



MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday, 13 December 2020

Don't leave kids and pets in hot cars

Summer is here and with the weather warming up, RACT is urging people to never leave children or pets in hot cars.

With Hobart's temperature forecast to reach 31 degrees tomorrow, RACT is issuing a timely reminder to Tasmanians of the dangers of leaving children and pets in hot cars.

Between 1 December 2019 and 30 November 2020, RACT Roadside patrols received 180 callouts to children or pets locked inside cars, despite the COVID-19 enforced lockdown in the middle of this year.

Of these callouts, 116 related to animals and 64 related to children, which is roughly 1 child and 2 animals each week.

General Manager Mobility Services Darren Moody said while it might seem fine to leave a child or pet in your car for a short period, or with the window ajar, in reality the consequences could be rapid and devastating.

"The temperature inside a parked vehicle on a typical summer's day could be 30 to 40 degrees hotter than outside," he said.

"For instance, Hobart is expected to reach 31 degrees tomorrow, which means the temperature inside a car could be in excess of 70 degrees.

"However, it doesn't even have to be a particularly hot day. Even on a warm 25 degree day, like in Launceston tomorrow, the interior of a car could rise up to 65 degrees.

"The danger of children or pets being trapped in hot cars is that as the internal temperature rises, they can begin to develop heat stress and start to dehydrate.

"In addition, young children are more sensitive to heat than older children or adults, meaning they can be at greater risk of heat stroke and other health issues. Pets are also more prone to hot temperatures than humans as they cannot respond to heat the same way we do."

Mr Moody said RACT will prioritise callouts to children and pets locked in cars, and that people don't have to be a member to receive the service.

“At the end of the day, it’s a pretty simple message – don’t leave children or pets unattended in a car, even for a moment.”

Mr Moody said if a member of the public noticed a child locked in someone else’s car and the owner was unknown to them, Tasmania Police should be advised immediately by calling triple zero (000). In relation to animals, police should be called on 131 444.

Other facts to consider:

- Darker coloured cars can reach slightly higher temperatures when parked in the sun
- Interior trim colour has little impact on the speed the temperature inside a car increases
- Tinted windows make little difference to the temperature of the interior of a vehicle
- A large car can heat up just as quickly as a small car
- Having the windows down 5cm causes only the slightest decrease in temperature

Tips to avoid accidental lock-ins:

- Always take the child with you – even if you only intend to leave the car for a brief time
- Keep the keys with the driver – never leave them with the child, in the ignition or on a seat
- Never let children play with keys or access an unattended vehicle
- Check the vehicle is empty before remote locking – it is easy to accidentally lock them in