



Drive to fix risky roads

JO CAMPBELL

MID WEST residents are cornered between the fourth worst road for safety in WA's regional areas and the second worst road in the Mid West.

And local MPs are at loggerheads over what to do about it.

Research compiled by the RAC with the help of motorists has named Brand Highway as the fourth-worst road for safety in regional WA.

The North West Coastal Highway was voted the second worst road in the Mid West. Its main problems were listed as narrow road or lanes and an inadequate traffic light system in Geraldton.

The RAC received 560 nominations in its Risky Roads campaign identifying 288 roads, one third of which were in regional areas.

The main problem identified with the Brand Highway was inadequate crossing or turning opportunities.

Opposition Minister for the Mid West Brian Ellis said Mid West residents should not have to endure a double dose of concern every time a family member



Brand Highway south of Dongara.

drives to Perth.

"Concerns they may have an accident on one of the second and fourth worst regional roads, and concern that the collapse of the regional police radio networks may mean they will not be able to get help if that accident happens," he said.

Geraldton MLA Shane Hill agreed the two roads were dangerous but said Government was taking measures to decrease risks by constructing Indian Ocean Drive, to be completed in 2011.

"I'm not denying its a risky road but we are looking at other options with Indian Ocean

Drive," he said.

Mr Hill agreed that the Wonthella area of North West Coastal Highway had not been planned well but said an alternative route out to Moresby Ranges was being considered, perhaps using Wonthella's disused rail reserve.

Agriculture Region MP Grant Woodhams said more passing lanes were needed.

"Indian Ocean Drive really won't solve the problem," he said. "It will take some of the tourist traffic off Brand Highway but it won't take the commuter or industry traffic because its only going to be a two-lane road with no passing lanes."

RAC's executive manager of Member Advocacy David Moir said that in the lead-up to the state election RAC would study the most nominated sections of road and prepare a report.

"We're calling on the State Government and road authorities to take notice of this list of risky roads and listen to the people of Western Australia," he said.

"Something needs to be done to make the entire road network safer for all drivers."