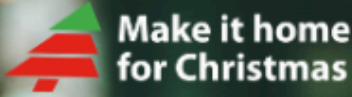


# MEDIA RELEASE

## CHRISTMAS ROAD SAFETY

### DECEMBER 2024



*Give the gift of Road Safety*

## RISING TRAGEDY ON AUSTRALIAN ROADS PROMPTS URGENT CHRISTMAS SAFETY PLEA

**Australian Road Safety Foundation Implores Australians to Give the Gift of Road Safety This Christmas**

Following a concerning 5.6 per cent rise in road fatalities over the past 12 months,<sup>1</sup> the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) is calling on all road users to prioritise safety during the notoriously dangerous Christmas period.

In the last 12 months, 1,288 road fatalities have been recorded on Australian roads, which means 1,288 families will be facing their very first Christmas without a loved one.

ARSF has issued the plea with a poignant installation in Sydney: 39 Christmas wreaths, each representing a life lost during the 12-day Christmas period (23 December 2023 to 3 January 2024) last year.

Last year alone, 215 Australians were tragically killed on the nation's roads between December 2023 and January 2024, marking a 3.4 percent increase from the previous year.

Valerie Whimp, the aunt of Katrina Roberts, who tragically lost her life in April 2022 when her vehicle was struck by an out-of-control truck on the Snowy Mountains Highway, shared how Christmas will always be overshadowed by grief.

“Losing Katrina has left a hole in our lives that no holiday or celebration can fill, especially at Christmas, when her absence is felt the most,” Ms Whimp said.

“I’m sharing our story because we need to change how we think about road safety. Dangerous and careless behaviour on our roads shouldn’t be accepted as part of life. Every driver has a responsibility to be more vigilant. We need to ensure that everyone using the road respects others and is mindful that unexpected dangers can appear,” she said.

ARSF Founder and Chair Russell White expressed concern about alarming research showing that more than two-thirds (68%) of Australian drivers admit to breaking road laws, with 4 in 10 (42%) drivers committing an offence at least monthly.<sup>2</sup>

The top three road laws broken by drivers included speeding (48%), driving fatigued (32%) and using a mobile phone (27%).

1) Australian Government, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Road Deaths Monthly Bulletin, September 2024

2) Research conducted by Pure Profile on behalf of Australian Road Safety Foundation between 12-27 March 2024 with a sample size of n=1513 adults aged 18+years

"The shocking number of drivers breaking road laws is deeply concerning. It's difficult to understand why so many road users continue to take unnecessary risks, putting themselves and others in danger," Mr. White said.

"The fatal five road rule breaches - speeding, driving inhibited, driving fatigued, not wearing a seatbelt and being distracted - are choices that an individual makes," Mr White said.

"Most road crashes are the result of unsafe decisions, so we're urging all Australians to take responsibility, put safety first and help us save thousands of families from the heartache of road trauma this Christmas."

"Every road death is a tragedy, and the loss is even more profound during the holiday season, which should be a time of celebration, not mourning," he added.

However, there is hope for curbing this upward trend in fatalities, the ARSF research indicated the power of heightened road safety awareness has on individual behaviour.

According to the research, 8 in 10 Australians say road safety messages have had a positive impact on their behaviour.

Suncorp Group Executive General Manager of CTP Insurance and Advocacy, Michelle Bain, emphasised the role all road users play in preventing road trauma, which impacts more than just those behind the wheel of a car.

"AAMI Insurance is committed to tackling road safety, which is why our partnership with ARSF is so important. Together we're able to elevate awareness and encourage more Australians to have road safety top of mind," said Michelle Bain.

"As we come into the festive season, a time when more people are taking to the roads, it's a timely reminder that everyone has a part to play in reducing the risk of road trauma."

"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 2024. Our claims teams are also supporting many Australians with a range of injuries caused by accidents that could have been avoided," she added.

"It is AAMI's hope that this campaign is a reminder for all Australian road users to stay safe and mindful of the causes of road trauma so 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)

**- ENDS -**

**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

Frances Milvydas | 0431 296 499 | [frances@inthemaking.com.au](mailto:frances@inthemaking.com.au)

Annabelle McIntyre | 0403 431 899 | [annabelle@inthemaking.com.au](mailto:annabelle@inthemaking.com.au)

**If you or someone you know has been affected by the topics discussed, we encourage you to seek support by contacting:**

- Griefline - 1300 845 745

- Road Trauma Support Group NSW - 1800 808 384