

David Koch

Member for Western Victoria Opposition Whip (Council)

46 Brown Street, Hamilton 3300
Tel: 5572 3377 · Fax: 5572 4945

MEDIA RELEASE

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Truckies risk their lives at level crossings

Many level crossings across rural Victoria are a dangerous safety threat to truck drivers, says David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

Speaking in State Parliament this week, David said that safety issues at level crossings had been raised often in recent times, both in the Parliament and by the Victorian community, particularly by those who live in rural and regional areas.

He said that an aspect to level crossing safety that is often overlooked involves truck drivers who put their lives at risk after they have stopped at back-road level crossing where the road runs at a sharp angle to the rail line.

“These back-road crossings are usually passively protected with a stop sign and after stopping, truck drivers find they can only see a short distance of the railway line to their left.

“They then have to take a blind gamble that a train is not approaching the crossing before they proceed to cross.

“From a standing start a truck, depending on its size and the weight of its load, could take in excess of 30 seconds to safely clear a level crossing, while a train approaching at 100 kilometres an hour will travel 417 metres in 15 seconds.

Clearly, if a driver can not see a train coming beyond 200 metres, it is likely the truck will not clear the crossing before a fast-approaching train arrives.

“This has been an ongoing problem in rural areas for many years, and increases during the harvest season when more trucks are on back-roads carting grain or hay.

“Part of the problem seems to be that placing stop signs rather than give way signs at these level crossings increases the danger for heavy vehicle drivers.

“The Brumby Government is now jumping into action in response to numerous fatalities in recent years, culminating in the catastrophic Swan Hill-line accident in June that claimed 11 lives.

“It has set about implementing measures to improve safety at level crossings that include rumble strips, additional signage and lights which will flash well in advance of approaching trains at some 200 identified as more dangerous level crossings, but the Government is ignoring the many rural lower-use crossings that pose just as much danger.

“The Minister for Public Transport, Lynne Kosky, must act to urgently address the safety concerns of truck drivers who take their lives into their own hands at these dangerous and poorly designed level crossings across rural Victoria,” said David Koch.

Media inquiries: David Koch 0418 723 031