

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Use
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RURAL ROAD RISK RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR FURTHER AWARENESS

Australian Road Safety Foundation's month-long safety initiative targets high-risk rural roads

Despite two thirds of road deaths occurring on regional roads in 2018¹, new research has put the spotlight on risky driver behaviour on rural roads and the need for further education.

Released by the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) to mark Rural Road Safety Month (August 1 to 31), the research reveals that one in three Australian drivers admit they are more likely to undertake risky behaviour on rural roads.²

Worryingly, not even having children in the car is a deterrent for taking risks behind the wheel, with one in two rural drivers admitting to speeding, using their mobile phone or driving distracted while their own kids are in the car, compared to one in three metro drivers.

Added to this, one third of rural road users admit to taking risks behind the wheel while someone else's children are in the car in comparison to one quarter of metro drivers.

Following community support of last year's inaugural Rural Road Safety Week, the ARSF has extended the initiative to a month-long national campaign.

ARSF Founder and CEO Russell White urged Australians - both regional and city based - to take ownership for their role in reducing the rural road toll.

"While there are a number of factors that contribute to the regional road toll, it's everyday Australians that hold the key to safer roads," Mr White said.

"The research has told us that drivers are taking risks on rural roads because they're either less likely to get caught or perceive there to be fewer dangers.

"We will continue to see a significant and unnecessary loss of life on regional roads until we make a collective effort to shift this mentality so that safety is front of mind for all road users."

The ARSF research has also highlighted the disparity in attitudes and behaviours between rural and city drivers.

According to the data, metro residents are more likely than rural drivers to engage in dangerous behaviour on rural roads.

In fact, when it came to undertaking those risky behaviours, rural drivers only scored worse than their metro counterparts when it came to driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

However, the research also showed that one in three road users recognised that a shift in attitudes and behaviour would have the biggest impact on the road toll.

"Despite making up only 16.5 per cent of the nation's population, regional road deaths account for a staggering two in every three of the national toll," Mr White said.

"Acknowledging that everyday road users have a personal responsibility is the first step and it's our hope that Rural Road Safety Month will encourage drivers to choose road safety and turn this sentiment into real action."

¹ BITRE Road Deaths Database, SA Police, WA Police, NSW Police, QLD Police (2018 calendar road data)

² Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of the Australian Road Safety Foundation, April 2019, n=1001 nationally representative by gender, age and location of Australian drivers aged 18 years and over. Parents defined as having one or more offspring considered currently independent if aged 24 years and older or currently dependent if aged under 24 years.

Suncorp's Head of Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance Matthew Kayrooz said the month of action was a timely reminder for all drivers to take an extra moment to avoid disaster on regional roads.

"Every day our team witness the impact road trauma has on our customers and our regional communities, which is why we are backing action. Safe roads are critical to keeping our regional and rural communities great places to live, visit and work – so I encourage each of us to take a personal pledge to drive safely not just throughout the month but well after the campaign finishes," Mr Kayrooz said.

Running from August 1 to 31, Rural Road Safety Month is a community-based awareness initiative that calls on everyday road users to jump in the driver seat of regional road safety.

Backed by the Australian Government and long-time sponsor Suncorp, businesses, community groups and individuals are encouraged to choose road safety and get involved by hosting a local awareness raising event.

The ARSF research was conducted by a third-party research company, Pure Profile, and was an online survey of more than 1,000 licenced Australians, nationally representative by gender, age and location.

For more information or to find out how to get involved, visit arsf.com.au.

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About Australian Road Safety Foundation:

The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is a not for profit organisation dedicated to improving road safety awareness, enhancing driver education and reducing the impact of road trauma. The Foundation strives to improve road safety outcomes, develop research and education programs and work to inform policy makers on methods to address road safety issues. It also provides an umbrella organisation for other road safety programs and community groups. ARSF is helping to develop a sustainable strategy for reducing the social and economic costs of road crashes, as well as providing a platform for future research and advocacy programs.

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