



# Reducing rural road toll

*Submission to*

Senate Inquiry into Aspects of Road Safety in Australia

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Rural Australia lacks a consistent voice promoting road safety.

Each year roughly 60 percent of the Australian road toll occurs outside the capital cities.

It is too easy to dismiss this as inevitable.

While there is copious research into the high death toll on country roads, the message does not filter through to rural residents.

In my experience, the main causes behind the disproportionately high number of tragic road accidents in rural Australia surprise most people.

- **Most deaths on rural roads are not caused by extreme or risky behaviour, but simple mistakes**
- **Complacency, over-confidence, a rural roads "expert" mentality, optimism bias, fatalism and locum of control are big factors**
- **About 70 percent of fatalities on rural roads each year are local residents**

Deaths per 100,000km are highest on isolated rural roads where drivers spend long hours getting to their destination.

Rural Western Australia and the Northern Territory are stand out examples.

Like all drivers, rural people do not like being told they are the problem, so the road safety message has to be carefully crafted and delivered.

A clear, factual, unemotional message on rural road safety, delivered to the heart of country residents by experts, can make a real difference.

A road show on rural road safety could make its way across the country.

These sessions could be held in selected venues and involve local emergency services, service clubs, schools, parents and volunteers.

By showing motorists the full extent of risk without drawing on emotion, graphic footage or horror, drivers have real motivation to protect themselves.

Statistics, quality videos, powerful photographs, demonstrations and crowd involvement could be used during sessions.

A dedicated website on rural road safety could be launched as part of the road show.

The website could provide a continuous stream of information from experts and allow the general public to share their experiences.

Through this approach rural communities can be encouraged take control and look after their own safety on the roads.

Building better roads is only part of the solution.

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