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RACT calls for better protection of Roadside Assist vehicles and tow trucks

With the State Government's review of slow down for emergency vehicles legislation progressing well, the RACT has reiterated called for its Roadside patrols and tow truck drivers to be included in the law.

The law, which was introduced in December 2019, means drivers must slow to 40km/h when passing stationary emergency vehicles with red and blue or magenta flashing lights.

The State Government is currently reviewing the law, with RACT Chief Mobility Officer Geoff Evers calling on the government to ensure the flashing amber lights of Roadside Assist vans and tow trucks are covered

"As part of the review, our Roadside patrols took part in interviews to help the government learn about their experiences on Tasmanian roadsides," Mr Evers said.

"A report on the review is due to be presented to the Road Safety Advisory Council (RSAC) at its meeting on Tuesday, with the council to make recommendations to the government for any changes to the law.

"We call upon RSAC and the government to make the right decision and grant RACT patrols and tow truck drivers the same safety benefits under this law."

"This would be similar to laws in Western Australia and most recently NSW, which both cover roadside assist vehicles and tow trucks.

Mr Evers said the evidence shows these workers experience the same risks as emergency services workers, regularly reporting near misses and dangerous situations at the roadside.

"RACT Roadside Assist workers attended 12,000 breakdown callouts to roadside locations where the speed limit was 90km/h and above in 2019-20, indicating they are exposed to high-risk situations every day," Mr Evers said.

“The latest survey of RACT Roadside patrols found 75% experienced a near miss in the previous 12 months, with 60% of those experiencing more than one near miss.

“Anecdotal evidence also suggests that drivers/riders are often distracted when there is a road incident or breakdown

“While our Roadside Assist workers are provided with extensive risk assessment and training aimed at working safely at the roadside, they cannot control where a vehicle will break down, can’t set up signage and speed limit reductions and they don’t have red and blue flashing lights.