

Media Release

Embargoed until 10.00am Friday, 28 April

AUSTRALIAN ROAD USERS IMploRED TO WAVE IN A FATALITY-FREE FUTURE

Amidst climbing road deaths, new research highlights the possibility to create change and save lives

Following a six per cent increase in annual road deaths,¹ the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) has released new research detailing the attitudes and actions that may help prevent further tragedy.

The ARSF research², released to launch its annual Fatality Free Friday initiative, has reported a number of alarming insights including a rise in road aggression combined with continued bad behaviour and a decline in common road etiquette such as the ‘thank you wave.’

Most alarmingly, half of Australians (50%) have reported higher levels of aggression on the roads over the past year, and almost half of these say the increase has been “significant.”

Additionally, 62 per cent of the Australian population admit they make dangerous decisions when using the road.

Of significant concern was the fact that more than 5 in 10 drivers are speeding, more than 4 in 10 are using a mobile phone and more than 1 in 10 are getting behind the wheel under the influence of drugs and / or alcohol.

However, ARSF chief executive officer and founder Russell White said that within the new research was also encouraging statistics showing the life-saving potential of further education and simple change.

“When confronted with the road toll numbers, more than three-quarters (76%) of Australians admitted it made them think or act safer, which means keeping the conversation going can and will make a difference,” Mr White said.

¹ 2021 versus 2022 total road fatalities, sourced from Deaths in Australia, Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (accessed 15 March)

² Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of Australian Road Safety Foundation between 3-9 March 2022 with a sample size of n=1,016 adults aged 18+ years

“The vast majority (85%) of Australians recognise that it’s individual road users who can have the biggest impact, so our job now is to help people understand that it’s not just the big choices that have grave consequences.”

According to the research, 95 per cent of Australian road users believed a simple ‘thank you wave’ could contribute to improved road safety. Sadly, more than half (55%) believed this symbolic gesture of road kindness was on a sharp decline across the country.

Mr White said the ARSF is calling on Australians to bring back the all-important ‘thank you wave’ as a kickstart to spreading a culture of sharing the road.

“We want all Australians to put their hand up for road safety, and in doing so, help combat rising aggression, remind other road users that their decisions impact more than just themselves and inspire safer road choices,” he said.

The call comes as ARSF commences its annual Fatality Free Friday initiative, which is one of the nation’s largest community-based road safety campaigns.

Chelsea Wellman, whose brother Koby did not survive a head-on collision last year has joined the call for road users to be proactive in ensuring that they arrive safely at their destination.

“You don’t think it will happen to you until it does,” Ms Wellman said.

“Koby had everything going for him and was building himself a wonderful life but speeding and distraction has taken him from us, taken him from his friends and his community forever”.

“I hope that in hearing Koby’s story, more people will understand the importance of their choices in getting home safely and preventing others from the grief we’ve endured since his passing,” she said.

Fatality Free Friday operates on the belief that if we can go one day without a death on the road, we can create a long-lasting culture that will drive us towards a fatality-free future, ultimately saving thousands and thousands of lives.

This road safety messaging is reiterated by Suncorp's Executive General Manager for CTP Claims, Ms Alicia Tsois. Ms Tsois and her teams see the impact of road accidents on injured road users and their families, 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 accept when we travel on the road".

"Suncorp is proud to support ARSF and we join them to call on all road users to consider how they behave when using the road, as a driver, passenger, cyclist or pedestrian", said Ms Tsois.

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

- ENDS -

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

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.