

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**8 December 2021**

**BEYOND FESTIVE FATALITIES: BID TO PREVENT TRAGIC AFTERMATH OF TRAUMA**

*Calls for Australians to be the change they want to see on the road by choosing road safety*

The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is imploring road users to give the gift of life this Christmas, by choosing road safety across the holiday period.

Last year, 191 Australians were killed on the nation's roads over December and January, showing no improvement from the year prior<sup>1</sup>.

In figures that concern the road safety authority, more than 939 people have been killed so far this year, which is a 4.4 per cent increase on the same time last year<sup>2</sup>.

These lives are being honoured as individual heart-shaped ornaments adorned upon an eight foot Christmas tree in both Brisbane and Adelaide, each ornament marked with the gender and age of each victim of last year's holiday road toll.

This included a three year old girl, Luna, who was tragically struck by a car on her own street on 20 December 2020, tragically dying two days later - her mother Jessica Feeney attended today to hang Luna's ornament and share her story.

"Spending the lead up to Christmas last year in the hospital was dismal, we did what we could to celebrate her life in those last moments - we decorated the room, invited friends to sing songs - but no parent should need to face that,"

"We know first hand what the journey looks like after being dealt the worst card in the deck, and now through the Luna Capri Foundation we work to provide other families with the support, tools and advice they need to navigate their way through life after loss," she said.

The ARSF is concerned this year's holiday period poses even greater road risk with its research confirming that almost half (49%) of Australians are planning to drive longer trips this year<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communication, BITRE Road Deaths Database, accessed 1 July 2021

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communication, BITRE Road Deaths Monthly Database ending 30 Oct, accessed 30 November

<sup>3</sup> Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of the Australian Road Safety Foundation, June 2021, n=1501 nationally representative by gender, age and location of Australian drivers aged 18 years and over

ARSF founder and CEO Russell White said the festive season is a time where we all come together as family and friends to celebrate, but sadly, it's also one of the hardest times for those missing loved ones lost through road trauma.

“So far this year, 939 people have been killed on Australia’s roads<sup>4</sup>, which means there will be 939 families experiencing Christmas without this loved one for the first time,” Mr White said.

“For every fatality it’s estimated that another 30 experience serious injury - meaning there are tens of thousands of people also facing horrific and often permanent injury, illness or disability,”

“Sadly, most crashes are preventable, they are the outcome and aftermath of a poor choice so we’re imploring road users to be the change we all want to see on the road,” he said.

Elise Kennedy who at just 20 years was involved in a crash that left her unable to walk said she wants people to understand the ripple effect of every decision made on the road.

“The course of our lives were completely altered because of one person’s choice to cut a corner,” Ms Kennedy said.

“It happens that quickly and we have the power to prevent it just by choosing safety,”

“Despite the crash turning our life plans on their head, we’ve gone on to build happy and wonderful lives but I’d just ask the community to start to reframe road safety - instead of showing resilience as part of the aftermath of road trauma, we need to look at road safety resilience as part of efforts to prevent tragedy occurring in the first place,” she said.

The ARSF’s festive season initiative is made possible by long-term supporters Suncorp, Subaru and Giti Tyres.

Daniel Wilkinson, Executive Manager CTP QLD & ACT, Suncorp said as one of Australia’s largest motor insurers, Suncorp is continuing its commitment to keeping Aussie drivers safe on the roads through our partnership with the ARSF.

“Suncorp would like to see all Australians enjoy the festive season and make it safely to their destination,” Mr Wilkinson said.

“Being one of the largest personal injury insurers in Australia, the Suncorp Group would like to underscore the importance of the message from ARSF concerning choosing good driving behaviours in all conditions faced on the road. If you are planning a road trip this Christmas,

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<sup>4</sup> South Australian Police, Traffic Statistics, accessed 25 November 2021 <https://www.police.sa.gov.au/about-us/traffic-statistics>

prepare for all aspects of the trip, have your car in good working order, drive to the conditions, be rested and mindful of the choices made while out on our roads,”

“Suncorp is proud to support ARSF and this holiday season initiative, as we see every day the devastating effects road accidents have on people’s lives. It doesn’t matter where you live in a city, regional or remote community, Suncorp calls on all drivers to make a commitment to drive safer,” he said.

During the lead up to Christmas, individuals are invited to visit and pay respects to road trauma victims by writing a message to a lost friend or loved one, or pledging not to be the reason more tragedy occurs.

For further information about the Australian Road Safety Foundation, or how to support festive road safety activity online visit [arsf.com.au](http://arsf.com.au).

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**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

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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.