



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW RESEARCH SHEDS LIGHT ON THE RISKS FUELLING A RISE IN REGIONAL ROAD INCIDENTS

South Australian road users implored to sow the seeds of change this Rural Road Safety Month

Following an alarming 52 per cent increase in fatal crashes on South Australian rural roads last year¹, the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) has released research to help drive down the heightened risk in regional areas.

Conducted as part of the launch of this year's Rural Road Safety Month (September), the new ARSF data² has shown that an alarming trifecta of individual attitudes towards risk, consequence and overall lack of rural road safety resilience may be fuelling fatal and serious incidents.

Despite being less populated areas, over half (57%) of fatalities recorded in South Australia last year (67 deaths) occurred on regional roads, reaffirming the ARSF's stance that rural road safety is a cause for state concern, no matter where drivers may call home.

According to the latest ARSF research, more than 9 in 10 South Australian drivers (96%) have used the regional, rural and remote road network within the past 12 months and a similar number (89%) plan to over the coming year.

Alarmingly, the ARSF's research confirmed that almost two-thirds of South Australians (64%) admit to unsafe driving practices on rural roads. Nearly half (47%) admitted to speeding on country roads, 25 per cent acknowledged driving despite feeling fatigued, and 19 per cent are guilty of using a mobile phone behind the wheel.

Notably, Adelaide-based drivers are more likely to disregard rural road safety, with almost 3 in 10 (28%) admitting that they are less vigilant about road safety in regional areas (compared to 23% of local rural drivers).

The primary reason South Australian drivers are breaking laws on regional roads is that they believe it's safe (40%) but distraction (13%) and not getting caught (9%) are also key factors.

¹ Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Road Deaths, Annual Road Deaths Database, Accessed June 2024

² Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of Australian Road Safety Foundation between 5-12 July 2024 with a sample size of n=1504 adults aged 18+years with a current drivers licence



The ARSF research has also shed light on a lack of preparedness for regional road risks with a startling 85 per cent of South Australian drivers failing to check safety guidance before road trips. Additionally, many neglect essential preparations, with 66 per cent not carrying emergency supplies, 48 per cent failing to plan rest stops, and 41 per cent not checking the weather forecast.

Founder and Chair of ARSF, Russell White, said these disheartening statistics around dangerous driver attitudes, behaviour and lack of road safety resilience underscore the critical need for enhanced safety measures as we enter Rural Road Safety Month.

"We are urging all South Australians to prioritise safety, especially during Rural Road Safety Month. By choosing to put safety first and undertaking simple actions, such as planning routes, taking rest breaks, and avoiding distractions, we can prevent death or serious injury on the road," Mr White said.

"That said, our research also unveiled encouraging news for our mission to enhance road safety in regional areas by confirming the positive impact campaigns such as Rural Road Safety Month have on behaviour and attitudes," he said.

More than half (55%) of South Australians recognise their role as individual road users and similarly, more than half (52%) believe that road safety messaging and campaigns can change road safety outcomes. In fact, when it comes to improving their own individual behaviour, 8 in 10 South Australians (80%) say road safety messaging makes them a better road user.

AAMI, a longtime supporter of ARSF and this year's Rural Road Safety Month, reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to road safety. Michael Miller, CEO of Commercial Property and Personal Injury Insurance, said, "AAMI recognises the unique challenges we all face when it comes to road use across Australia. When we look at regional and rural roads, the distances travelled are long, the weather challenging, and the local flora and fauna can become obstacles.

AAMI is committed to being part of the solution for safer roads, and this is why we partner with the Australian Road Safety Foundation. The ARSF provides clear insights into driving behaviours and sets a challenge before us all this September; take individual responsibility to prioritise safety in all road use, in particular, when you use our regional and rural roads be alert and drive to the conditions," said Mr Miller.

Road users looking to help sow the seeds of change are encouraged to share their personal commitment by visiting [Rural Road Safety Month](#) or participating in the virtual pledge via ARSF's Instagram (@ausroadsafety) and Facebook (@fatalityfreefriday) channels.

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About the 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.