

SPEECH

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MOTOR VEHICLES (LEARNER'S PERMITS AND PROVISIONAL LICENCES) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BROCK (Frome) (17:24): I also rise today to support the Motor Vehicles (Learner's Permits and Provisional Licences) Amendment Bill. When this bill was first discussed, I had grave concerns as to the effect the bill would have on our youth in our country regions, and this has been mentioned here by previous speakers from the country. However, I notice there are several exemptions that will allow our youth to attend schools, training facilities, play sport, get to work, and participate in normal stuff. These situations in country regions are completely different to those, who may be affected by this bill, who live in the metropolitan areas of Adelaide. In Adelaide there is ample public transport and close distances for taxi services, but in country areas some of these services do not even exist.

Firstly, I must point out, really importantly, that I am very passionate about doing whatever we can to preserve the precious lives of our youth. Over many years, I have lost many friends in motor vehicle accidents. Those friends were very young at the time, and I was young at the time too—we were only 18. They were also very immature and invincible, because we all think that when we are young we are invincible. I also lost my late wife to a motor vehicle accident. No matter who is to blame, the consequences are horrific. I do not believe anyone can appreciate the effects that it leaves not only on the immediate family but on whole communities, especially in country regions.

When we are young we think we can do anything and nothing will harm us, but the reality is that it is not what we do but what others do and how they behave. As responsible adults and legislators we need to do whatever we can to ensure that our young people are taught as much as possible to behave responsibly in motor vehicles and on the roads. An area that we previously used to have at secondary schools was driver education. I strongly request that this be part of education teaching in all secondary schools across South Australia. The member for Stuart has questioned the budget impact—you have to worry about that—and I agree with the member; however, we have to look at the fact that, in the long term, a life is worth more than another \$200,000 or \$300,000—
Mr van Holst Pellekaan interjecting:

Mr BROCK: Yes, I was just going to say that life is worth more than that. Secondly, if you reduce the opportunity for a tragic, long-term, life-ending or lifelong injury, it will save the government of the day many hundreds of thousands of dollars in hospitalisation bills. This is to ensure that our young people know how to drive defensively and to understand road conditions and, importantly, the power of vehicles that are available today. It has been mentioned previously that Rotary clubs in general, but in particular the Rotary clubs of Port Pirie and Clare, have driver education opportunities at both public and private secondary schools. These are for students who are nearing or have an appropriate driver's licence. This project is called Rider. Road rules are always changing and evolving and refresher courses would be of great benefit to not only young people but also older drivers across the whole state.

The member for Fisher mentioned that some drivers appear to be angry, and I do see them on my many, many kilometres of travel. They may be, but with so much pressure from slower vehicles, caravans, road trains, which may cause long delays and long lines of traffic, it becomes an irritating issue and it does get on some people's nerves. The member for Giles also mentioned grey nomads and, again, I encounter these caravans on many occasions, especially around the Clare area. These people also have a right to travel, and as a safety issue they cannot travel as fast as normal motor vehicles.

Another issue I see during my many kilometres of travel is the fact that some vehicles, due to the colour of those vehicles, seem to get lost by blending into the colour of the road. These vehicles may not be readily visible to the oncoming traffic, and one of the oncoming cars may want to pass a vehicle and not see the vehicle coming towards it; so I think that is a real issue. We have the right to have our cars the colour we like, but I believe that all vehicles travelling on open roads should have their headlights on at all times. One way to improve this is to have headlights come on automatically

when the vehicle is started and then turned off automatically when the key is removed from the ignition. It could be a very simple part of the manufacture of vehicles across Australia.

Also, with the wearing seat belts or the non-wearing of seat belts, a vehicle should not be able to be started unless the relevant seat belts have been secured on the driver and any passengers. I have experienced occasions when I have had an item—a briefcase or my folder—sitting on the passenger side and all of a sudden the indicator goes on reminding me that the seatbelt needs to be secured; so there are ways. Seat belts of today are coordinated and can have pressure on them to automatically look for a seatbelt to be engaged. I believe that is a safeguard, to make sure the vehicle cannot be started, the same as alcohol ignition locks.

The member for Schubert mentioned that the roads south of Clare are winding and narrow, and they certainly are. He also talked about the lack of overtaking lanes. I would remind the member for Schubert that, since I have been the member for this region, there have been many overtaking lanes constructed between Clare and Tarlee. I have worked tirelessly, together with my local councils, for improvements, and some of these include: the bypass of the Bungaree Station at Clare, with a new road via Anama Lane; merging lanes at the Kadina-Wallaroo intersection; slip lanes at the Giles corner near Tarlee; the Gladstone roundabout; reconstruction of a portion of the Tarlee to Kapunda road; and many other minor issues. We need to be very positive about this and continue to try to do the best we can.

The proposals in this bill have been forwarded to all of my road safety groups for their consideration and feedback. The feedback so far is that, whilst they are concerned with some of the restrictions, they understand the value of young lives and the exemptions go a long way to improve what was being publicly discussed prior to the bill being debated in this house. As I said earlier, I had grave concerns about restrictions and youth not being able to get into the community, to school or training, or to work. This bill can be improved and I think we need to be able to discuss that going forward.

There are many roads across the whole state and they have not just overnight got to the condition that they are in today. They have been neglected over many years. I will say this—and I have said it before—both sides of politics in this state need to take their share of responsibility for the lack of attention to roads over many, many years. These roads do not fall apart within five minutes. The situation is that we have more traffic and larger vehicles, with road trains now being able to travel on many roads and basically coming just about into Adelaide. They can go through a lot of centres that they were not allowed to go through before. I think previously they were not allowed to come south of Port Augusta, then they got up to Lochiel and now they can come basically right into Adelaide. Many of these roads were not really constructed to carry the amount of heavy traffic that is going on at the moment.

Vehicles in my day were far stronger and slower, but they were never as powerful as they are today. The vehicles of today are supercharged. Some of these vehicles are capable of doing in excess of 200 km/h. Why have a domestic vehicle capable of doing these speeds when the speed limit is 110 km/h? I question why we as a country are allowing these vehicles to be sold to the general public, because you are not supposed to go that fast. It is a really weird situation.

The member for Stuart has a great region and he has the pleasure of travelling for BP Australia. Prior to me going back to Port Pirie and working at the smelters, I also had the privilege of being a manager for BP Australia to the northern areas, in the member for Stuart's area, and more. I used to travel to lots of areas up there on the roads, and met lots of oncoming traffic and things like that. We were taught how to react to what was coming towards you, to the road and to the how the weather was affecting it. That is a big issue. As I said, I think the time has come where we need to have some more educational programs back into the secondary schools, and refresher courses going along.

Whilst I have some concerns with the restrictions, such as extra time frames for the various licences and so on, I am very aware of the tragic results that can eventuate from an unfortunate incident. It does not have to be a death. It may be a lifetime injury where there is personal loss and emotional stress. The stress and loss is not only for the family and friends, but any accident has a very strong impact on emergency workers, paid or volunteers, hospital staff and doctors. Sometimes these people may not be at the front of people's thoughts when issues such as these are discussed, but we need to

seriously consider these people, because they will be emotionally affected, and it is worse if they know the person.

I have heard some negativity not only in this chamber but across the general public regarding this bill. I am very sure that, between here and the upper house, we will all work together to reduce the opportunity for any incident to happen. Through the minister, I sincerely thank the departmental staff for the great briefing I had the other day. It was very detailed and I asked lots of questions. They gave me some great presentations. I feel far more relaxed than I was before I had that briefing, and I certainly appreciate it. Those sorts of briefings are very beneficial, especially for an Independent, because we have to get all our own information. Again, I thank the staff very sincerely. I will be looking very closely at any amendments to this bill, but at this stage I am certainly impressed with it, and I am supporting it.