



The Daily Advertiser

This is true liberty, when freeborn men,
having to advise the public, may speak
free.

Milton

Coroner's views on 4WDs worth considering

Before the Roads Minister, Michael Costa, and his Opposition counterpart, Andrew Stoner, reject out of hand a state coroner's recommendation that drivers of four-wheel drive vehicles should have special licences, they should pay special attention to the comments of others.

In particular, they should weigh up the opinions of the driver involved in the fatal accident from which the coroner made her recommendations.

The driver was in control of a "slow-moving" four-wheel drive vehicle inside a school ground and told the court that while she had looked about, she was not aware of the girl's presence until she felt a "thud".

The driver was a trained rally enthusiast but since the accident said the four-wheel drive vehicle was not appropriate for city traffic and was (in her opinion) not safe.

The coroner also recommended

that four-wheel drives be stopped within 200 metres of primary and infants' schools.

Mr Costa and Mr Stoner say they oppose both recommendations. Certainly the policing of the 200 metres restriction recommendation would be a difficult matter personnel-wise but politicians must also realise that circumstances have changed for parents.

Parents do not want their child walking long distances to school for security and safety reasons and others, who also work, need to be certain their child has arrived at the school.

However, the special licence recommendation does have merits, as the Pedestrian Council and parents interviewed since the coroner's finding, have suggested.

The problem, they say, is that people proposing to drive four-wheel drives need to be trained in how to drive them and the danger-

ous elements surrounding them.

Mr Costa's rejection out of hand for a special licence on the grounds that it would have to be a national decision and was therefore too difficult, smacks of arrogance without due consideration for the concerns of children, parents and teachers.

This sort of dismissal, out of hand, is not what is required. The vehicles are a popular form of transport for young families.

As a result they do need to be driven with care, safety and expertise. It should not require a great deal of legislation to ensure a potential four-wheel driver is therefore put under greater scrutiny and testing when upgrading to a special licence.

The coroner's recommendations about eliminating risks and for better training and testing to make drivers more aware of their responsibilities is worth more sober consideration from MPs.