MEDIA RELEASE

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS RACS

Drive with care this Christmas season

20 December 2019

Huge bushfires, extreme temperatures, a decade of drought in some states, and the White Island volcano tragedy bookend 2019 in Australia and New Zealand.

“Don’t let death and serious injury on our roads add further heartache at this festive time of year.

Speeding, driving distracted, driving fatigued, or driving drug or alcohol affected contribute to the frequent seasonal spike of preventable injury from road crashes,” said Dr John Crozier, Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Trauma Committee.

In Australia, according to recent figures from the department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development there has been a 2.5 per cent increase in road fatalities over the past twelve months.

“There has been a massive spike in deaths on Victorian roads in 2019. South Australia experienced its worst year on the roads in almost a decade.”

In New Zealand, road crash death and serious injury rates have dramatically risen over the last three years. Fifty-one motor cycle riders have been killed so far this year, the highest number in five years.

During 2019 in New Zealand, the starkest peak of road deaths involved road users between 40 and 59 years of age. 106 people in this age range were killed, compared with 82 for the whole of the previous year – the highest number of people aged between 40-59 in the last five years.

Dr Crozier also said that 2020 is an important year for Australian governments as the *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* draws to a close.

“Each year across Australia, more than 1,200 people are killed and 44,000 are hospitalised due to crashes. That is the equivalent of the population of a medium-sized country town, seriously injured each year.

“We are in significant breach of conservative targets set under the terms of the *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020”*– both with respect to death, but also, critically, with respect to serious injury from road crashes.

“As we approach 2020, we need to draw a line and recalibrate. We must do better. The greatest gift that we can all give ourselves and our loved ones this Christmas is to take care on our roads, and commit to zero fatalities on our roads in 2020.”

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