Protecting Our Roads and Boosting Public Safety

Legislation aimed at better protecting Territory roads and boosting public safety is expected to be debated in Parliament this week.

Transport Minister Gerry McCarthy said the amendment to the Control of Roads Act means the maximum penalty for driving on a closed or restricted road would increase from $50 to $13,300.

“The Territory road network covers about 36,000 kilometres and is often affected by bad weather meaning roads are often closed or access restricted,” Mr McCarthy said.

“As the recent bad weather and reckless behaviour has shown, driving on closed or restricted roads means emergency services crew have to rescue idiots unnecessarily, putting others who do need emergency help at risk and causing further damage to a road already in need of repair.

“That’s why we are proposing to increase the maximum fine so that the penalty acts as a greater deterrent and better reflects the seriousness and cost of the offence committed.

“Many Territory roads affected by bad weather are crucial to our economy and industry as well as supporting the transport of goods and supplies to our towns and cities.

“The old penalty has been around since the 1950s and the new penalty brings the Territory into line with other jurisdictions.

“The amendment will also provide a defence for those motorists who have a genuine and reasonable excuse for being on a closed or restricted road.”

Mr McCarthy said another amendment to the Control of Roads Act will create more certainty and make it easier for a landholder to be compensated on just terms if their land has been acquired by Government to build a new public road.

“Roads play an important role in the Territory’s social and economic development and that’s why compensation for land required to build new public roads needs to be explicitly on just terms,” Mr McCarthy said.

“The amended Control of Roads Act if passed will come into force in the middle of the year meaning landholders affected by an acquisition for a road will have improved mechanisms in place to be sure compensation can be determined on just terms through a judicial process.

“This amendment also has a retrospective clause meaning anyone with an outstanding claim can be accommodated by the proposed legislation set to be debated this week by Parliament.”

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