



Media Release

Friday 27 March 2015

We need to talk about the elephant in the Wheatbelt

RAC today launched the next stage of a five year campaign to highlight the Wheatbelt's unacceptable road safety record by committing \$3 million dollars to raise awareness of the impact of road trauma in the community.

RAC Executive General Manager, Pat Walker, said the Wheatbelt's road fatality rate is consistently and significantly higher than the rest of Western Australia.

"In 2014 the Wheatbelt road fatality rate was 11 times the Perth metropolitan rate, six times the state rate and twice nearby regions. We need to start talking about the elephant in the room," Mr Walker said.

As part of the launch, RAC unveiled a life-sized African elephant sculpture made out of crashed cars as a symbol of the silence on road safety in the Wheatbelt.

"During the past two weeks, the elephant has visited several Wheatbelt towns and was built to drive community discussion about how the Wheatbelt community, road safety bodies, police, local business and Governments can all work together to help save lives on the road and stop serious injuries.

"Western Australia's road safety record is unacceptable. Last year, one person died on WA roads every two days, and nowhere was this fatality rate worse than the Wheatbelt.

"Part of this campaign will also focus on breaking down myths and misconceptions about what is happening over the past few years on regional roads, and replacing these with facts."

A review commissioned by RAC to investigate factors that may be contributing to the disproportionately high number of fatal road crashes in the Wheatbelt found there was no single issue that differentiated this area from any other part of regional WA.

However the facts show last year, 65% of crashes in the Wheatbelt can be attributed to deliberate driver choices, such as speed, drink driving and inattention.

One in three Wheatbelt road victims was not wearing a seatbelt and more than 70% of fatalities were single vehicle run-offs.

"We all have a role to play in addressing the Wheatbelt's road safety record and real change starts with the individual, and must be supported by the community as a whole."

Last year, an independent audit commissioned by RAC and carried out by OPUS International Consulting of three Wheatbelt roads with high crash rates found installing low-cost road safety measures could reduce crashes and potentially save lives.

"With more than \$80 million dollars sitting unspent in the Road Trauma Trust Account and funding available through Royalties for Regions, RAC is calling on the State Government to draw on this money to seriously tackle road safety in the Wheatbelt."

For more information visit elephantinthewheatbelt.com.au

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