

## Media Release

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### **NEW ROAD USER RESEARCH REVEALS INCREASED REGIONAL ROAD RISK**

*Australian Road Safety Foundation implores all road users to be the change they want to see on the road.*

With two in three road deaths occurring on regional roads,<sup>1</sup> new research from the Australian Road Safety Foundation<sup>2</sup> (ARSF) has detailed why all Australians have a personal responsibility to take greater action.

Released today, to mark the fourth annual Rural Road Safety Month (September), the research revealed that high risk rural roads are used by almost all Australians (94%) at least once a year.

In fact, more than four in 10 drivers utilise regional roads at least once a week.

The research confirmed that it is not just regional residents either, with personal travel confirmed as the number one reason (31%) for driving on regional roads. This was followed by visiting friends and family (27%), living in the area (22%) and rounded out by travelling for work (14%).

Road authorities are concerned these risks may increase in the wake of Covid-19 flight fears. The report confirmed that nearly half of the population (49%) are more likely to drive longer trips this year.

ARSF Founder and CEO Russell White said the research helped to explain the high disparity between the number of road deaths occurring regionally compared to urban areas.

“We now have strong evidence that when it comes to preventing road trauma in regional areas, Australians from metropolitan areas carry an equal responsibility to local residents,” Mr White said.

The research showed that a quarter of Australian drivers are more likely to break a road rule when in regional areas. Most alarmingly, however, was the frequency of this high risk behaviour.

The ARSF’s research found that more than one in 10 drivers are breaking road rules on a daily basis, double the numbers in metropolitan areas.

Mr White said a key takeaway from the research, however, was that three in 10 Australians are taking additional risks in regional areas because they wrongly think it’s safe, or that they won’t get caught.

“The risks being taken are choices. It just really goes to show that empowering more people to choose road safety is going to have the biggest impact on reducing the tragic loss of life and serious injury on our roads,” he said.

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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> 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

Deputy Prime Minister and Member for New England Barnaby Joyce, in relation to Rural Road Safety Week, said “the most important thing we can all do for our families and community is help ensure we all get home safely.”

“Two in three road fatalities in Australia take place on regional roads, which is why I’m backing Rural Road Safety Month to help address this often preventable loss of life.”

“One life lost on Australian roads is one too many. Our Government is committed to keeping our communities safe, that’s why the Coalition has committed \$3 billion for the nationwide Road Safety Program.”

“In the last twelve months more than one thousand Australians lost their lives on our roads.”

“I ask every Aussie, rural or not, to do your part behind the wheel and help bring that number down to zero.”

Surayez Rahman, Acting EGM Statutory Classes, Suncorp Group, said “as one of Australia’s largest motor insurers, AAMI is continuing its commitment to keeping Aussie drivers safe on the roads by once again partnering with the ARSF to bring Rural Road Safety Month to the forefront in 2021.

“Being one of the largest personal injury insurers in Australia, AAMI would like to underscore the importance of the message from ARSF concerning choosing good driving behaviours in all conditions faced on rural roads. Driving on rural roads can be very different than in the suburbs or capital cities – you need to adapt, be alert and drive to the conditions.”

“AAMI is proud to support ARSF and Rural Road Safety Month as we see every day the devastating effects road accidents have on people’s lives. It doesn’t matter if you live in a rural, regional or remote community, or you’re just driving through, AAMI calls on all drivers to make a commitment to drive safer.”

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 1,500 licenced Australians, nationally representative by gender, age and location.

For more information or to find out how to get involved, visit [arsf.com.au](http://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.