

SPEED LIMITS – 22 July 2010

The Hon. R.B. SUCH (Fisher) (11:29): I move:

That this house calls on the state government to conduct a review of speed limits, with a view to—

- (a) obtaining greater consistency in application;
- (b) improving speed limit signage, including additional painted speed limits on roads where appropriate; and
- (c) allowing greater demerit point loss in lieu of a heavy fine.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:08): I rise too to speak on this motion, and I think we do need a review of speed limits in this state. A lot of us in this place—I would say pretty well all of us—grew up with the default speed of 60 km/h.

Mr Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes. It is confusing when you drive around Adelaide and in some of the suburbs you even have to get down to 40 km/h on all the connecting roads and, yes, they are signposted, but then you get out on the other roads and you have to look for the 60 on the main arterial routes. However, there are a lot of roads that look like major connectors that you think would be 60 km/h roads, but they are unmarked so they default to 50 km/h.

That is where some of the confusion comes in, and there are certainly plenty of reports from people I know driving around Adelaide where there are frequently used streets that, for whatever reason, are put back to 50 km/h and there does not seem to be a real reason why they are not signposted and kept at the not very much faster limit of 60 km/h. It does seem at times that revenue raising is the greater thought of the government here in regard to these speed limits.

I want to also reflect on country roads. There are issues down my way on the Dukes Highway, the main road between Melbourne and Adelaide, where most of the freight in and out of the state is carried. It is a very busy road. I believe it can be as high as 4,000 vehicle movements a day or more, and all the time we have these ongoing roadworks for extra parking bays and overtaking lanes—and they are good things. Let me lay that on the table: they are very good things, but why do they take so long?

It is just incredible, and I note that the same issues are at Port Wakefield. It just becomes a logjam as people run into roadworks. I note down our way before you get to Tailem Bend where the dual lane kicks in—obviously, I get on the road just before Coomandook and head up through Cooke Plains—parking bays are currently under construction and have been for months. Why do they take so long?

It was interesting to note that I heard a member of the police force, I think, or perhaps someone from the Department of Transport, being asked a question on the radio one day and saying that there are time constraints on how long the contractors have to do these things—either overtaking lanes or parking bays.

Well, they are obviously getting a fair bit of lead time, because it is really confusing for people driving up these main arterial routes, especially when you have thousands of semitrailers and thousands of B-doubles trying to conduct their rightful business on these main arterial routes. You are driving along, and there is one just south-east of Cooke Plains, and they picked a really good spot to put a parking bay right amongst the salt swamp. I am sure it took a fair bit of work—

Mr Goldsworthy: Saltier than the sea.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes; it's just unbelievable—trying to find a decent place to build the road base in, because I know for a fact that when the high-voltage power line went through there several years ago they had to tip in so many loads of cement just trying to cement the poles in that they just had to keep going. I know when they tipped the first lot in, it just disappeared so they said, 'Right; just keep going.'

You have to wonder about the planning that goes into some of these things. Let me repeat: we do need these things. In the first instance, I would rather see dual lane all the way to the border, and let us hope we get there sooner rather than later, because not only will it

improve traffic movement through to Bordertown and the Victorian border but it will also save a lot of lives, because we are losing too many people on that section of road.

These parking bays and overtaking lane extensions or new overtaking lanes get opened up and people get slowed down to 80 kilometres coming into them, then 60 kilometres, then sometimes there are even 40 km/h signs left there. You go through some of these areas at night and there are 60 km/h signs, and you think: what for? There is nothing going on; you can still quite easily go through this section of road. There are no roadworks happening overnight.

It is simply because, obviously, there is a standard, and I appreciate that, but the standard needs to be that they need to have white posts in clearly marking the edge of the road. That is fair enough, but why are they not put in sooner? Then they would not be upsetting the thousands of users per day utilising these roads and upsetting the chain of traffic.

This is where problems happen, where people get upset about having to slow down and speed up and line haul operators having to back off. I am sure there have been times where the police could have had a field day with a camera at some of these locations and raise a lot of money for this government, because people just get sick and tired of these restrictions being there for so long because the white posts have not been put in so that we can get it back to a 110 km/h speed limit on those main arterial routes.

In my speech today, I wonder why it does take so long to get to the stage where the pavement can get put down so that these pieces can be finished. I know that at one stage last year several overtaking lane extensions were put in on the Dukes Highway, from Tailem Bend heading further south past Keith. One contractor was doing the lot and opening them up and just leaving them. You would think that it would be simpler perhaps to do one or two and complete them. It seems to me, coming from a small business background, to be the wrong way to do things. It certainly is frustrating, the number of speed limits we have. I know that at times on a main road you can go anywhere from 110 km/h through a 90 zone, an 80 zone and occasionally a 70 zone, a 60 zone, a 50 zone and a 25 km/h zone. You have to wonder why we need so many increments that are only 10 kilometres apart.

I know that interstate road train operators get frustrated. I believe the ruling in this state is that they can sit on only 90 km/h, yet I believe in the territory (and I stand to be corrected), they can do 100 km/h. The one piece of smart legislation we did approve in this house in relation to speeding and speed limits was letting learner permit drivers sit on 100 km/h. That is such a smart move for people, especially in the country. You only have to drive on the main arterial roads in the country to come across a lot of learner drivers. Yes, we all have to learn to drive, but sitting on 80 km/h with 60 tonne B-doubles swarming around you, you can appreciate the terror experienced by a learner driver at the time and especially the person helping them to drive. So, that was a smart move.

Before closing, I note that the Hon. Graham Gunn, the former member for Stuart, made some very wise comments about where he thought speed limits should go. I think that one of his infamous Gunn amendments was the 130 km/h speed limit north and west of Port Augusta. I really do think that needs to be looked at, because I think he was right on the money—there is nothing worse on country roads and distance roads, as long as they are capable of maintaining a decent speed, than going so slow that people fall asleep.

There are plenty of people who undertake long drives, and there are plenty of members on this side of the house who do upwards of 60,000 kilometres a year. In fact, I know the former member for Stuart, and probably the current member for Stuart, could do up to 100,000 kilometres a year. We on this side of the house spend a lot of time on the road. We know the distances that have to be covered, and we know what you have to do to stay awake. It is a tough call.

In any other workplace, they would rule against people having to drive the kilometres and hours that members have to do in their line of work. Let me just make that point here today. We legislate for everyone to have safe work practices. I certainly believe, and having talked to some of my colleagues about what can happen when you have a lot of meetings in a row, that people have a problem with fatigue, yet we are expected to do it. We do not mind doing it; we do it as our duty. However, I just lay that out there to let the house know that it does take does take all your concentration sometimes to keep making it to your destination.