

Media Release

Drive with care this festive season

23 December 2020

In a year where huge bushfires and COVID-19 have dominated headlines, surgeons have urged drivers not to 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.

“Surgeons see the carnage from road crashes daily. In the past year alone 1132 have died in road crashes and another 39,404 people have been admitted to hospital with road injuries. That is the equivalent of the population of a medium-sized country town, killed or seriously injured just this year alone.

“Alarming in November alone, as restrictions eased in Australia, we saw a 7.5 per cent increase in the number of road deaths compared with the average November figures over the previous five years.

“We have seen a similarly disturbing trend in New Zealand. As an example, Otago experienced its worst year on the roads in almost fifteen years and has seen a rise over the past month. We also saw another rise in the number of motorcycle deaths in 2020 compared to 2019.”

Dr Crozier praised the leadership of Australia and New Zealand during the COVID-19 pandemic and said that he hoped a similar approach would be adopted towards road safety in 2021.

“The New Zealand Government and governments across Australia are to be commended for the way they have responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A similar response is required to the epidemic that is road trauma.

“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 2021, 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 2021.”

ENDS

Media enquiries: Mark Morgan, Policy and Communications Officer: 0488 218 009

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery. www.surgeons.org