



OUR VIEW

# Road toll shocking, tragic



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**N**ew Zealand's road toll so far this year is both shocking and tragic to contemplate.

From January 1 to March 16, the Ministry of Transport reported 83 deaths. This compares to last year's total for the same period, of 74 deaths.

And there has been at least two more since March 16, with two teenagers killed yesterday in a head-on crash near Amberley on State Highway One, after their car crossed the centre line.

The figure shows we are on track for one of our worst road tolls in years, and experts are forecasting it will surpass 400. Last year's road toll was bad enough, at 380, up from 327 in 2016, and 319 in 2015.

The road toll reality means that there are more than 300 Kiwis who will be out and about living their lives today, who will not be here by the end of this year.

These 300 or so people are not some anonymous figures dotted around the country.

They are fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, sisters, brothers

– people upon whom communities and families rely, people who bring something into the lives of those around them.

They are you and me, people who will probably be suffering Mondayitis today and going through all the highs and lows that every normal day brings.

Death by road accident not only cuts short the life of the

person who is killed, but has a hidden toll in the grief and sadness it leaves behind.

The social cost of road crashes in New Zealand is also huge, and was estimated for 2016 to be \$4.17 billion, measured in loss of life and life quality, loss of output due to injury, and medical, legal and property damage costs.

There has been ongoing action at government level in recent years to reduce the road toll, such as advertising campaigns, lowering the drink drive limit, and road improvements.

But there is much we can do at an individual level.

They include no texting or using your cellphone, no speeding, making sure you pull over for a rest if you are tired, no drink driving, wearing your seatbelt and keeping your eyes on the road at all times.

They are just the basics, but things that at some stage we have all been guilty of not doing. The growing road toll should be a reminder to all that it's time to get back on track to safe driving.

