

Media release

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We need to stop talking about a road toll

A group of road safety advocates is asking Southerners to join them in a call to stop referring to road death as a road toll.

“A toll implies we are comfortable paying with our lives, our children’s lives, our parents’ lives, our family or friends’ lives for the convenience of road travel,” Southern Road Safety Influencing Group Chairman and Southland District Councillor Brian Dillon says.

“This year far too many people paid with their lives in New Zealand with 31 in Otago and Southland. Many more family members, friends and work colleagues will be deeply affected for a long time to come.

“It’s time to stop and think about this. Should we keep accepting road death as normal? Is this what we want for our communities?”

The Southern Road Safety Influencing Group challenges everyone to stop talking about it as a road toll and call it what it is – death.

“In 2018 we are asking Southerners to stop talking about the road toll and start talking about road death.

“Maybe it will mean we take it more seriously. We’ll stop congratulating ourselves when it’s lower than the year before or complaining when it’s higher and realise there is no good number of deaths on our roads. Any number is too many,” Mr Dillon says.

Tomorrow the road toll will start again from zero.

“What does that mean for the Southerners who lost a member of their family this year? Does the grief stop too? Do those deaths stop counting?”

1461 people have died on Southland and Otago roads since 1980.

“That’s very close to the population of Riverton and 400 more than Waikouaiti. If an entire community was wiped out we would be calling it a national tragedy, but when it comes to road death we call it a toll,” Mr Dillon says

“We need to have honest conversations about our local road risks with our communities and with ourselves.

“Ask yourself how you can reduce your own road risk? What small changes can you make to your driving to ensure you and your family get home safely?”

“We can all work towards solutions which make sense through the sharing of ideas and talking seriously about the road risks we need to focus on.”

The Southern Road Safety Group is not going to start from zero in 2018 as an acknowledgement of the number of people who were killed in 2017.

“It’s about respect. We aren’t going to forget the lives lost on our roads and the communities that are suffering. We are going to keep counting and we ask you join us, because for Southland and Otago any number is too many.”

ENDS

About the Southern Road Safety Influencing Group

Established in 2016, the SRSIG looks at new ways of solving an old problem – how to reduce the number of people being killed and seriously injured on Southland and Otago roads. The group is made up of regional and local authorities from Southland and Otago, representatives from government agencies, and partners representing the transport sector.

Members of the SRSIG:

Otago Regional Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Otago District Council, Clutha District Council, Dunedin City Council, Environment Southland, Gore District Council, Invercargill City Council, Southland District Council, AA, ACC, HW Richardson, Fonterra, Real Journeys, NZ Police, and NZ Transport Agency.

About *Any number is too many*

Together the Southern Road Safety Influencing Group (SRSIG) and Southern emergency responders (NZ Police, St John Ambulance, and Fire and Emergency Southland) have developed *Any number is too many*, which asks communities to think and talk about road risk. This new inclusive approach to addressing road risk recognises local people know their roads and can help develop possible solutions to rising road death.

How to join the conversation:

- Visit the *Any number is too many* Facebook [page](#) and like/share/comment
- Visit the official website anynumberistoomany.org for more information, including campaign materials and personal stories
- Start a conversation with your friends and whānau
- Display a bumper sticker on your car or letterbox
- Put up posters at your school or community space

If you would like some materials, please contact Otago Regional Council Customer Services team on 0800 474 082.

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