



Media Release

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Driver fatigue a Wheatbelt killer

Wheatbelt drivers need to pull over at the first sign of fatigue, with statistics showing that fatigue was a contributing factor in 12 per cent of road deaths in Western Australia last year.

RAC Senior Manager Media and Government Relations Liz Carey said fatigue is a major contributor to vehicle crashes in Western Australia, behind alcohol and speed.

“Fatigue is a silent killer on WA roads. Driving tired slows down your reaction time, makes you agitated and decreases your alertness,” said Ms Carey.

“The reaction time of a driver who has been awake for 17 to 19 hours is similar to the reaction time of a driver with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05.”

The impact of inattention, which includes driving fatigued, is now comparable to the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by speed and drink driving which are all contributors to the Wheatbelt’s tragic road death rate.

In 2013, the RAC launched the [Attention Powered Car](#) to help raise awareness of driver inattention because nationally, it is estimated inattention was a factor in 46% of fatal crashes in 2012.

An international *Health Affairs* study has found that young drivers are more at risk of fatigued driving because they are less likely to pull over.

“Country driving can be particularly dangerous for driver fatigue so we recommend planning your journey and taking a break from driving at least every two hours. You can find many reasons to pull over - grab a coffee, check your tires, fill up your tank or stretch your legs.

“In 2014, WA had 184 road deaths and no region was worse off than the Wheatbelt who lost 26 loved ones. Now is not the time to be complacent. As a community, we need to ensure we do everything we can to help continue to bring the Wheatbelt’s road fatality rate down.”

RAC has embarked on a five year campaign in the Wheatbelt to break the silence on road safety; the first stage comprising of the Elephant in the Wheatbelt. Made out of wrecked cars, the life-sized African elephant sculpture is touring the Wheatbelt to generate discussion and bring about behaviour change.

Last week, the Elephant in the Wheatbelt and RAC visited local councillors in Cunderdin and Tammin to discuss the Wheatbelt’s concerning fatality rate and generate ideas about how to improve road safety outcomes in the region.

For more information, visit elephantinthewheatbelt.rac.com.au.

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rac.com.au/media