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Older drivers urged to keep eye on their vision

Older drivers are being reminded to have their eyes checked regularly by an optometrist in order to stay safe on the road.

During last week's CarFit workshop in Launceston, RACT representatives and an occupational therapist uncovered a series of eye problems among participants.

CarFit is a program designed to provide information to older drivers on how to reduce blind spots and improve line of sight, mirror positions, neck mobility, peripheral vision and driving height.

U-Turn Driver Assessment and Training Occupational Therapist Ana Vandenberg found that almost all participants had previously experienced, or continued to experience, vision issues.

"This included several participants having had cataracts removed, some were having treatment for glaucoma and others needed to wear glasses while driving," she said.

Ms Vandenberg said most people should have their eyes checked every two years by an optometrist, but others may need more frequent check-ups due to eye problems or vision changes. This should be guided by their eye specialist.

"It was great to hear that all participants were conscious about having regular eye checks from between 3-12 months due to these conditions," she said.

"Conditions such as glaucoma and macular degeneration, need to be diagnosed early; conditions like cataracts should be periodically monitored. If left untreated they can seriously impact on someone's vision and therefore driving abilities.

"Vision is extremely important for driving. Unfortunately, if someone's vision doesn't meet the medical guidelines, then they can't continue to drive."

RACT Community Manager Will Oakley said CarFit was an avenue for older drivers to talk about any concerns they may have while behind the wheel.

“These workshops provide older drivers with advice on how to improve their visibility, comfort and safety, all in a non-threatening environment,” he said.

This message comes as RACT continues to roll out its Golden Rules of Road Safety campaign, which is aimed at reducing road deaths and serious injuries on the road. This week’s rule is “Check your vision”.

The campaign involves students from three primary schools in the south, north and north-west discussing each of the 12 rules in a series of videos. These videos are being posted on RACT’s social media channels each week, with the students setting challenges for Tasmanians to abide by on the road.

The 12 Golden Rules were created by the Federation Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA), the representative body for auto clubs across the globe, to address the 3500 lives lost on the world’s roads each year.

In Tasmania, approximately 300 people are either seriously injured or killed on the state’s roads each year. The campaign will run until 30 September.

The 12 Golden Rules are:

- Never Drink and Drive
- Don't Text and Drive
- Always Pay Attention
- Slow Down for Kids
- Wear a Helmet
- Check Your Tyres
- Buckle Up
- Stop When You're Tired
- Stay Bright
- Obey the Speed Limit
- Use a Child Safety Seat
- Check Your Vision

Follow the campaign on RACT's social media channels @RACTOfficial and website at www.ract.com.au/community/advocating-change/golden-rules

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