



Media Release

Major medical bodies campaign against NT open speed limit trial

17 January, 2014

Four major medical groups representing more than 50,000 medical professionals across Australia today joined forces to campaign against the Northern Territory (NT) Government's open speed limit trial on a 200km section of the Stuart Highway scheduled to commence 1 February.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), The Australian Medical Association (AMA) NT and The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) are campaigning in response to shared concerns over the significant dangers to motorists and pedestrians posed by the trial and are calling for it to be scrapped.

Chair of the RACP NT Committee Dr Christine Connors said that there is a comprehensive body of evidence demonstrating enforced speed limits decreased motor vehicle crashes and fatalities, and is urging the NT Government to consider evidence-based measures to safely manage speed in the Territory.

"World-wide, open-speed limits have been removed from a majority of areas because of strong evidence linking speed to car crashes, deaths and injuries," Dr Connors said.

"The NT government is not fulfilling their responsibility to the community as signatory to the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, which is committed to reducing road trauma."

Chair of the ACEM NT Faculty, Dr Stephen Gourley said: "The remoteness of most Northern Territory roads, and the distance from emergency services and emergency medical care compound the risk to motor vehicle accident victims who have sustained serious injuries. The Territory already endures 2.5 times the national average road trauma cases per capita, and leads Australia, in terms of overall trauma cases. Removal of current road speed limits will ensure these statistics worsen."

RACS NT Regional Chair, Dr Patrick Bade said: "Just one speed-related death on that section of highway during the trial will be too high-a-price to pay for political expediency."

In an open letter to the Chief Minister, the groups also called on the NT Government to release the reports commissioned to determine the efficacy of an open speed limit trial.

"The RACP has provided concrete evidence to the NT Government linking speed with increased fatalities in the Territory and the Government has said that the reasons for this trial are evidence-based, yet it will not publicly release the reports cited as evidence supporting the trial," Dr Connors said.

"There is no evidence to support the trial and it should be scrapped."

According to 2012 annual statistics, per-capita, NT roads are responsible for more road fatalities and major injury than any other State or Territory in Australia. The NT's poor road conditions are also a safety factor, as highlighted in the Australian Automobile Associations' AusRAP 2013 report.

Prior to the introduction of speed limits on certain roads in 2007, NT had the highest per-capita fatality rate across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and twice the Australian average. In 2012, 39 per cent of all NT road fatalities and serious injuries were attributed to speed.

Ends

To join the Twitter discussion use the hashtag **#noopenspeedlimit**

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Follow the RACS on Twitter: [RACSurgeons](#)

Follow ACEM on Twitter: [ACEM](#)

Follow the AMA on Twitter: [AMA Media](#)

About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 14,300 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 6,500 Trainee members across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 32 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au

About The Australian Medical Association (AMA): The AMA is the peak membership organisation representing the registered medical practitioners (doctors) and medical students of Australia. The AMA promotes and protects the professional interests of doctors and the health care needs of patients and communities. www.ama.com.au

About The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS): The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS), formed in 1927, is a bi-national non-profit organisation training surgeons and maintaining surgical standards in Australia and New Zealand. The College's purpose is to be the unifying force for surgery in Australia and New Zealand, with FRACS standing for excellence in surgical care. www.surgeons.org

About The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM): ACEM is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for the training and ongoing education of emergency physicians, and for the advancement of professional standards in emergency medicine, in Australia and New Zealand. ACEM, as the peak professional organisation for emergency medicine in Australasia, has a vital interest in ensuring that the highest patient care and emergency department. www.acem.org.au/

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