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New road rules need to include RACT Roadside Assist workers

The RACT is calling for Roadside Assist workers and tow truck drivers to be included in the State Government's proposed 'Slow Down Move Over' legislation.

The legislation, set to be introduced this year, is designed to improve the safety of emergency workers and first response personnel at road crashes.

RACT General Manager Mobility Services Darren Moody said the laws, active in other states, would dictate that drivers must travel at no more than 40km/h when driving in the same direction as stationary emergency response vehicles with flashing red and blue lights (Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Ambulance Tasmania) or magenta lights (National Heavy Vehicle Regulator safety and compliance vehicles).

"But we understand that the proposed new laws – which the RACT broadly supports – do not include the flashing amber lights of RACT Roadside Assist vans and other incident response vehicles such as tow trucks," he said.

"Roadside Assist workers and tow truck drivers are vulnerable road users, as they experience the same risks as emergency services vehicles, regularly reporting near misses and dangerous situations at the roadside."

While RACT Roadside Assist workers are provided with extensive risk assessment and safety training, they cannot control every situation, particularly with increasing instances of distracted driving.

In 2018, RACT Roadside Assist workers attended about 12,000 breakdown callouts to roadside locations where the speed limit was 90km/h and above.

A survey of 20 RACT roadside patrols in January found 75% experienced a near miss in the previous 12 months, with 60% of those experiencing more than one near miss. Additionally, 30% reported a near miss in the week prior to taking the survey. Anecdotal evidence suggests that drivers/riders are often distracted when there is a road incident or breakdown.

The call to amend the proposed legislation falls in the middle of the RACT's Golden Rules of Road Safety campaign, aimed at reducing road deaths and serious injuries on the road.

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.

Mr Moody said RACT had presented four rules so far, with this week's focus being Obey the Speed Limit.

"Our focus for this rule is the impact of speed on incident response personnel, including emergency service workers and RACT's own Roadside Patrols," he said.

Mr Moody added speed was also the leading cause of fatal and serious injury crashes in Tasmania. On average, speed is listed as a contributing factor in 29% of these crashes each year.

The campaign will run until 30 September.

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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