OPEN SPEED LIMIT OPEN TO QUESTION

An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report into road accidents amongst Indigenous Australians highlights that the imposition of the open road speed limit will do very little to reduce the Territory’s road toll.

The report notes that Indigenous Australians die at more than twice the rate of other Australians and that 80 per cent of fatal road accidents involving Indigenous people happen in rural and remote areas.

“In other words, the Territory’s high road toll is in large part the result of people driving on unsealed roads and, as a consequence, more dangerous roads,” says Fay Miller, Opposition Transport spokesperson.

“Slapping a speed limit on the sealed and engineered Stuart Highway does nothing to address the high rate of deaths of drivers on unsealed roads.

“An investigation of those Indigenous deaths in rural and remote areas will also show alcohol is a significant factor and that many of the victims weren’t wearing seat belts.

“Alcohol, no seat belts and unsealed roads are a very dangerous road safety cocktail.

“Imposing an open road speed limit was always an attempt at road safety on the cheap that wasn’t addressing the root causes of road fatalities in the Territory.

“The fact the Martin Government has scaled back the number of random breath tests it will conduct next financial year highlights revenue, not results, are driving the Government’s policy.”

This year’s budget papers show that the number of drivers to be random breath tested next financial year will be just 60,000. In 2005/2006 almost 80,000 Territory motorists were asked to blow in the bag. This year the target was 85,000 but only 60,000 breath tests will actually be performed.

“The fact the road toll shows no sign of improvement indicates the Government needs to go back to the drawing board.”

Further comment: Fay Miller 0407 720 511