

School bus - seat belts Nov 15, 2006

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): I wish to make a small contribution to this discussion and commend the member for Fisher for his comments. Being a rural member, I have one son already on a rural bus, as with thousands of other children across the state who travel on school buses to get their education. My son Mack's bus has to pull up twice a day on the main Melbourne road, which in itself raises questions. Our children are our most precious resource and, as the member for Fisher indicated, one death will be one too many. One comment I wish to make is about children not sitting down. With the provision of seatbelts in buses, there is room in this amendment that drivers will not be prosecuted for children not sitting down, but they will make their best endeavours to ensure that children are sitting down.

We can probably all go back in history to when we were on school buses and the unruly behaviour that some people may have participated in—but I guess it would not have been anyone from this place! Another issue along these lines is that perhaps we need to pay more attention to the maintenance backlog on country roads. The backlog of maintenance is about \$200 million for the state contribution, and it appals me when I drive around country areas to see the lack of spending going into road maintenance when we will have, in the next few years, towards a billion dollars spent on metropolitan road improvements.

In closing, I echo the sentiments of the member for Fisher in relation to private operators, that they do need to be appropriately compensated if seatbelts are fitted, and I think they do need to be fitted.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: It is all about money—that is exactly right. They need to be paid a relevant contract rate to take this into account.