



REVIVED CALLS FOR ROADSIDE FIRST AID SKILLS TO REDUCE INJURY AND SAVE LIVES

- **New survey from St John Ambulance Australia finds that nearly 4 in 5 Australians (78%) believe that people should be equipped with first aid training as a requirement of holding a driver's licence.**
- **Road deaths continue to rise, yet first aid rates in Australia remain low comparative to other nations.**

The Christmas and New Year period has again been a tragic one with increased road injuries and deaths. The number of annual deaths on Australian roads has continued to rise, with 1,253 annual deaths in 12 months – an increase of 6.3% on the previous year¹. Yet simple first aid interventions can be easily learned to reduce injuries or save a life.

St John Ambulance Australia CEO, Mr Brendan Maher, explains the important role of educating everyday people, who may be first on the scene after a crash or roadside emergency, *“Anyone of us could become a bystander to a collision or other emergency when we are travelling as a driver or passenger. Knowing how to keep calm, get help and perform basic first aid interventions, while waiting for an ambulance, is an important set of skills that can reduce someone’s injuries or save a life.”*

A new national survey of Australian adults, commissioned by St John Ambulance Australia, has found that when presented with road accident data, 4 in 5 Australian adults (78%) were supportive of equipping young people with basic first aid skills as part of achieving their driving permits². Young people 17-25 are a high-risk group for injury and fatality on our roads. Many European nations have adopted early intervention strategies, such as making first aid training a pre-requisite to holding a driver’s permit. Unfortunately, Australian first aid rates remain comparatively low.

In November 2023, the ACT Government began leading the way in encouraging more young people to learn first aid, to improve road safety. They will be delivering an incentivisation initiative that allows Learner Drivers under the age of 25, to claim a five-hour credit against their required driving hours when they complete approved first aid training. This initiative was developed in consultation with St John, off the back of calls from 2022 Senior Australian of the Year, Val Dempsey, to make the training a requirement for all Learner Drivers.

“We are really pleased to have played a role in this announcement, and grateful to ACT Government for taking this positive step,” says Mr Maher.

A free online training package, geared primarily towards Learner Drivers (driverfirstaid.org.au), is available to teach common first aid interventions, including checking and supporting an airway, stopping a bleed, treating broken bones, and performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). This course offers an introduction to first aid that may give a person the confidence and knowledge to take action during an unexpected and overwhelming roadside situation. Preliminary findings from an independent evaluation by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) have shown a significant increase in first aid efficacy and self-agency among participants.

The South Australian Government recently announced that it will be making St John’s Learner Driver First Aid accessible via its My License website, in an effort to encourage engagement and road safety. St John organisations in every state and territory continue to work together to engage governments in discussions about systemic change – aiming to engage more leaders and policy makers on the topic.

“We want to see young people be safe in the immediate future, but we also want to equip them with skills that will create a long-term generational change in first aid for road safety. It’s great to see that the community are largely supportive of this direction.”

St John Ambulance Australia wants all Australians, whether they are just starting out behind the wheel or seasoned drivers, to be safe and prepared for travel on our roads. This includes: planning ahead; driving safely and to the conditions; having access to a device to call 000; knowing basic first aid; and carrying an in-vehicle first aid kit.

St John encourages anyone struggling with distress relating to road trauma to seek support through a state-based Road Trauma Support group or by calling a national helpline such as Lifeline on 13 11 14.

St John’s free Learner Driver First Aid e-Learning course is available at: <https://www.driverfirstaid.org.au>. While geared towards young people, the course content is available and relevant to anyone. **In Western Australia a similar, alternate option exists called ‘Click to Save’.*

Notes:

¹ (Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics): [Road Statistics | Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics \(bitre.gov.au\)](https://www.bitre.gov.au)

² National survey commissioned by St John Ambulance and conducted by YouGov (n=1039 Australian adults). Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th - 11th December 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Australian adults (aged 18+).

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