along the Dukes Highway has been ongoing for many months and people get over it. I believe this is the fourth busiest highway in the country and it is

certainly the connector between Adelaide and Melbourne. The overnight runners or the trucks can do that trip in nine or 10 hours quite easily. Even though there is a very good rail line between Adelaide and Melbourne, it makes that inefficient with the off-load and on-load time lines at each end, so you are far better off to put it on a B-double or a single semitrailer and send it direct from the freight terminus to your customer at the other end.

My issue is not just that these roadworks are happening currently next to the motorsport park but that they have happened there previously. When the overtaking lane was built there, it was excavated, laid out and we were left with a rubble strip on the new lane for many, many months. It is not good road making. It could have been compacted. I am prepared to cop it because I am not a road engineer, but I think it is outrageous that these roads are left in a half-made state for so long.

I must commend the minister's staff, one of whom emailed me and suggested that there was going to be some work down there, and there has been. There has been some re-sheeting, but the final bitumen or hot mix has not been put on, the lines painted and everything done so that we can get everything back to 110 km/h. It does cause a lot of frustration, and people wonder what is going on.

I do not need pointed out to me that the access point on the north-western end near the Mallee Highway, where there has been a small intersection point made there for travellers coming from Adelaide to enter the motorsport park, is not extremely obvious. It has road signs now in the way so that people know it is there, but there is a concrete kerb in the middle of the road and it is going to need some good signage when it comes into use, hopefully in the not too distant future.

It is a frustration and, as I said, not just at this time. A four-lane overtaking lane was put in between Cooke Plains and Coomandook, and there was the same effect, where a rubble side was left out and not worked on for months and, when they finally laid the bitumen, they still managed to leave a lump in at one spot. When I overtake trucks on my way home towards Coomandook, I notice that the trucks know where the lump is and try to move out around it so that they are not shaking their load.

We need to get on with the roadworks. Both federal and state money was put in to this project at the motorsport park at Tailem Bend. From what I understand, the Peregrine group has made some changes to some of its plans and I believe some of that is waiting for some development approval on where some of the infrastructure is going to go. However, in the main, I think a lot of that has been settled now.

The roadworks need to be done because of the increase in traffic. Especially when you have a big harvest like this one, with extended opening times, one farmer might be able to send a semitrailer up that road six or eight times a day. If farmers do that multiple times, with hundreds delivering into Tailem Bend from as far south as Tintinara or even Keith, there are a lot more truck movements and a lot more movements on the road, and people do get frustrated.

I acknowledge that it has been a bit of a cash injection for the government when the speed cameras have been placed down there, but I understand people's frustration when the signs are constantly in place and people do not see any progress with a project. Get the work completed so that we can get the road up to speed and so that people know where these speed limits are into the future. At times, it seems like we are in a constant phase of roadworks, especially on these main highways in our state.

I certainly commend the bill. I commend the intent, but it is not going to address all the issues we have, because obviously roadworks have to comply with standards, and if the road is not built to the standard, they cannot just change the speed back to 110 km/h. I believe that is addressed

through the amendments in the bill, but it does create that issue where people are frustrated by ongoing roadworks that seem to go on forever. I will be interested in the committee debate and to see the progress of this bill through the house.