

Media Release

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ROAD SAFETY EXPERTS IMPLORE URGENT FOCUS ON ROAD SAFETY TO DRIVE DOWN DEATHS

Shocking new research indicates an alarming level of ignorance and arrogance towards road safety

While 100 per cent of South Australians claim to be safe road users, 68 per cent are breaking road laws¹ - the juxtaposition spotlighting an urgent need to give road safety a renewed focus across South Australia.

The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) has issued the plea to road users today, as it released the South Australian research from its annual Fatality Free Friday initiative.

Even with multiple lockdowns and border restrictions last year, a total of 99 people were killed on South Australian roads.²

According to the research, the top two reasons for South Australians breaking road rules were not being focused on the road or believing it was safe to do so (50% and 23% respectively).

ARSF founder and CEO, Russell White, said the research had raised a number of red flags and demonstrated alarming levels of complacency.

“Just over half of South Australians say they’ve taken a risk on the road (56%), and yet we have a significantly higher portion who are breaking laws (68%) - laws that have been put in place for safety,” Mr White said.

“This isn’t just about you as an individual, but all the people around you whose lives you put in jeopardy every time you fail to focus on road safety,”

“We cannot afford to be complacent when the price is somebody’s life,” he said.

The research also indicated further road safety ignorance in the fact well over half of the state’s road users defined it as simply obeying road rules; dismissing the role of taking personal responsibility to prevent injury or death.

¹ Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of Australian Road Safety Foundation between 2-8 March 2022 with a sample size of n=1,503 adults aged 18+ years

² Deaths in Australia, Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (accessed 14 Jan)

Furthermore, the focus has continued to slip in the wake of the pandemic, with more than a quarter of South Australians (28%) admitting that they've become more concerned with health matters than with road safety.

The ARSF were concerned by drivers' lack of focus, given how quickly a road crash can happen and how prevalent risky behaviour was amongst the state's drivers.

Specifically, the research showed that two thirds (66%) of South Australian drivers admit to speeding, and more than a third (34%) drive fatigued.

The research confirmed that distractedness continues to be a prevalent road risk. In fact, 56% of South Australian drivers admit to being distracted, with the most common including talking on the phone (29%), looking away to change music or radio (26%), and looking away to use GPS (31%).

The ARSF hoped this research would spotlight the need for all road users to take personal responsibility for the unacceptably high numbers of people losing their lives on the state's roads.

It was a sentiment echoed by Jessica Hargraves, who is bravely campaigning for road safety after being involved in a crash that tragically claimed the life of her husband, James, the father of two young children.

"This was a pointless loss of an amazing, successful father, son and husband - and to experience a crash that took your husband plus have your two young children in the car was pure terror. The trauma I've suffered from that follows me every second of every day. The pain in my heart feels fatal at times," Jessica said.

"Later I realised the shock waves and trauma it sent through the emergency services and the community.

"We need to take a reality check that we only have one life and it's precious. Don't ever take risks when driving," she said.

The road safety authority will be driving this message home over the month of May as it campaigns towards Fatality Free Friday, a national day of action now in its 15th year, with the support of sponsors such as Suncorp Insurance.

As one of Australia's largest insurers, Suncorp Insurance sees first-hand the life-changing impacts of distracted driving behaviours. Matt Pearson, Executive General Manager, CTP Insurance Suncorp (including brands AAMI, GIO and Apia) said: "We partner with the Australian Road Safety Foundation to

help encourage safer driving behaviours. Unfortunately we know all too well the impact road accidents can have on injured road users and their family, friends and communities.

Our message to road users is simple – even a short trip to the shops can be disastrous so don't become complacent while behind the wheel. Road safety is a responsibility we should all carry and whether you drive, ride, cycle or walk, it's vital to focus your full attention on the road, and drive to the conditions."

Fatality Free Friday operates on the belief that if we can go one day without a death on the road, we can demonstrate the impact a focus on road safety can have each and every day of the year - ultimately saving thousands and thousands of lives.

Road users in support of Fatality Free Friday can make an individual pledge to focus on road safety by visiting arsf.com.au

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Media Contact: Frances Milvydas on behalf of ARSF | frances@inthemaking.com.au | 0431 296 499

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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.