

Road Trauma Statement



RURAL ROAD SAFETY MONTH 2022

Confidential Statement/Not for distribution (embargoed ARSF)

Hello, today I am here with my two sons Rowan & Jordan, because 319 days ago on November 1 last year we became members of the Road Trauma family, when my youngest child and only daughter – Mackenzie was killed.

Mackenzie wasn't in a vehicle; she was walking along the footpath on the Great Western Highway, towards Blaxland railway station to catch the train home after finishing work. At 2.15pm a truck being driven by a disqualified driver mounted the footpath and mowed her down, killing her almost instantly.

Mackenzie was 21 years, 4 months & 12 days young when she was robbed of her life & after almost 2 years of Covid she was just beginning to make plans to follow her dreams. One of these dreams was to follow in her brothers' footsteps & serve her country, she wanted to join the RAAF & become a dog handler – she loved animals & had always wanted to work with them. Eventually her dream was to work with rescue animals.

To know Mackenzie was to love her & love was returned tenfold she had a huge heart, & family, pets & friends were her priority. What Mackenzie didn't realise was, how loved & highly regarded she was by everyone including her colleagues, customers & acquaintances. The community as a whole were devastated along with us with what happened that day, so much so that as Mackenzie made her final journey back through the mountains, many members of the community lined the highway wearing yellow & holding yellow flowers.

Most people thought of Mackenzie as being a shy, quiet person, that was until she got to know & trust you, only then would you see her shell open & witness the bright bubbly girl with a wicked sense of humour. Apart from animals she had a passion for art & she had a gift for sketching, painting & working with clay.

To say Mackenzie was my best friend doesn't even come close to the incredibly special bond we shared. We did most things together & in sharing a love of music we were lucky enough to go to some amazing concerts, we shared a love of photography & enjoyed many road trips together – now my passenger seat is forever empty. For one so young Mackenzie was wise beyond her years, being a sounding board for me & offering incredible support & wise advice. We were nearly always together & friends would say if they saw one of us, they knew the other one wasn't far away. It's hard to put into words what the impact has been after the tragic loss of Mackenzie, every day there is another reality hit that will knock the wind from me.

Road Trauma Statement



Just like coming to the realisation I will never get to be the mother of the bride, I will never get to see her excitement in sharing the news that she is going to be a mum & I will never get to share the experience with her. We have been robbed of sharing that special relationship between adult daughter & mum, I will never again feel that overwhelming fullness in my heart when I come home & see her, I will never again hear the sound of her voice & the music of her laughter. I will never come to terms with being without her.

What happened to Mackenzie that afternoon should never have happened, her right to get home safely was taken from her & she was let down on so many levels – by the government, the judicial system & the person that thought about phoning the police to report their concerns & didn't. Our lives have forever been destroyed & every day I live with the trauma of what happened to my beautiful girl, constantly reliving the events of that afternoon. Every time I see her room she is missing, reminding me of all I have lost.

The ripple effect of that afternoon is far reaching, there is her work colleague that was trying to catch up to her & witnessed what happened. There are those that stopped to render first aid like her brother's friend, he now lives with the grief of being unable to save his mate's little sister. Or one of her closest friends driving past & seeing CPR being performed, to later learn it was Mackenzie. They & the community now live with the aftermath of this tragic afternoon. We also need to acknowledge the effect on first responders who have to attend incidents such as this time & time again, not only are they at the scene & have investigations to complete, witnesses to interview, court dates to attend, too often seeing the offenders receive minimal sentences. Imagine how they feel looking at the families left serving a life sentence.

A question we continued to receive after this horror event was how could this happen? And the truth is. It shouldn't have.

It seems society has become desensitised to road deaths, especially ones that are the result of a criminal act. Why when there are so many road deaths each year do the media not play a bigger part in helping to curb these incidents? When an innocent victim such as my daughter is killed in the manner in which she was killed it should be looked upon as murder. Our children are taught when they are learning to drive that you are in charge of a deadly weapon, yet the laws do not reinforce this.

We are sharing our story today because if you are making a choice that puts lives at risk, we want you to stop. If you see someone you know, making choices that put lives at risk, we want you to stop turning a blind eye, speak out and do what you can do to stop them.

Road Trauma Statement



And we want tighter regulation around banned drivers registering vehicles that will help ensure criminals who are determined to break the law can be stopped before they take a precious life.

The Towards Zero target will never be achieved until everyone of us - individuals, police and government - come together and create the change we need to save lives. Educating all road users with the message having a license is a privilege, not a right or entitlement & the laws are there for every single road user to abide by.

Finally, if you see something on the roads & think you should call the police, just do it - you just may save someone's life. 319 days ago, if that person had made that call like she thought about doing, Mackenzie's life may well have been spared & we would not be standing here today. We would also like to thank our community & local state member Ms Trish Doyle for their constant support in our calls for change & greater pedestrian safety along the highway.

Tracy Blake

Tracy Blake
16 September 2022