



# Sleep Disorders Australia Queensland



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Sleepy Drivers Die

A report by the Australian Centre on Quality of Life at Deakin University found more than 31 percent of Australians sleep six hours or less a night yet less than 3 percent of the population is hard wired to sleep so few hours. Insufficient sleep has significant consequences on health and well-being including serious injury and even death.

Inadequate sleep is a major health and safety hazard that contributes to the deaths of approximately 3000 Australians a year. A recent study by Deloitte Access Economics estimates more than one Australian will die every day, or 394 a year, from falling asleep at the wheel of a vehicle or from industrial accidents due to lack of sleep. As well as the negative impact of inadequate sleep on health and wellbeing the report also calculates that the financial cost to Australia is \$66 billion.

Extreme tiredness brought about by not enough sleep puts drivers at a much higher risk of nodding off, however driver fatigue can also impair reaction time and decision making which further increases the risk of being involved in an accident. Australian research shows drivers who have had 17 hours of sleep deprivation face the same risk of a crash as a person who has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 g/100ml. They are therefore twice as likely to have an accident as a person with a zero blood alcohol content who is not fatigued. When you consider one in every five car accidents is related to fatigue, it amounts to a lot of harm caused by people not getting enough sleep.

#### **Signs of Drowsiness:**

- Heavy eyelids, eyes closing, frequent blinking, or trouble focusing
- Trouble keeping your head up
- Drifting between lanes, hitting a shoulder
- Constant yawning, rubbing your eyes
- Daydreaming/wandering thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating on driving, missing exits or traffic signs

#### **Tips for Staying Safe on the Road:**

- Make sure you have had plenty of sleep before you leave
- Be aware of the effects of medications you are taking (some may increase drowsiness)
- If you have to drive a long distance share the driving with someone else
- Don't rush. It's better to arrive at your destination safe than on time
- Do not drink alcohol. Even very small amounts of alcohol will enhance drowsiness
- Avoid driving between 1am and 6am, this is a time when sleepiness is most intense

- Do not rely on short-term remedies to offset the feelings of fatigue e.g., turning up music, drinking coffee/energy drinks etc. If you feel tired or notice signs of drowsiness pull over and take a short power nap

### **About Sleep Disorders Australia and our Sleepy Drivers Die campaign.**

Sleep Disorders Australia (SDA) was established in 1994, it is a voluntary Not for Profit organisation that provides information about sleep health and also offers assistance and support to people and their families who are living with sleep disorders throughout Australia.

Many Australians don't realise that driving when sleep deprived can be just as dangerous as driving while intoxicated by alcohol or drugs. Sleep Disorders Australia has launched a campaign in Queensland sponsored by the RACQ that is aimed at raising awareness and educating about the dangers of driving without adequate sleep.

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Sleep Disorders Australia Website  
[www.sleepoz.org.au/events/sleepydrivers](http://www.sleepoz.org.au/events/sleepydrivers)



***If you are feeling sleepy, stop driving immediately. The only cure for sleepiness is sleep.***

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