

**MEDIA RELEASE**

26 May 2023

**ROAD SAFETY AUTHORITY DRIVING CHANGE TOWARDS A FATALITY FREE FUTURE***Fatality Free Friday urging road users to change their behaviours and attitudes to prevent tragedy*

To curb the alarming rates of death and injury on our roads, the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is imploring road users to wave in a fatality free future by choosing road safety this Fatality Free Friday (26 May).

Last year, 1,193 people were killed on our nation's roads, this is a six per cent increase in deaths compared to the year before (2021).<sup>1</sup> The national death toll has continued to increase, up 4.3 per cent in the last 12 months as of April 2023.<sup>2</sup>

New research conducted by the ARSF has revealed a rise in bad behaviours behind the wheel and increased aggression on our roads, which is also concurrent with a decrease in basic road etiquette such as the simple 'thank you wave'.

As high as 50 per cent of Australians have reported an increase in aggression on the roads and almost half of these say the increase in aggression has been 'significant'.

Additionally, almost half (46%) of Australians say safety isn't always top of their mind when they are using the road.<sup>3</sup>

The research also revealed that 85 per cent of Australians believe it is the individual road users that have the biggest impact, yet 62 per cent of people still admit to taking risks.<sup>4</sup>

These attitudes and behaviours are why Fatality Free Friday – one of the nation's largest community road safety initiatives – implores road users to choose road safety and wave in a fatality free future.

ARSF Chief Executive Officer and Founder Russell White said that Fatality Free Friday is a starting point for all road users to change their attitudes and behaviours around safety on the roads to avoid further tragedy from occurring in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Deaths in Australia, Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (accessed 15 March)

<sup>2</sup> Road Deaths, 12 Month Total, Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts.

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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

“We need to work together as a nation to create a cultural shift focused on choosing road safety and sharing the roads with one another, remembering that our individual choices impact the lives of many people,” said Mr White.

“Each number you see on the road toll represents a life, someone who was tragically taken away from their loved ones. What you don’t see are those left with lifelong injuries and the families, friends and first responders who are left to deal with the grief.”

“There are simple steps we can take together to create safer roads. Removing distractions when driving and doing a simple gesture, like the thank you wave, can reduce aggression and risky behaviours on our roads,” Mr White said.

To further this, the new research shows that 95 per cent of Australian road users believe that the simple ‘thank you wave’ can contribute to improved road safety. However, more than half (55%) believe that this gesture is on a sharp decline across the nation.<sup>5</sup>

“We are imploring all road users to choose road safety and wave in a fatality free future this Fatality Free Friday,” he said.

This sentiment was echoed by Chelsea Wellman, the sister of Koby Wellman who was tragically killed on our roads last year.

“It took mere seconds to lose someone we love, we now have to live without him for the rest of our lives,” Ms Wellman said.

“You never think it is going to be you, until it is,” said Ms Wellman.

“Koby was a teacher aid with future plans of becoming a teacher, his dreams will never come true”.

“I want to encourage everyone to choose road safety. Don’t let yourself get distracted, don’t speed, just focus on getting home safely,” said Ms Wellman.

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

Now in its 16th year, Fatality Free Friday asks road users to make a promise 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 millions of Australians over the past month.

Suncorp Group is a long-time supporter of ARSF including Fatality Free Friday. As one of Australia’s largest insurers, Suncorp Insurance urges road users to embrace a safety first mindset when using our roads.

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<sup>5</sup> 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

This messaging is reiterated by Suncorp's Executive General Manager for CTP Claims, Ms Alicia Tsolis. Ms Tsolis 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 Tsolis.

The national day of action will include banding together at Martin Place in Sydney with seven people who have lost a loved one to road trauma and calling on passersby to commit to being a piece of the puzzle as we all work together to solve road safety.

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

- ENDS -

**Assets:**

- [Video News Release](#)
- [Fatality Free Friday imagery](#)

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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.