

Park the rage to curb rise of toll

By Evangeline Polymeneas

The Advertiser

Saturday 13th May 2023

449 words

Page 37 | Section: NEWS

300cm on the page



Park the rage to curb rise of toll

Evangeline Polymeneas

Elise Kennedy was 20 and newly engaged when she became a quadriplegic after a horrific crash near the Victorian border in 2013.

On Friday she became the face of a new road safety campaign that aims to slow the growth of the state's disastrous road toll – 49 fatalities compared to 28 at the same time last year – in part by highlighting increasing numbers of road rage incidents.

Ms Kennedy was a passenger with her now-husband Luke, heading to his farm, when a car travelling too fast and on the wrong side of the road smashed into their Jeep.

She regained consciousness in the Royal Adelaide Hospital's ICU on life support.

"I was on breathing tubes, ventilator, oxygen ... feeding tube,"

she said.

"I had my mum sitting next to me and I just couldn't talk to her, I couldn't communicate, I didn't know how else other than to point to my (ring) finger to ask 'how's Luke?'"

The pair were in ICU for weeks and Ms Kennedy spent eight months in Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre.

The now 30-year-old, who has dedicated her life to telling her story through the Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth program, on Friday helped launch the Australian Road Safety Foundation's Fatality Free Friday campaign.

Emphasising the devastating long-lasting affects of road trauma, she said there were still days "I don't want to get out of bed".

"(But) if all of the crap that I've been through can impact just one

young person ... that'll make it worth it," she said.

The foundation is urging everyone to think of road safety as a giant puzzle where the decisions of each person are a piece that can help solve it. Foundation chief executive Russell White said: "You don't think it will happen to you until it does."

New survey data from the foundation shows just over half of South Australians have noticed an increase in road rage over the past year. The same proportion report that drivers' courtesy 'thank you' waves are dying out. Almost 90 per cent of drivers care about thank you waves but only a third say they do it themselves whenever they are in the car.

Royal Adelaide Hospital trauma director Dan Ellis said telling the families of the patients that do not make it is "the hardest" aspect of the job.

"You can't take any time out, you have to go in with another colleague and you have to deliver that news and that's crushing for us," Associate Professor Ellis said.

"The fact it's happening twice as frequently now is really, really sad."



Elise Kennedy. Picture: Greg Adams

