

### Agreement in Principle

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.37 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure all visiting interstate and overseas learner and provisional drivers are subject to the same zero alcohol limits that apply to New South Wales novice drivers. This builds on the New South Wales Government's commitment to improving road safety, particularly the safety of young drivers on our roads. Under current New South Wales road transport law, learner and provisional licence holders are not permitted to drive after consuming any alcohol. However, also under current law a legal blood alcohol limit of less than 0.05 is allowed for a visiting provisional driver when driving in New South Wales. That same driver could be subject to a legal blood alcohol limit of zero when he or she is driving in his or her own jurisdiction. For example, under the current legislative provisions, a Victorian probationary licence holder has to comply with a zero alcohol limit when driving in Victoria and a 0.05 alcohol limit when driving in New South Wales. The same would apply to the holder of a learner or provisional licence issued overseas.

The member for Tweed recently formulated the Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment (Alcohol) Bill 2007 because of similar concerns with the current arrangements. While the intent of the private member's bill is generally supported, it does not capture all novice licences issued by other jurisdictions that equate to a provisional licence, namely, probationary licences issued by Victoria and Western Australia. Further, it does not capture those holding equivalent provisional and learner licences issued overseas and fails to make consequential amendments to the provisions relating to the legal alcohol limits of drivers supervising learner drivers.

Prior to a zero alcohol limit being introduced in New South Wales, the legal limit for special category drivers, which included learner and New South Wales provisional licence holders, was 0.02. In 2004, the New South Wales Government introduced legislation to reduce the legal limit to zero for holders of learner and provisional licences. The legislation sent a clear message to novice drivers that alcohol and driving do not mix. It also addressed the misconception among young drivers that they could drink small amounts of alcohol and remain under 0.02.

Prior to the zero alcohol limit being introduced, many young drivers were confused about how much alcohol they could safely consume and still stay under the limit. The introduction of zero alcohol legislation in 2004 targeted New South Wales novice drivers. Visiting novice drivers from other jurisdictions were not included in the new provisions because of the inconsistent application of legal blood alcohol levels for provisional drivers that existed across jurisdictions at that time. Since that time, other States and Territories have, or are in the process of, introducing a zero alcohol limit for their respective learner and provisional drivers. The Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia currently apply a 0.02 alcohol limit to novice drivers.

I note the Government of Western Australian is proposing to move to a zero alcohol limit later this year. The current law in respect of the zero alcohol limit treats the holders of learner licences equally regardless of which Australian State jurisdiction issued the licence. However, for the purposes of consistency, the opportunity is being taken to include overseas learner and provisional licence holders as those who must also observe the zero alcohol limit when driving in New South Wales. The Roads and Traffic Authority will update information on its website and publications available to overseas visitors, and will also seek the assistance of other States and Territories to update their respective websites and published material.

Alerts will be displayed on roadside variable message signs to inform visiting novice drivers of the zero alcohol limit applying in New South Wales. Alcohol remains one of the major factors in the New South Wales road toll, with one in five fatalities involving alcohol. Alcohol was a factor in the deaths of 87 people on New South Wales roads in the 12 months ending in May 2007. Novice drivers are at an even greater risk because their newly developing driving skills make them more susceptible to the effects of alcohol. Research has shown that the effects of alcohol are more pronounced on skills that are not highly practised or developed. Alcohol impairs a driver's coordination and ability to concentrate. It also increases a driver's confidence and risk-taking behaviour.

This bill ensures that all visiting learner and provisional licence holders are subject to the same zero alcohol limits that apply to New South Wales novice drivers. The measures I have outlined today are sensible and will have a positive impact on young driver safety. The New South Wales Government is committed to young driver safety and this bill further enhances that commitment. Through this bill the New South Wales Government is sending a strong message to all novice drivers that drinking and driving will not be tolerated in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.