

MEDIA RELEASE

16 December 2021

A Safe Drive Saves Our Wildlife – drivers urged to take care this summer!

Wildlife Victoria, the state's wildlife emergency response service, has launched a new campaign encouraging drivers to slow down and remain alert on the roads throughout the summer holidays.

The '*A Safe Drive Saves Our Wildlife*' advertising campaign launched this week and is being supported by the Transport Accident Commission.

Every year, thousands of native animals die on our roads. In the past 12 months, Wildlife Victoria has been called to assist more than 8,000 native animals involved in road related incidents. The top three species involved were Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Swamp Wallabies and Wombats.

Wildlife Victoria CEO, Lisa Palma, said the not-for-profit organisation was anticipating a deadly summer on the roads.

"We are already seeing wildlife related road trauma increasing year on year with the urban spread creeping into the natural habitat of our native animals. On top of that, a great deal of habitat was wiped out during the State's last devastating bushfires.

"It's becoming more and more common to see native animals foraging for food alongside roadside verges between dusk and dawn," she said.

TAC Head of Road Safety Samantha Cockfield said this summer would be a busy time on Victorian roads, with people catching up with loved ones and holidaying in their home state.

"It is such an important time for Victorians to be extra vigilant on the roads and heed the message, particularly with people driving longer distances on high-speed roads," Ms Cockfield said.

"There are so many reasons to slow down and take care and that includes wildlife, regional roads see the most incidents, and we'd urge people to be wary when they see animal warning signage, particularly at high-risk times at dusk or in the evening.

Between 2011 and 2020, 11 people were killed on Victorian roads in crashes that involved an animal strike – the majority of those involved kangaroos, wallabies or wombats. In the same period, more than 1,500 people were injured in a crash where an animal was involved.

"Hitting a large animal, such as a kangaroo or wombat, while travelling at high speed can have tragic results.", Ms Cockfield said.

In most cases the animal does not survive or is severely injured and must be euthanised.

Roadkill impacts the Australian environment by wiping out more than four million mammals and six million birds, reptiles and other creatures a year. Kangaroos, wombats, wallabies and emus are most at risk on our roads, but drivers are also asked to look out for birds, possums, lizards and echidnas while driving.

Reducing speed reduces the risk of all types of collisions, including hitting animals on the road, so drivers are urged to slow down in areas where wildlife is active. Just a 5km per hour reduction in speed can lead to at least a 15% decrease in crashes.

Ms Palma concluded that drivers needed to be aware that when they were travelling on outer urban and regional roads, they were travelling through the home of our wildlife.

Wildlife Victoria thanked TAC for its significant support in committing resources to the campaign. The not for profit also thanked the many media outlets who had provided advertising space at no cost to Wildlife Victoria.

Campaign supporters include:

- TV Channels - Seven, Ten and SBS,
- Radio stations - ARN, Nine Radio, NOVA, SEN, JOY FM, Vision Australia Radio, TRSN, LEBA & SBS,

- Out of home advertisers - JC Decaux, oOh!, QMS, TMS and Val Morgan Outdoor and
- Press - NewsCorp & Nine, ACM, BOFB, RMC.

How to avoid a collision

- Stay alert and drive carefully through the home of our wildlife. If you know you are in an area where there is wildlife, stay focused on the road. Be aware that wildlife may be grazing on the roadside.
- Reduce speed so that you can increase your reaction time, should wildlife come onto the road.
- Be especially careful driving between dusk and dawn. This is a very dangerous time to be driving. Much of Australia's wildlife will be out foraging for food.
- Take care when leaving new housing estates that are situated near native habitat. Many of the wildlife related road accidents reported to Wildlife Victoria happen in areas where humans and animals are sharing nearby living spaces.
- Pay attention to yellow road signs that indicate wildlife in the area.
- If you see an animal near the road, slow down, and prepare to brake if needed.
- If you are driving at night in rural areas, use your high beam headlights for better sight, and watch for reflecting eyes.
- Take it extra slow when road visibility is poor.
- Be aware of smaller animals such as birds, echidnas, possums and reptiles.

What to do if you have a collision

- If you do have a wildlife collision, pull over to a safe spot, put on your hazard lights and check to make sure everyone in your vehicle is safe.
- Take note of the street address or nearby landmarks to enable emergency support workers to find the location.
- If anyone is injured call an ambulance on '000'.
- Telephone Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service on (03) 8400 7300, or you can lodge a report via the Wildlife Victoria website www.wildlifelivictoria.org.au to get help for the animal. Even if the animal appears to be unharmed and has hopped or moved away, it will be injured.
- Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service can help. Volunteer rescuers can be dispatched to check the animal's condition
- A life-saving pouch check is so important. If the animal is deceased or injured there may be a joey in its pouch that has survived the impact. A joey can survive in a pouch for several days after its mother has died. Alternatively, the joey may have left its mother's pouch but still be nearby.
- If the animal is deceased and on the road, please take time to move it to the side of the road (if safe to do so). By doing this, you are removing the hazard for other drivers and ensuring that other animals will not be injured while feeding on the carcass.

More details

The advertisement can be seen here <https://youtu.be/vY90UW2yEQc>

Or visit www.wildlifelivictoria.org.au/drive-safely for more information

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For further information and enquiries contact:

Media phone 0477 193 121 or media@wildlifelivictoria.org.au

About Wildlife Victoria

- Wildlife Victoria is a not-for-profit wildlife Emergency Response Service that has been operating for more than 30 years as an independent, not-for-profit organisation focused on the welfare of Australia's unique wildlife.
- This year, Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service received more than 100,000 requests for assistance and supported almost 90,000 sick, injured or orphaned native animals.
- Wildlife Victoria educates the community about wildlife, and helps the community manage wildlife incidents.
- Wildlife Victoria advocates for wildlife whenever their welfare is under threat or compromised.