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The deadly country road myth: Why locals are more dangerous than city drivers

By [Ben Smyth](#)

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Hundreds of postcards from regional Australia, but devoid of the usual colourful scenery, tell a tragic story of road trauma on our roads.

And hidden in the grey scenes of the usually-picture-perfect destinations is a stark reality – local drivers are actually far more dangerous than city visitors on regional roads.



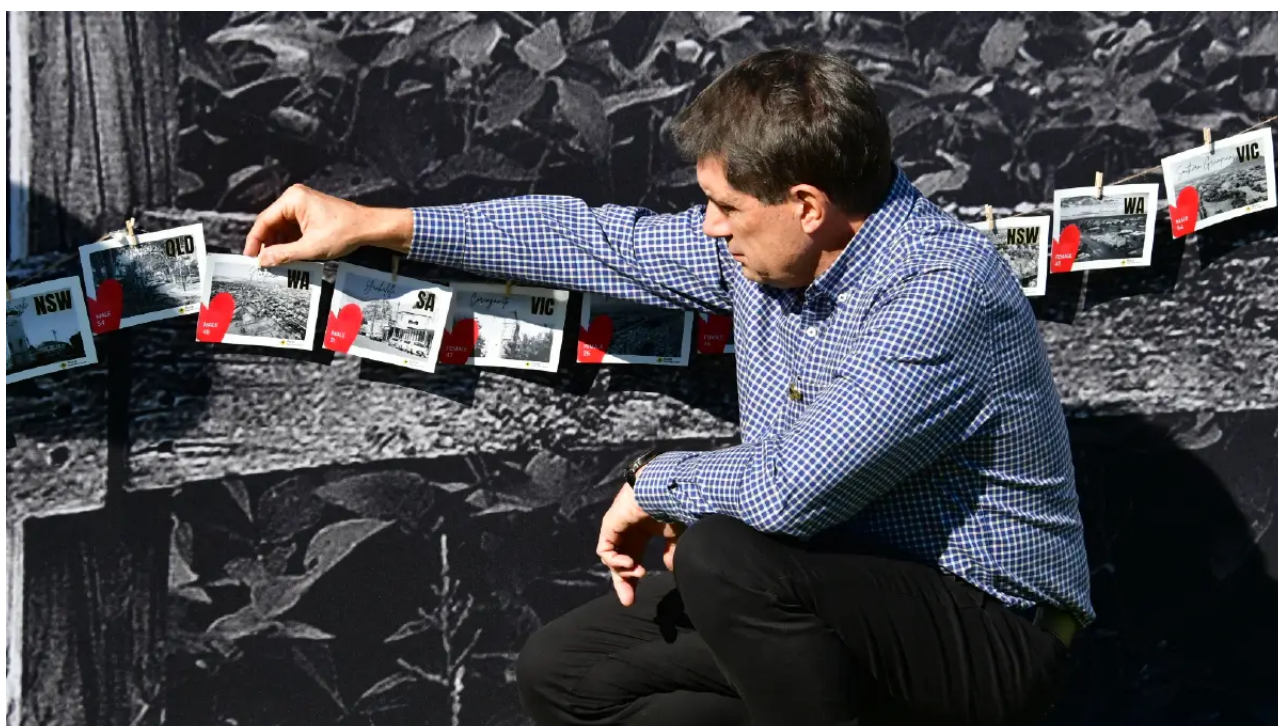
🎥 Australian Road Safety Foundation launches new campaign and research in Merimbula NSW, 31-7-26, Bega District News

The human factor behind the country's road toll was laid bare in Merimbula as the Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) launched its latest research findings and awareness campaign on Friday, July 31.

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Grey postcards, 906 of them, lined the boundary fence of Berrambool Oval, one for each of the lives lost on regional and rural roads in 2025.



📷 ARSF chairman Russell White launches a road safety campaign using 906 grey postcards, one for each person killed on a regional road in 2025. Picture by Ben Smyth

Only splashes of red were included, noting the gender and age of each person killed on the roads at the otherwise picture-perfect postcard

locations.

The 906 lives lost in 2025 was a 10.5 per cent rise on the previous year.

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ARSF founder and chairman Russell White said the latest research laid bare the human factor behind the statistics - "a widespread and misplaced confidence" that regional roads were safer.

"This is a confidence not borne out by reality. While more than a quarter of drivers [27 per cent] think rural roads are safer than city streets, the fact that more than two in every three road deaths [69 per cent] happen in regional areas paints a very different - and stark - picture," he said.



📷 The deadly country road myth: Why locals are more dangerous than city drivers

ARSF's research places the responsibility squarely on human behaviour and the choices made on and around the road.

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The data showed that more than half of all Australian drivers (53 per cent) admit to breaking a road rule on a country road.

On country roads, speeding was the most common offence (36 per cent), followed by driving while fatigued (21 per cent) and using a mobile phone (15 per cent).



📷 At the launch are Eden-Monaro MP Kristy McBain, Russell White, and AAMI representative Michelle Bain. Picture by Ben Smyth

It was often on the most relaxed of journeys, with rule-breaking most common during holiday and recreational travel (23 per cent) and trips to visit friends and family (21 per cent) – the very journeys meant to bring people together.

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Complacency went hand in hand with unpreparedness, too, Mr White said.

Ahead of longer trips, more than six in 10 drivers fail to plan their fuel or where to refuel, almost six in 10 don't check that their vehicle is fit to drive, and more than half don't even check the weather forecast.

And while that may make city drivers seem to be most at fault, it was local country drivers who admitted to the most dangerous habits.

Regional residents are more likely to speed in regional areas than those who live in the city (45 per cent compared to 30), and also more likely to get behind the wheel tired (25 per cent versus 19).



📷 Russell White said complacency behind the wheel is a killer and road safety is the responsibility of everyone. Picture by Ben Smyth

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Mr White said every driver, everywhere, had a part to play in preventing more deaths and debilitating injuries on regional roads.

"Make no mistake, the majority of crashes come down to human fault - whether you live in the city, the regions or the bush, every single road user makes choices that can have deadly consequences," Mr White said.

"And it's not just reckless, high-risk driving. The majority of rural crashes happen in broad daylight, on an ordinary weekday, in a single vehicle - on the kind of everyday drive every one of us makes.

"Every one of those 906 people killed on rural roads last year was heading somewhere - a father picking up a child from school, a daughter heading to the movies, a partner popping out to grab milk.

"Our job this Rural Road Safety Month is to make sure more journeys end where they're meant to," Mr White said.

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Ben Smyth
Editor



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I have worked as a journalist since 2005 and am now Editor of Australian Community Media mastheads in Bega, Merimbula, Eden, Batemans Bay and Narooma

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A question. Why not move this to the centre of a main street, instead of hiding it at Berrambool Oval, away from the eyes that need to see it? Carp Street in Bega right down near the new sports stadium. In Toallo Street in Pambula? Outside of the council chambers in Bega? Let's not be scared for people to see the tragedy.

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