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STAY SAFE ON THE ROADS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON - AMA

The AMA is urging all Australians to drive safely this holiday season.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that the tragic reality is that doctors and nurses in emergency departments see too many victims of avoidable road accidents over the Christmas/New Year period.

“Every holiday season, too many Australians experience road trauma or lose their lives on roads,” Professor Owler said.

“The holiday season sees more people on the road on their way to parties, holidays, and family get-togethers, so the risk to drivers, riders, passengers, and pedestrians is greater than normal.

“Carefully planning trips and safer driving could mean the difference between a family outing and a family tragedy.

“Anyone travelling long distance over the holiday period should take their time, have regular breaks, and don’t drive if they’re feeling tired.

“If you’re a passenger and you think the driver is tired, driving too fast, or being distracted, assist them in making the right decision.

Professor Owler praised the police and government road safety strategies that have helped reduce the incidence of road trauma.

“The road toll in Australia is decreasing thanks to the efforts of Australia’s police and the strategies used to stop drink driving and speeding, but the onus is always on those behind the wheel or riding a motorbike to obey the road rules,” Professor Owler said

“It’s not just motorists who must take extra care during the holiday season. Pedestrians, cyclists and anyone travelling on our roads need to be aware that the holiday season is a time of heightened risk.

“Every Christmas, doctors, emergency workers, paramedics, and others witness the consequences of road trauma.

“Over the holiday season, everyone using our roads needs to be aware that this should be a time of celebration, relaxation and enjoyment.

“All road users must be aware of their behaviour, obey the road rules, and most importantly, *don’t rush.*”

The AMA has some simple tips for safer road travel:

- allow extra time when travelling on major or busy roads;
- be extra cautious on roads that you are not familiar with;
- drive to the weather conditions - with extended periods of heat or rain, road conditions can change;
- make sure your vehicle is in good working order, and always check tyre pressure, water, and oil;

- if you're driving a 4WD, always exercise caution and responsibility when driving 'off road';
- never respond to text messages, and it is safest not to use your mobile phone when driving, even as 'hands free';
- don't drive defensively, or engage in threatening or aggressive road rage behaviour;
- take regular breaks and, if possible, rotate driving, and don't drive for extended periods; and
- don't rush - make sure you have plenty of time to get to your destination.

"The AMA wants everyone to have a safe and enjoyable holiday, and to start 2016 in good health," Professor Owler said.

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