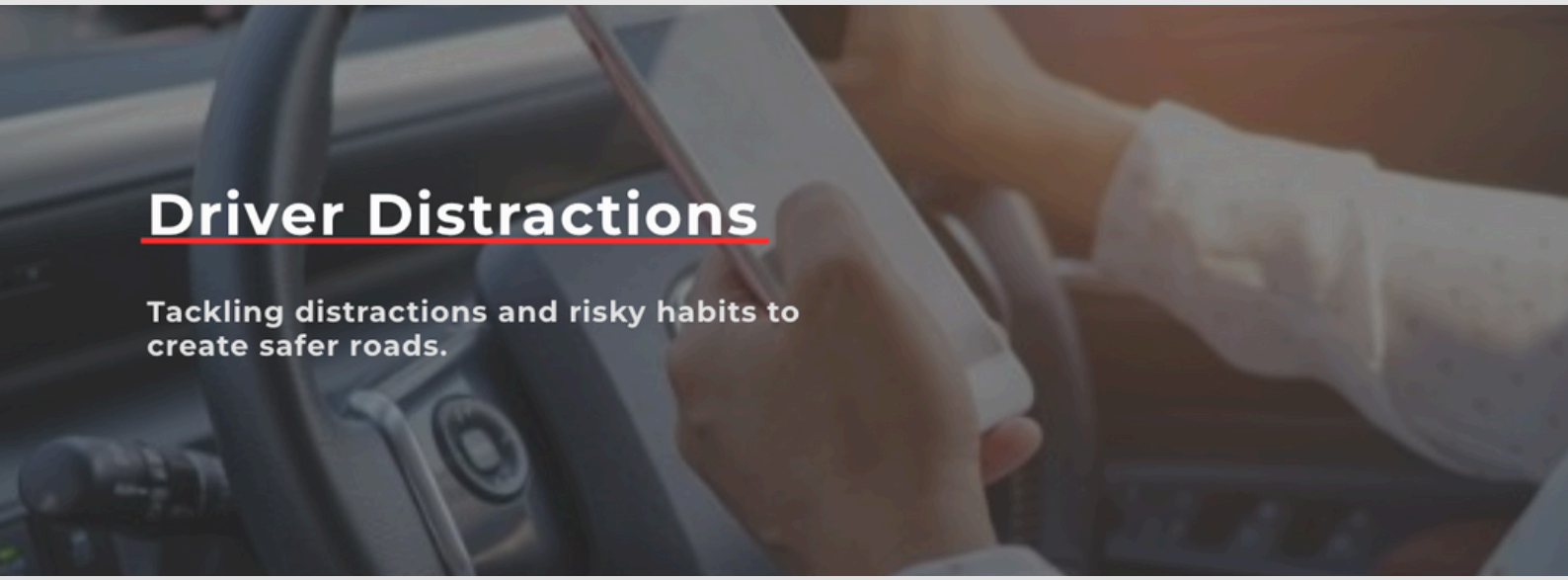


Driver Distractions

Tackling distractions and risky habits to create safer roads.

What's it about?

Taking your eyes off the road to dial a mobile phone or send a text increases the risk of crashing by 600 to 2,300 per cent [4].

Driver behaviour plays a pivotal role in road safety. Factors such as mobile phone use, impaired judgment from drugs or alcohol, fatigue and over-reliance on in-car technology (including touch screens) - can significantly increase the likelihood of crashes.

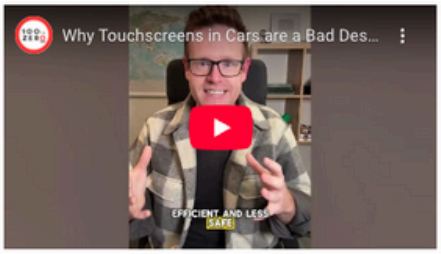
Mobile phones and touchscreens, for instance, divert attention from the road, while alcohol and drug use impair decision-making and reaction times. Addressing these risks through education, enforcement, and technology design improvements is vital.

In Australia, campaigns and regulations targeting driver behaviour aim to reduce preventable accidents and save lives, but young people still remain particularly at risk. By fostering responsible habits and minimizing distractions, drivers can contribute to safer roads for everyone.

The 100 to Zero Project is supported by the National Road Safety Strategy's National Road Safety Action Grants Program.

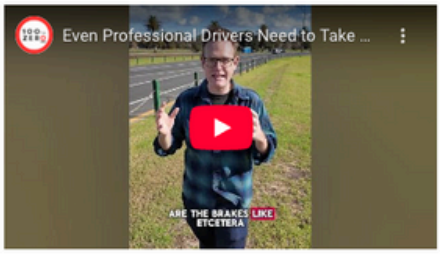
Watch Videos

Explore road safety topics in 100 seconds or less.



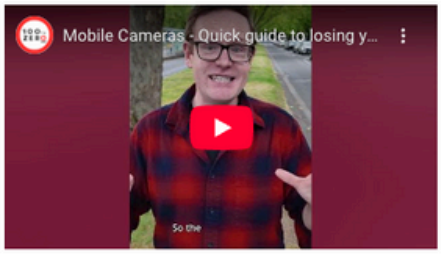
Why Touchscreens in Cars are a Bad Design

The truth about new driver interfacers. Hint: they're not safer.



Even Professional Drivers Need to Take Care

Are pro-drivers safer than the rest of us? Here's a quick comparison.



Hands off your phone

Here's a quick guide to losing your licence

Watch All Videos

Benefits

Why reducing driver distractions makes roads safer for everyone.

Improved Alcohol-Related Reaction Times

Eliminating distractions and impaired driving ensures quicker responses to sudden hazards. Alcohol can affect your driving by causing drowsiness, impaired vision, reduced reaction times, reduced concentration and vigilance. Alcohol impairment reduces reaction times by up to 25%, increasing crash risk [1].

Minimising Technology Distraction

In-car touch screens are extremely detrimental to driver attention. Entering an address requires the drivers to look at the screen for an average of 15.7 seconds, and changing the radio station 10-11 seconds - all taking eyes away from the road. Improved in-car technology design, such as voice-activated controls, minimises distractions and supports focused driving [2].

Reducing Driver Fatigue

Fatigue contributes to about 20 to 30 per cent of all car crashes in Australia. Driving while tired slows reaction time and reduces awareness—similar to alcohol. Fatigue-related crashes are often severe because the driver doesn't brake or react. Rest breaks, education, and in-car alerts can help drivers stay alert and safe. [3]

Phone related accident reduction

Taking your eyes off the road to dial a mobile phone or send a text increases the risk of crashing by 600 to 2,300 per cent. This highlights the importance of the laws requiring mobile phones to be mounted in a dashboard or windscreen cradle which helps minimise eye time spent off the road. [4]

Supporting Young Drivers

Young drivers benefit from safer systems, not just safer choices. Younger drivers (17–25) face higher crash risks due to inexperience and distraction. Graduated licensing programs, targeted campaigns, and well-designed roads give them the support they need to drive safely. [5]

Reducing Driver Distraction Examples

Re:act road safety behaviour change program

A peer-led road safety campaign engaging 17–25-year-olds through university and TAFE students. It featured innovative ads encouraging young drivers to consider road conditions and posted limits—rather than merely "slow down." The program, part of Re:act's ongoing work, has influenced creative, behaviour-centric messaging among young Australians.

Re:act's student campaigns have been seen by almost 24 million Australians, and over 53 Million people have been engaged worldwide [6]

Mobile Phone Detection Cameras (South Australia)

In 2023, South Australia rolled out mobile phone detection cameras to tackle one of the most common driver distractions—illegal phone use behind the wheel. These high-resolution, AI-powered cameras operate 24/7 and in all conditions, automatically scanning passing vehicles to detect if a driver is touching or holding a phone.

If AI identifies a possible offence, the image is reviewed by a trained officer before issuing a fine. The cameras are not speed cameras—they focus solely on phone use.

Within the first three months, over 3,500 drivers were caught, revealing just how widespread distracted driving remains. By combining technology with enforcement, the program aims to change driver behaviour and reduce serious crashes caused by inattention.

It's part of South Australia's broader commitment to safer roads and supports the goal of zero lives lost to preventable road trauma. [7]

References

[1] Alcohol and Drug Foundation, Alcohol and Driving.

[2] European Transport Safety Council Report on Infotainment Screen Distraction, based on Norwegian Council for Road Safety Study carried out by Trygg Trafikk.

[3] Australian Automobile Association Reducing Fatigue.

[4] Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) Rod Safety Research

[5] Road Sense Australia, Young Drivers and Risks

[6] Re:Act For Change, Global Campaign

[7] Government of South Australia, Think Road Safety, Mobile phone detection cameras.

Helpful Guides

Australian Drug and Alcohol Foundation

Australian Automobile Association Fatigued Driving

NSW Safer Driving Guide - Mobile phones, digital screens and GPS

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