

MEDIA RELEASE

Have you secured the kids?

Monday, 7 January 2019: Researchers from Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) are urging drivers to check child restraints are properly secured before travelling this holiday season. This is particularly important at this time of year when cars are being packed with gifts and holiday gear. Car crashes remain a leading cause of death and disabling injuries – approximately 30 children die as passengers in car crashes every year on Australian roads.

When packing the car, belts tethering car seats for children and babies can accidentally be unlatched to load luggage or position camping gear and sports equipment. Passengers can also inadvertently disengage the seat belt used to tie a child's car seat to the car.

NeuRA Associate Professor Julie Brown said while most children now use the proper restraint for their age, the number of errors in how child restraints are fitted or installed hasn't improved.

"In our studies we see a number of children seriously injured in a crash because they are 'out of position' and the seat belt or restraint is no longer providing good protection," said Associate Professor Julie Brown.

- Children and young people should always be restrained in a seat belt or car seat, no matter how short or long the trip
- A correctly fitted child restraint which is appropriate for the child's age and size can reduce the risk of serious injury or death in road crashes by up to 70 per cent
- To get the full protective effect the restraints need to be installed in the car correctly and the child needs to be secured within the restraint correctly
- Keep an eye on how your children are interacting with their restraint during long journeys, noting the importance of ensuring children keep their arms within the harness of child safety seats
- For children in a seatbelt, it is critical not to lie horizontal across the car with a pillow but rather to keep upright so the seatbelt is positioned over the mid shoulder to provide the best level of crash protection.

Transport industry leader Transurban is partnering with NeuRA to strive for fatality and injury-free roads through funding the Transurban Road Safety Centre.

Group Executive Project Delivery, Tony Adams said Transurban understands the importance of road safety research and the importance of properly installed child car restraints. "Research into child restraints and ensuring they can be easily and correctly secured is pivotal to the work being done at the Transurban Road Safety Centre," said Mr. Adams.

A 2010 study found half of all restraints had errors in how they were used. Some had up to seven errors, ranging from failing to buckle the child in to slackness in the belts and sashes. Most often parents weren't aware they had made a mistake.

A properly-installed and fitted child restraint stops a child moving in a crash, by attaching them to the vehicle's rigid structure. It ensures the force of an impact hits the strongest parts of the body more likely to recover, like bones, instead of internal organs and the brain which may never heal properly. This is also the case for a child wearing a properly fitted seat belt.

Associate Professor Brown cautioned mistakes usually occur one of three ways:

1. When the child seat or restraint is installed or a restraint is moved from one car to another
2. When a carer puts a child in the car (for instance, any slack in a seatbelt or harness – if you can pinch some fabric between your fingers it is too loose – may allow the child to move during the crash)
3. Errors caused by a child who may take an arm out of the restraint or fiddle with the sash.

For more tips on safer driving this holiday season, visit <http://kidsafe.com.au>

Digital content available:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UwcQWRIRXZr2Qm8qDpztryKCVoEpW3Kv>

- Video with Associate Professor Julie Brown
- Selection of images

Please note the NeuRA media and communications unit is closed until Monday, 7 January.

Transurban Road Safety Centre:

Housed at NeuRA's headquarters in Randwick and funded by Transurban, the Transurban Road Safety Centre combines world-class research with state-of-the-art facilities. It includes a crash test sled capable of reaching real-life crash speeds and cameras that can record up to 1200 frames per second, allowing researchers to see what occurs in collisions.

Transurban overview:

An Australian-owned company that builds and operates toll roads in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, as well as in Greater Washington, United States and Montreal, Canada.

Transurban design roads for the long term, ensuring they'll deliver real and lasting benefits to cities and their communities.

They also research and develop innovative tolling and transport technology that makes travel easier for everyone.

NeuRA overview:

Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) is an independent, not-for-profit research institute based in Sydney, Australia. As a leader in brain and nervous system research, our goal is to prevent, treat and cure brain and nervous system diseases, disorders and injuries through medical research.

