

REAR-VISION CAMERAS

6 March 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: In recent years we have heard the tragic stories of parents who back out of their driveways and, on some occasions, inadvertently back over their own children, who are playing in the driveway or otherwise just wandering around in the driveway. In fact, there was another incident earlier this week. Overnight, on 3 March, in Geelong, Victoria, a father accidentally backed his BMW four-wheel drive into his daughter, sparking renewed calls for mandatory rear-vision cameras in four-wheel drive vehicles. I further note that, in 2005, the Pedestrian Council claimed that about 330 children nationwide are injured in similar driveway incidents each year.

A survey of some 2,380 licensed drivers, released by AAMI insurance company in the past 24 hours, indicates that a surprising (or, I should say, a not surprising) 75 per cent of Australians support the compulsory installation of cameras in four-wheel drive vehicles. Recently released models of four-wheel drive vehicles have responded to this situation by installing cameras or motion detectors to show or detect what is happening at the rear of the vehicle when it is reversing and, of course, other life-saving inventions are being installed on a mandatory basis in vehicles, such as electronic stability control, side curtain airbags and the like.

My questions to the minister are:

1. What is the government's view of requiring the installation of reversing cameras in large four-wheel drive vehicles by law?
2. What, if any, research has the government done or commissioned in this area with a view to improving road safety?
3. Will the government consider introducing a scheme to subsidise the installation of reversing cameras for existing four-wheel drive owners?

The Hon. CARMEL ZOLLO (Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Correctional Services, Minister for Road Safety, Minister Assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): I think all of us would feel for the parents of young children who have tragically lost their lives in an incident such as the honourable member has just described. I do not have statistics with me as to exactly how many children have lost their lives in South Australia.

In relation to the government's looking at this as a safety feature, the South Australian government assists in funding the Centre for Automotive Safety Research (CASR) in South Australia, which is based at the University of Adelaide. The Motor Accident Commission also assists in funding that centre in relation to looking at new ways of improving road safety and, in particular, vehicle safety. There is also the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), which is a market-driven research centre, which also carries out experimentation in relation to measures that assist in reducing road trauma throughout South Australia. It should provide a rating. The honourable member may have seen from time to time that a vehicle has a particular star rating, and that will depend on the features it includes to assist in road safety.

I know that there has been some publicity in relation to these cameras and, from memory, I understand that the cost is not necessarily prohibitive for the people who own four-wheel drive vehicles. The suggestion at the time was that parents who have young children invest in them. Again, young children are a vulnerable group in our community.

One state government curriculum package is aimed at children aged between zero and five years. It is provided to preschools and child care centres. In fact, I have attended an interactive session at which—and it is usually during quiet time—the young children were sat down and taken through the package. It is called Safe Start, from memory. It is a large package whereby they interact on a regular basis over time. They are taught about the dangers of cars—whether it is

as a pedestrian walking with their parents or even at home in the driveway; all scenarios are put before them. Clearly, we do not try to do it in a heavy-handed way. Young children will respond differently to different scenarios.

It is very much meant to cater for that age group. Of course, if they stay, we always encourage the parents to take part. So, we have that facility. Research is also happening, as I said, in particular with CASR (which we assist with funding), together with the Motor Accident Commission. Of course, it is market driven, and that is the reality. Certainly, if I were a young parent with little children and was driving a four-wheel drive it is something I would be looking for. As I said, I will undertake to have a chat to CASR and bring back a response for the honourable member.