

MEDIA RELEASE
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AUSTRALIANS URGED TO CONSIDER RIPPLE EFFECT THIS FATALITY FREE FRIDAY

Road trauma has a devastating ripple effect through the community, extending way beyond those involved in crashes, according to the Australian Road Safety Foundation.

Research shows that 84 per cent of road users falsely believe that drivers make up the majority of the road toll when in actual fact more than half are passengers, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

"Road users need to understand the long-lasting impact on families, friends, schools, workplaces, first responders and emergency services," said Founder and CEO Russell White.

Mr White was making the comments at the launch of the 15th annual Fatality Free Friday being held today, 28 May.

Initiated by the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF), it aims to bring attention to the road toll Australians needlessly suffer and ways in which it can be reduced.

Research released by the ARSF reveals speeding remains by far the highest broken road rule, with 78 per cent of Australians admitting to being heavy footed.[1]

The findings also reveal that jaywalking is the second highest road law broken, which shows that it's not just Australian drivers but also pedestrians who need to step up their road safety skills.

Worryingly, more than two thirds of Australians admit to having broken a road rule, with a quarter of people doing so at least once a week.

When it came to the reasons for undertaking these potentially life-threatening behaviours, half of Australian drivers said it was due to inattention, while one in three said they believed it was safe to do so.

Mr White said the research highlights the need for further education around the idea that it's just drivers who suffer the consequences of road risk taking.

"Tragically, 1,108 people lost their lives on Australian roads last year," Mr White said.

"Individuals have a responsibility to make the right choices when using the roads and it is imperative they understand the devastating consequences their choices can have not just on other road users, but on the wider community."

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack MP said the recent findings revealed 78 per cent of Australians admit to being heavy footed and more than two thirds admit to having broken a road rule, with a quarter of people doing so at least once a week.

"These findings are a harsh reality and is why this Government is taking a strong leadership role and making significant investments in road safety," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

"This includes our \$3 billion Road Safety Program that has seen almost \$1 billion already allocated through tranche 1 for nearly 700 road safety projects due for completion by June this year.

"Even one death on our roads is one too many, which is why it is vital we continue delivering priority upgrades to get motorists home sooner and safer," he concluded.

This message was reiterated by Suncorp's Executive Manager for Queensland CTP Clams, Ms Kylie Horton.

"Our claims team sees the impact of road accidents on injured road users and their family, friends and communities every day."

"We know that road trauma is preventable. Road safety is a choice we can all make, and a responsibility we should all carry when we travel on the road, whether we drive, ride, cycle or walk," Ms Horton said.

The ARSF today announced it has funded a PhD scholarship with QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q) which, since the program's inception in 1996, has seen more than 75 graduates fulfil roles within government and industry that inform road safety practices.

Through the Ainsworth 4 Foundation, the ARSF has funded QUT psychology graduate Glenn Mullins who will investigate how to better understand the entire footprint left on society by road traffic crash trauma.

"I have a personal interest in the ongoing impact of road trauma on family members and friends. This project seeks to give value to these personal life changes, as well as understanding how these changes permeate through communities and society at large," Mr Mullins said.

"It is our hope to explore these impacts comparatively across urban and rural settings."

Queensland Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey reiterated the need for a partnership approach to reduce death and serious injuries on Australian roads.

"Today, I'm joining with colleagues across Australia asking people to take a simple but important pledge to drive safer," Mr Bailey said. "We want everyone to reflect on what part they can play in making our roads safer. And not just today, but every day."

"The Palaszczuk Government has made safety a priority, delivering a record investment, with more than \$1 billion committed to road safety initiatives over the next four years."

"A fatality free future is something we can only achieve if we all work together. From those planning the roads, to designing cars, to educating our kids. Mums, dads, colleagues, footy mates - everyone has a part to play in making our roads safer."

Collectively, these road safety advocates called on individuals to #ChooseRoadSafety by taking the Fatality Free Friday pledge today, which means promising to always be fit to drive, stay focused on the road, scan the road ahead, keep a safe distance, and to drive in a way that suits the conditions.

Since its inception in 2007, Fatality Free Friday has grown to become Australia's largest national community-based road safety program. While the target is to have zero fatalities on Australian roads on Friday 28 May, the initiative is much more than just a single day, ultimately aiming for long-term community change.

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About ARSF:

The Australian Road Safety Foundation 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. The 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.