

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW ROAD RISK RESEARCH UNCOVERS AUSSIES SPEEDING SHAME

Australian Road Safety Foundation urges road users to consider domino effect of road trauma

Despite ongoing efforts to educate road users about their role in reducing the devastating impact of road trauma, new research reveals Australians are continuing to undertake risky behaviours on the roads.

Released by the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) in the lead up to the 15th annual Fatality Free Friday initiative (28 May), the research found speeding remains by far the highest broken road rule, with 78 per cent of Australians admitting to being heavy footed.

Surprisingly, females are more likely than their male counterparts to speed, with an alarming 81 per cent of female drivers admitting to the risky behaviour.

The findings also reveal that jaywalking is the second highest road law broken, which shows that it's not just Australian drivers but also pedestrians who need to step up their road safety skills.

Worryingly, more than two thirds of Australians admit to having broken a road rule, with a quarter of people doing so at least once a week.

When it came to the reasons for undertaking these potentially life-threatening behaviours, half of Australian drivers said it was due to inattention (50%), followed by the belief that it was safe to do so (30%).

ARSF founder and CEO Russell White said the research highlights the need for further education around the idea that it's just drivers who suffer the consequences of road risk taking.

"Tragically, 1,108 people lost their lives on Australian roads last year. The research shows that a frightening 84 per cent of road users falsely believe that drivers make up the majority of the road toll, when in actual fact more than half are passengers, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists," Mr White said.

"Individuals have a responsibility to make the right choices when using the roads and it is imperative they understand the devastating consequences their choices can have not just on other road users, but on the wider community.

"That's why this year we're working to increase awareness of the devastating domino effect of road trauma beyond fatalities. The impact of road trauma is far-reaching and does not discriminate. Road users also need to understand the impact on families, friends, schools, workplaces, first responders and emergency services."

As a powerful reminder of the devastating domino effect that road trauma creates, ARSF has partnered with renowned Brisbane artist Ben Craig to design an engaging installation made from thousands of dominoes.

Fortunately, the ARSF is not alone in understanding the importance of education and changes to behaviour, with almost half the population agreeing that this is the best way to prevent road trauma.

The research also reveals we can expect to see far more activity on our roads post-Covid, with one in two Australians more likely to go on long road trips rather than flying this year.

ARSF ambassador and motor racing champion Craig Lowndes said this increased road usage means drivers need to be increasingly vigilant on the roads.

"I know better than most the dangers of a high-powered vehicle, and cannot stress enough that the road is not a race track. There is no excuse for dangerous driving no matter what the driving conditions may look like," Mr Lowndes said.

“The stark reality is that any time you take a risk behind the wheel, you are putting the lives of every motorist, passenger, cyclist and pedestrian around you at risk. Together, we can save precious lives on our roads.”

Federal Member for Wide Bay, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety Llew O'Brien said road safety is everybody's business.

“Every driver needs to be mindful of their responsibility to themselves, their passengers, other road users and the community, every time they get behind the wheel,” Mr O'Brien said.

“This worrying research shows anyone on the road - drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians - all need to take more care.

“Road trauma has far reaching and lasting consequences for everyone involved - and motorists, road users, legislators, vehicle manufacturers and law enforcement each have a role to keep our roads and each other safe.”

Daniel Wilkinson, Executive Manager QLD CTP & ACT MAI, Suncorp, said “as Australia's largest personal injury insurer, Suncorp sees first-hand the life changing impacts of road trauma on our customers, community and staff. By partnering again with the Australian Road Safety Foundation for the Fatality Free Friday campaign, we can work together to reach all Australians to actively reduce the road toll through safe driving behaviours. Road trauma is preventable, if we all consider our own behaviours on the roads and live the pledge to keep our roads safe, we can create safer roads for all Australians.”

The research has been released as the ARSF calls on individuals to #ChooseRoadSafety and demonstrate their commitment to reducing the road toll by taking the Fatality Free Friday pledge.

Taking the pledge means promising to always be fit to drive, stay focused on the road, scan the road ahead, keep a safe distance, and to drive in a way that suits the conditions.

Since its inception in 2007, Fatality Free Friday has grown to become Australia's largest national community based road safety program.

While the target is to have zero fatalities on Australian roads on Friday 28 May, the initiative is much more than just a single day, ultimately aiming for long-term community change.

To take the pledge, visit <https://arsf.com.au/take-the-pledge/>.

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About ARSF:

The Australian Road Safety Foundation 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.