

Media Release

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HORROR YEAR ON AUSTRALIA'S ROADS PROMPTS A HEIGHTENED PLEA FOR CHRISTMAS SAFETY

Australian Road Safety Foundation implores road users to do their part to make it home for the holidays

Australian road users are being called upon to help save lives over the notoriously dangerous Christmas period, following a 6.5 per cent rise in road fatalities over the past 12 months.¹

More than 1,042 road fatalities have been recorded on Australian roads this year, which means more than 1,042 families will be facing their very first Christmas without a loved one.

The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) has issued the plea with a powerful installation in Brisbane – a festive dinner table featuring 36 empty chairs, each representing a life tragically taken over the 12-day Christmas period (23 December to 3 January) last year.

ARSF Founder and CEO Russell White said while he was alarmed by the number of road users taking risks, it demonstrated the potential for individuals to collectively make a real difference in preventing tragedy.

“Our research showed that more than six in ten road users admit to taking risks on the road, risks that can very well be the difference between life and death²,” Mr White said.

“When so many of the road crashes recorded are entirely preventable, it’s almost unfathomable that the majority of road users continue to put themselves and those around them at risk.

“Every death on the road is a tragedy, and those losses are so often heightened over the holiday season, which should be a time of love and laughter, not sadness and grief,” he said.

ARSF emphasised the role all road users play in preventing road trauma, which impacts more than just those behind the wheel of a car.

In fact, of the 36 road fatalities recorded last Christmas period, less than half (44%) were drivers. A quarter were passengers (25%), almost one in five (19%) were motorcyclists and more than one in ten (11%) were pedestrians.

Males accounted for three in five of the road deaths recorded over last Christmas.

¹ Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Road Deaths Monthly Bulletin, October 2023

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 and over

Executive General Manager of CTP, Matt Pearson said Suncorp Group was proud to support the Australian Road Safety Foundation on this timely and vital campaign.

“We are committed to tackling road safety and working together with the Australian Road Safety Foundation to get the safe driving behaviours message out to more Australians. Unfortunately, there are too many Australian families missing loved ones at end of year celebrations this year due to the loss of life we have seen on the roads throughout 2023. We know through our claims experience that no driver deliberately sets off looking for a crash, but every time someone speeds, picks up their mobile phone, or drives tired or inhibited it increases the risk. Our teams are always there to support our customers in their time of need, but we urge all drivers using our roads these holidays to take extra care and keep their wits about them, so they don’t become another crash statistic,” Mr Pearson 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 all Australian road users and that we can make our roads safer this holiday period.”

In the lead-up to Christmas, ARSF is asking road users to choose road safety – to take responsibility for themselves and others, obey the road laws and adopt practical principles to protect lives, ensuring the following behaviours:

- **As a driver:** being fit to drive, driving to suit the conditions, staying focused and taking regular breaks
- **As a passenger:** avoid distracting the driver, being a ‘second pair of eyes’ and only travelling with someone who is fit to drive
- **As a cyclist or motorcyclist:** being as visible as possible, wearing protective clothing and a helmet as well as avoiding distractions
- **As a pedestrian:** being as visible as possible, staying alert and aware of road users around you and avoiding being distracted by devices

For further information about the Australian Road Safety Foundation, or how to support festive road safety activity, visit [arsf.com.au](https://www.arsf.com.au).

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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 outcomes and reducing the rates of death and the mental and physical injuries that result from road crashes. It achieves this through innovative road safety awareness programs, education, advocacy, research and community engagement.