

**MEDIA RELEASE****EMBARGOED to 27 May 2022****ROAD SAFETY AUTHORITY AND TRAUMA VICTIMS CALL FOR A FATALITY FREE FUTURE***Fatality Free Friday initiative to be the catalyst for a permanent cultural shift in road user behaviour*

In an effort to end the alarming rates of road death and injury, the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is advocating for a revolutionary change in road user culture this Fatality Free Friday (27 May).

Even with the nation's most populated areas under extended lockdowns last year, a total of 1,127 people were killed on Australian roads, which was a three per cent increase on the year prior.<sup>1</sup>

The ARSF's most recent research report has also ignited fears that without an urgent renewed focus on road safety, Australia will face a road trauma pandemic. In fact, almost a third of Australians (32%) admit that road safety has slipped in priority, compared to health matters such as Covid-19.

The research also unveiled unacceptable levels of ignorance and arrogance towards road safety. Specifically, the fact that 99 per cent of Australians believe they are safe road users, despite 7 in 10 of them breaking road laws.<sup>2</sup>

It is why Fatality Free Friday, the nation's largest community road safety initiative, implores road users to be the change they want to see on the road.

ARSF founder and CEO Russell White said that achieving one Fatality Free Friday would be the foundation for road users to permanently change their attitudes and behaviour well into the future.

"The only way we are going to stop this unnecessary and tragic loss of life on Australian roads is through a nation-wide focus, and cultural shift to make better choices," Mr White said.

"The road toll is more than just a number - it's thousands of lives tragically taken before their time, tens of thousands more who are seriously and often permanently injured, and hundreds of thousands of loving family, friends and first responders left to deal with a lifetime of grief and stress."

"We are imploring all road users to choose road safety for Fatality Free Friday and ultimately, for a fatality free future," he said.

This sentiment was echoed by former highway patrol officer, Michael Stewart, whose extensive experience with fatal crashes came to the fore when his 17-year-old son, Jaylan, was tragically killed in one.

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<sup>1</sup> Deaths in Australia, Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (accessed 14 Jan)

<sup>2</sup> 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

“I’ve seen the sheer horror of countless crash sites, I’ve had the awful job of knocking on the door and delivering to families the worst news of their life, but to be on the other side of that knock is something else,” Mr Stewart said.

“The only way we’re going to stop this bloodshed, the only way we’re going to prevent people from experiencing a lifetime of trauma, is if we as a society say enough is enough and make dangerous road user behaviour unacceptable,”

“Please choose road safety, please make it clear that risks like speeding and distraction are not okay, and help us put a stop to this senseless loss of life,” he said.

Fatality Free Friday operates on the belief that going one day without a death on the road will demonstrate the impact a focus on road safety can have every day after.

Now in its 15th year, Fatality Free Friday asks road users to make, and live, a pledge to choose road safety. Through a national month-long education campaign, series of community events and support of partners, such as Suncorp Insurance, ARSF has driven home the road safety message to more than 12.6 million Australians over the past month.

The national day of action will include a tribute to road trauma victims, with an installation of 274 orange hearts outside Suncorp Stadium, each representing a life taken on Queensland roads across 2021. Families of road trauma victims attending the event will also honour their own loved ones with additional hearts featuring the faces of those lost too soon.

Suncorp Group is a long time supporter of ARSF including Fatality Free Friday. 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.”

Road users in support of Fatality Free Friday can make an individual pledge to focus on road safety by visiting [arsf.com.au](http://arsf.com.au)

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**Key assets:**

- [VNR link](#)
- [Images from Fatality Free Friday launch in NSW](#)

**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.