Hello Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am continually disturbed to read in the newspapers from towns in the electorate of Western Victoria reports of tragic fatal road accidents.

Lately there seems to be more than usual. Some of these accidents have involved young people, others well-known and respected members of the community.

My colleague, the Minister for Shipping and Transport Mr Peter Nixon, whose portfolio includes aspects of road safety, recently described traffic accidents as one of our most pressing social economic problems.

Statistics prepared by his department show that the greatest killer of Australian males under the age of 35 is road accidents. It is the third most important cause of mortality in all age groups. In addition alcohol is present in more than one third of all fatal accidents.

These statistics also indicate quite strongly that wearing of seat belts both reduces traffic fatalities, and the more crippling injuries, such as spine damage, associated with accidents.

This is born out in Victoria, where up to the end of October there had been 770 fatalities this year. In the same 10 months last year, when wearing of seat belts was not compulsory, there were 919 fatalities.

This reduction in Victoria accounts almost completely for the drop in the national total. To the end of October this year, 3005 people had lost their lives on the roads, compared to 3185 last year.
What can be done to halt this terrible situation. The Commonwealth Government has recently established a Commonwealth Expert Group which draws together a wide section of highly experienced and qualified people covering psychology, medicine, law, road planning, and driving. The group includes Australia's World Champion driver Jack Brabham.

They are beginning a comprehensive review of more than 25 relevant topics on road safety in Australia, the first ever undertaken. It is hoped that out of this review will come far reaching and effective measures for reducing the road toll.

In addition the Australian Transport Advisory Council, which comprises the Minister for Shipping and Transport, and the State Ministers have been active in stepping up standards which car manufacturers must meet.

Nine new rules have recently come into force covering such things as brake hoses, safety rings, door latches and steering columns.

At the beginning of next year a further seven become effective covering reversing lights, automatic transmission controls, mirrors and head restraints.

Further standards are currently under review and already some far-reaching ones have been established to come into force after 1976.

I can only hope that the emphasis in car buying and car driving will rapidly swing from power, speed, and cosmetic appearance to safety, and practicability. The cost in terms of human suffering of the present situation is already far too high.
I would like to turn now to the wheat situation, something which is uppermost in the minds of many farmers at this time of the year.

The Australian Wheat Board has some good news to report. It has now completed a record selling year, having so far disposed of a total of 388 million bushels of wheat, the highest quantity ever.

This is made up of export sales of 312 million bushels, 15 million bushels exports as flour and other derivatives, and 61 million bushels sold on the local market.

The important thing about the export sales is the comparatively small quantity which was bought by Communist China this year.

Predictions that with the politically motivated refusal of China to buy our wheat would result in enormous carry-overs have just not come true. This is a particular tribute to the wheat board which has managed to dispose of our crop to the United Arab Republic, Britain, Europe, Japan, and other countries to such an extent that the carryover at the present time is just 130 million bushels, a very satisfactory position.

At the same time quotas for this year were set at a total of 339 million bushels, however, poor harvest season in New South Wales and Queensland have resulted in an expected delivery of only 270 million bushels. If good sales result next year we may be faced with a surplus even less than which the Australian Wheat Growers Federation sets at about 150 million bushels.

There is of course a possibility now that wheat quotas for next year may be increased, however whether this is possible will depend on the Federation's meeting in December when quotas will be set. In any event, the Wheat Industry at least is in a sound position at the present time.
Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Road accidents, wheat market

Date:
21 November 1971

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40544

File Description:
Road accidents, wheat market

Terms and Conditions:
Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.