

## Media Release

7 December 2022 (embargoed)

### **INCREASED TRAGEDY ON AUSTRALIAN ROADS IN 2022**

*Australian Road Safety Foundation's plea to take extra care this Christmas*

The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is calling on all road users to be the change they want to see on the road by choosing road safety over the notoriously dangerous Christmas period.

The plea follows alarming data showing 999 lives have been lost so far on Australian roads, 7.1 per cent higher than in 2021<sup>1</sup>. Last year, 200 Australians were tragically killed on the nation's roads between December and January - a 4.7 per cent increase on the year prior.

These lives were commemorated with a powerful display at Hickson Road Reserve today with 200 Christmas presents laid, each representing a life lost on the roads across December and January last year and marked with the age and gender of the victim.

Tracy Blake, mother of 21-year-old Mackenzie who sadly died on a New South Wales road last November said Christmas will forever be marred with sadness and grief.

"Every day without Mackenzie is a struggle, but it definitely intensifies on milestones like Christmas when we feel the loss without her presence the most," Ms Blake said.

"I am sharing my story because as a society we need to wake up to how desensitised we are when it comes to road safety and do better. We need all individuals to stop making choices that put lives at risk, to stop turning a blind eye when we see others making choices that put lives at risk, and we need tighter regulation around banned drivers registering vehicles."

"Please don't be the reason there is forever an empty chair at the table or that any celebration is overshadowed by the absence of one so loved," she said.

The ARSF expressed particular concern over the changing nature of road fatalities during the last Christmas period, which saw the majority of road trauma occur during the day (61 per cent).

Speaking to the statistics, ARSF founder and CEO Russell White said the data suggested an increase in dangerous or underprepared driving.

"In the past, we've seen a higher incidence of fatal crashes occur at night when external risk factors are heightened, such as decreased vision and driving under the influence," Mr White said.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communication, BITRE Road Deaths Database, accessed 14 November 2022

“It’s worrying to see the tables turn on this trend, and when paired with an increase in lives lost this year, suggests that Australians are becoming more complacent on our roads than previously.”

Mr White reinforced ARSF’s plea for motorists to take extra care over the holiday period as it is one of the most dangerous times on the road.

“Tragically, we’ve already lost more than 999 lives to road trauma this year. That’s a thousand families spending their first Christmas without a loved one,” Mr White said.

“Data shows that not enough Australians are focused on road safety, with 60% of road users defining it as simply obeying road rules, rather than taking responsibility for preventing injury or death when using the road<sup>2</sup>.”

“We urge Australians to take extra care when travelling this holiday period as Christmas should be a time of love and laughter, not loss of life.”

GIO Brand Ambassador and Paralympic gold medallist Ryley Batt OAM has joined forces with ARSF this year to help reduce road trauma over the Christmas period, a problem he says extends far beyond fatalities.

“For every life claimed on the road, it’s estimated that another 30 victims are hospitalised - meaning there are tens of thousands of people also facing horrific and often permanent injury, illness or disability,” Mr Batt said.

Executive Manager of Suncorp CTP Dan Wilkinson said the company was proud to support the Australian Road Safety Foundation on this important campaign.

“We are committed to tackling road safety and working together with Australian Road Safety Foundation to get the safe driving behaviours message out to more Australians. We know through our claims experience that road related accidents can happen, but many of them are avoidable. Our teams are always there to support our customers in their time of need, but over Christmas we hope that it won’t be a busy time for them,” Mr Wilkinson said.

“Everyone has a part to play when it comes to reducing the impact of road trauma. We hope this campaign is a reminder for Australian road users and that we can all help make our roads safer this Christmas.”

In the lead-up to Christmas, ARSF invites road users to make a personal promise to be the change they want to see on the road by choosing road safety over the holiday period.

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<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

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:**

Frances Milvydas | 0431 296 499 | [frances@inthemaking.com.au](mailto:frances@inthemaking.com.au)

**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.