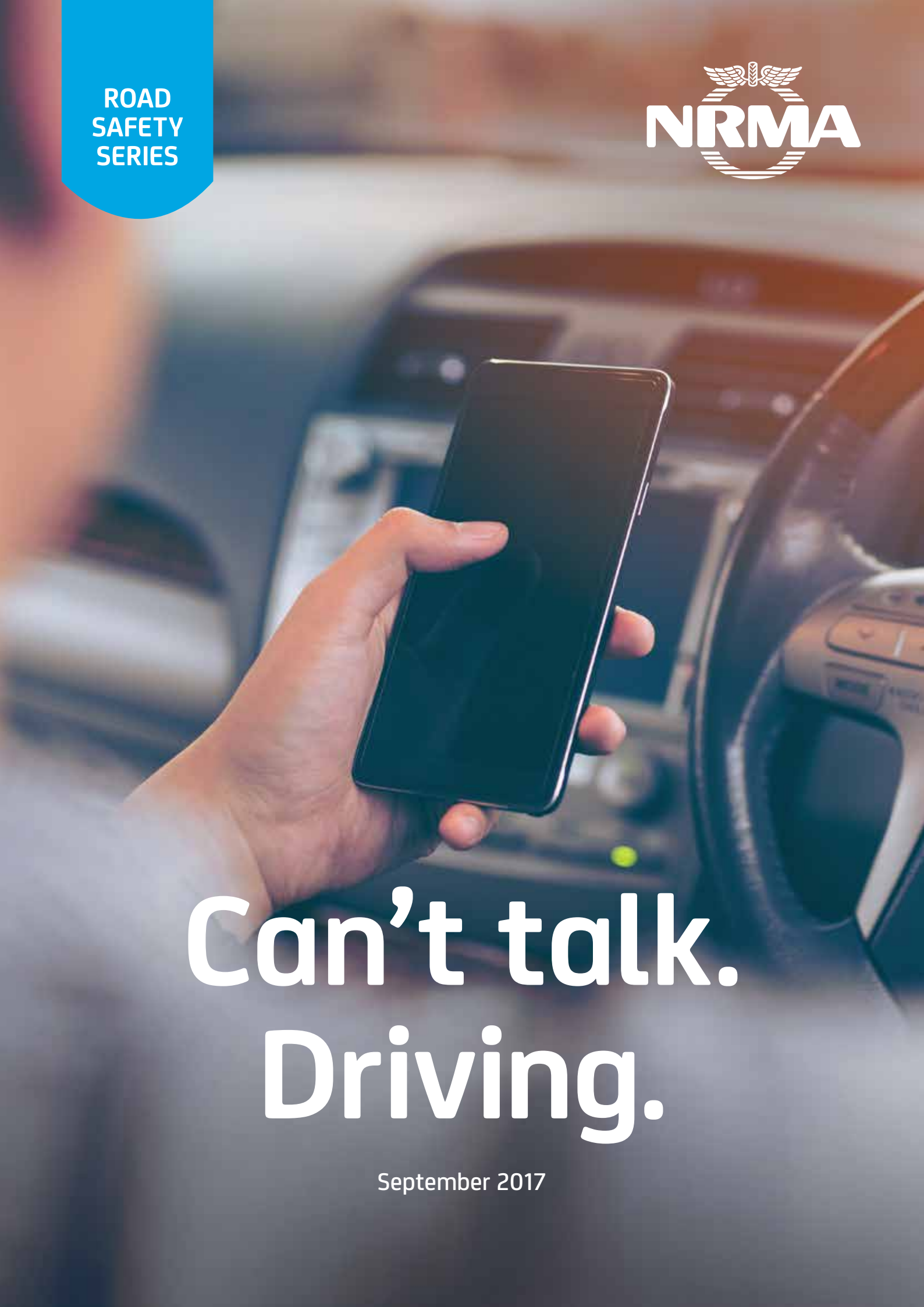
ROAD SAFETY SERIES



Can't talk. Driving.

September 2017

About the NRMA

Better road and transport infrastructure has been a core focus of the NRMA since 1920 when our founders lobbied for improvements to the condition of Parramatta Road in Sydney. Independent advocacy was the foundation activity of the organisation and remains critical to who we are as we approach our first centenary.

From humble beginnings, the NRMA has grown to represent over 2.4 million Australians principally from NSW and the ACT. The NRMA also provides motoring, mobility and tourism services to our Members and the community.

Today, the NRMA works with policy makers and industry leaders to advocate for increased investment in road infrastructure and transport solutions to make mobility safer, provide access for all and to deliver sustainable communities.

By working together with all levels of government to deliver integrated transport options we can give motorists a real choice about how they get around. The NRMA believes that integrated transport networks, including efficient roads, high-quality public transport and improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, are essential to solve the challenge of growing congestion and provide for the future growth of our communities.

Road Safety Series

The NRMA has prepared a series of reports with the aim of identifying the main factors involved in road crashes and initiatives that may help to reduce the risk of loss of life and injuries.

We acknowledge the next major tool to prevent and reduce loss of life will be driven by technology, as was seen with seatbelts and random breath testing. While we move towards an autonomous vehicle future, continued investment in road infrastructure, vehicle technology and public education campaigns are needed to improve safety on our roads.

This is the first report of the Road Safety Series.

Introduction

There is nothing new or surprising about being distracted while driving. The AM radio was one of the first distractions available in the car when it was introduced in the 1930s. The whole driving task can be one big distraction, whether it is visual or audible. The concern is how drivers prioritise such distractions including the use of technologies such as mobile phones.

More and more people are relying on their mobile phones in their everyday lives. The mobile phone has rapidly progressed from only being able to receive and make calls, to now being able to pay bills, provide directions, and order and pay for your daily coffee.

Australia has one of the highest penetrations of smartphone use in the world. With smartphone ownership rising to 84 per cent in 2016[1] it is no wonder that this technology has impacted the automobilty sector. While the contribution mobile phones play in road crashes is underreported, the risks are clear.

Safe mobility is at the core of the NRMA and we believe that increased enforcement, additional education and increased investment in technological solutions will address human error that occurs from being distracted by a mobile phone.

What the NRMA wants

1. Improved crash data and more effective means of quantifying the role of mobile phone usage and other technological devices in fatal and serious crashes.

2. Regular review and evaluation of current legislation related to mobile phone use and other technologies while driving to ensure legislation remains effective and keeps pace with advances in technology.

3. Increased enforcement to ensure illegal use of mobile phones and other technologies continue to be detected.

4. Quantify the impact of the 'Get your hand off it' campaign and publicly release the results.

5. Mobile phone restrictions introduced for Learner and Provisional licence holders in the ACT.

6. Research undertaken to investigate the safety implications of the increased legal use of hands-free mobile phones while driving.

7. Increased use of technology such as apps and connected car technology to mitigate the risk of in-vehicle distractions. This includes:
   - Research to investigate the effectiveness of in-car technology.
   - Governments encouraging investment in in-car technology.
   - Education campaigns, especially targeting young drivers to encourage uptake.

What our Members are saying

In July 2017, we surveyed over 1,000 of our Members and this is what they said[2].

62%
Thought they were likely to get caught using a hand-held mobile phone

15%
Thought they were not likely to get caught using a hand-held mobile phone

21%
Had a near miss crash where the other driver was using a mobile phone

Things people perceive as distracting


95% Taking a selfie


96% Writing & sending text messages


96% Using social media/internet


95% Reading text messages


91% Talking on a mobile while holding the phone

Things people use their mobile phone for while driving

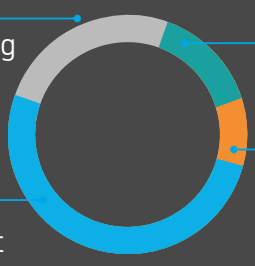

11% Wrote and sent a text message


56% Used a hands-free phone


19% Read a text message


18% Used a hand-held phone

What do people do with their mobile phone while driving?



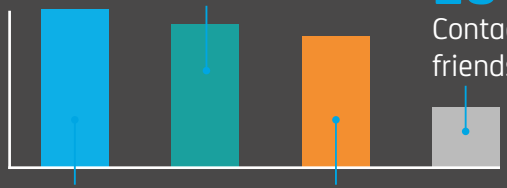
25% Outside of reaching distance or turned it off

6% No mobile phone in car

14% Turned on within reaching distance but not hands-free

55% Hands-free car-kit or Bluetooth

Why do people use a phone while driving?



54% Let people know where they are

49% For work

46% Contact family

28% Contact friends

Crash statistics

There is limited crash data available to quantify the involvement of mobile phones in road crashes. However, from what data is available we know that in NSW, driver distraction accounts for nine per cent of all driver involvements in fatal crashes between 2008 and 2016[10]. Of these crashes, being distracted by a hand held mobile phone was a factor in two per cent of fatal crashes between 2008 and 2016 **(See Figure 1)**.

Young drivers are also more at risk of mobile phone related crashes. During 2008 to 2016, 41 percent of people involved in serious casualty crashes where a hand-held mobile phone was a contributing factor, were aged under 26 years[11].

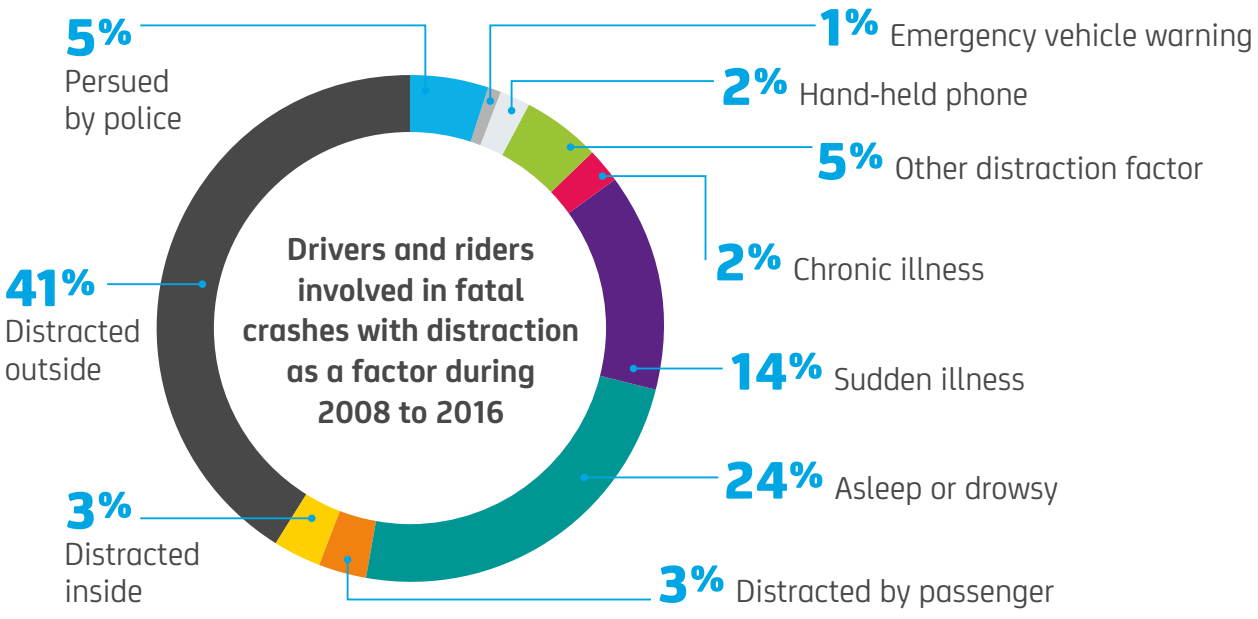
While statistics show that other in-vehicle distractions, apart from hands-free mobile phones are also a factor of crash involvement, technology based distractions are a growing issue that must be addressed.

Mobile phone related crashes tend to be underreported due to the difficulty of establishing evidence of illegal mobile phone use. The NRMA believes that more needs to be done to develop an effective means of understanding the role mobile phone use, both legal and illegal, plays in fatal and serious crashes.

"Young drivers are more at risk of mobile phone related crashes. During 2008 to 2016, 41 percent of people involved in serious casualty crashes were aged under 26 years where a hand-held mobile phone was a contributing factor".

The NRMA welcomes the Australian Government's announcement in May 2017 to undertake research related to the use of mobile phones while driving. We look forward to the public release of this report to help address this road safety problem.

Figure 1



Risks of mobile phone use and driving

- Using a mobile phone while driving increases your risk of a crash four-fold[3].
- Research shows that using a mobile phone while driving is risky, especially if the task involves visual distraction or a manual task such as reaching for the phone and scrolling[4].
- Drivers are twice as likely to have a crash or near crash if they glance away from the road for more than two seconds[5].
- In 2016, 94 per cent of mobile consumers aged 18-24 have a smartphone (increased from 91 per cent in 2015)[6].
- Research shows that young drivers are at greater risk of being distracted by mobile phone use than full licence holders. The demographic is also at greater risk because they use their phones more often[7 8].
- There is also evidence that older drivers are also at risk because they find it difficult to conduct two tasks simultaneously and their response times are impaired[9].

Using a mobile phone is dangerous because:


Slower reaction times


Wandering out of your lane


Slower and less controlled braking


Not being alert to your surroundings

Risker decision making

Enforcement

In order to change driver behaviour and ultimately reduce the road toll, police enforcement of illegal mobile phone use is needed.

According to the Office of State Revenue, from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 there were 38,441 fines issued to drivers in NSW for using hand-held mobile phones. This was an 8.7 percent increase compared to 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 where 35,370 fines were issued[12].

The NRMA understands that the NSW Police are leading the way in exploring new ways to detect hand-held mobile phone use. This includes using a roadside telephoto lens to not only detect illegal mobile phone use, but to also provide photographic evidence of the offence[13].

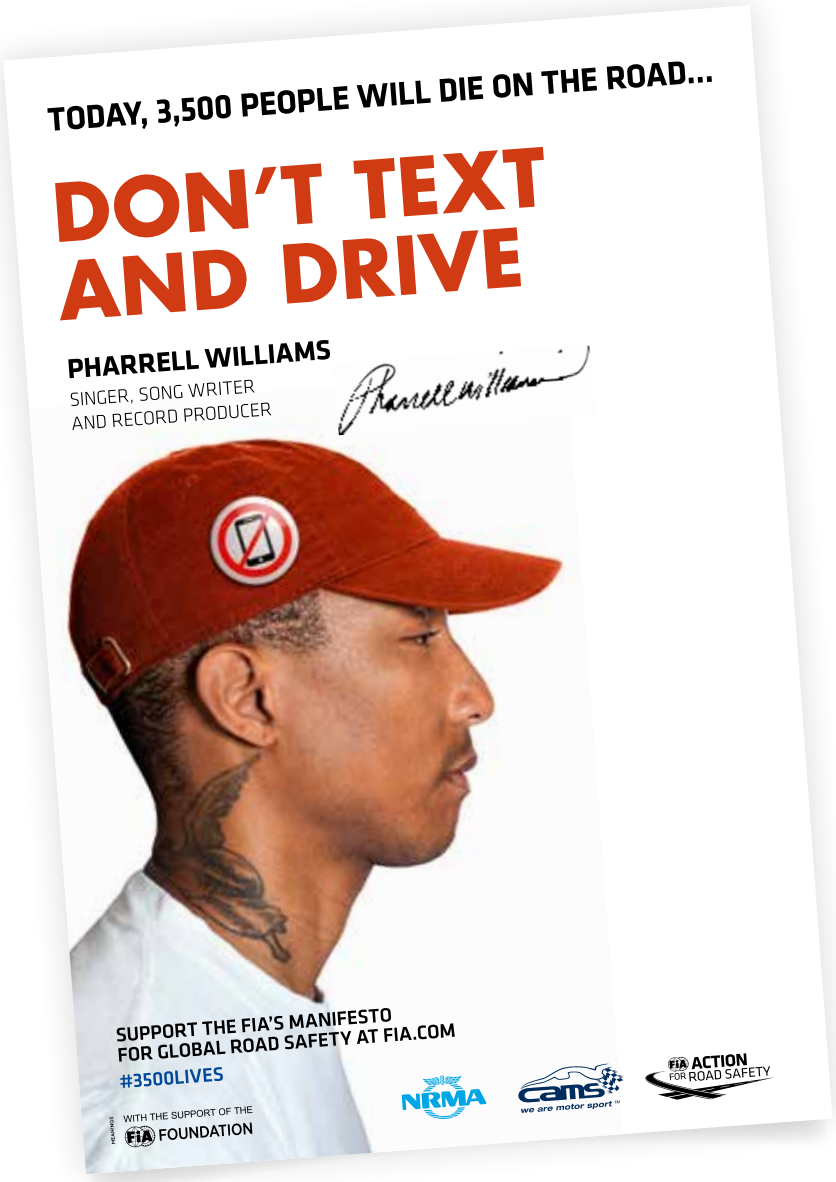
The NRMA would like to see more police operations targeting mobile phone use and continued investment in the latest technologies to detect these offences.

Education

Decades of road safety research have shown that public education campaigns, especially those using mass media, can help reduce crash rates when they are linked to enforcement [15].

The NSW Government has been running the 'Get your hand off it' education campaign since 2013 with the aim of educating drivers about the consequences of illegal mobile phone use while driving. Given the continued increase in drivers fined for illegal use, the NRMA is keen to see the evaluation of this high profile campaign in order to assess whether it has met its intended objectives.

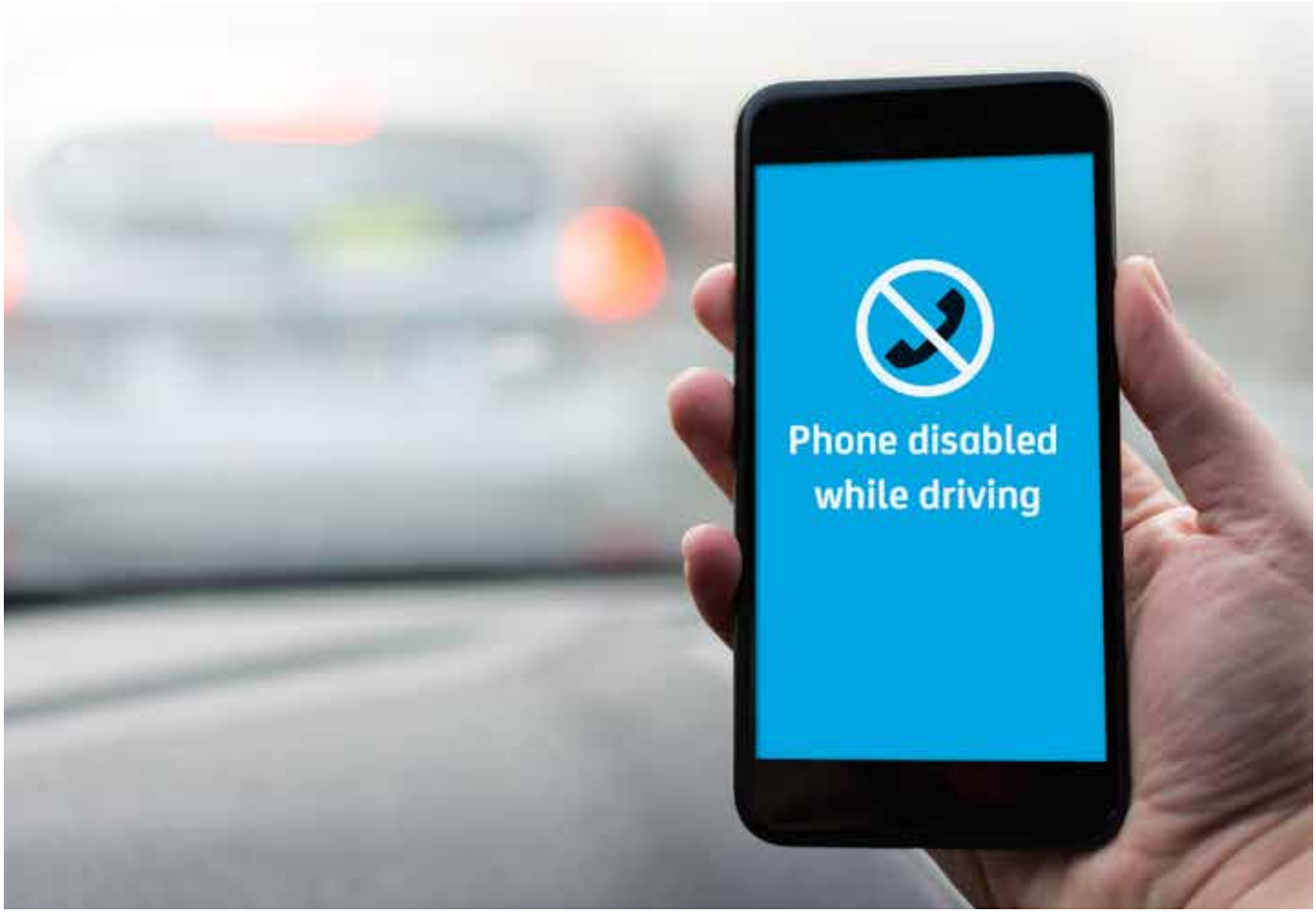
The NRMA recognises that education is not the role of government alone. The NRMA has also helped to spread the message of the dangers of mobile phone use and driving by joining a global campaign designed to reduce the number of people killed on the roads through mobile phone distraction. The campaign featured the high profile multi-Grammy and international award winner Pharrell Williams where advertisements appeared on over 200 bus shelters across NSW.



Technology: the missing link

While we know that education and enforcement works, the NRMA believes that the missing link in addressing driver distraction is technology. Apps are available that help prevent drivers from being distracted by their phone while driving, such as VicRoad's Road Mode android app. Other apps such as DriveSafe Mode allows parents to monitor or control the devices of their children. Parents will be notified if their young driver is texting, using social media or any other mobile app while the car is in motion.

Technology companies are also recognising the value they can add to road safety. An example of this is the Do Not Disturb While Driving feature in Apple's new iOS 11 operating system. This feature will automatically detect when someone is in a car and will block notifications and texts and stop drivers from opening apps on their phone. The NRMA welcomes this feature as a step in the right direction in reducing distraction, but acknowledges that the challenge will be getting drivers to enable the function every time they get behind the wheel.



What's the law?

NSW Legislation

In the NSW Road Rules 2014, Rule 300 states that it is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. This includes:

- talking
- texting
- playing games
- taking photos/video
- using any other function on your phone.

Drivers or riders however are able to use their mobile phone to make or answer a call and use the audio playing function (e.g. music) only if the phone is either:

- In a cradle fixed to the vehicle and doesn't obscure their view of the road;
- Can be operated without touching any part of the phone, such as via Bluetooth or voice activation[16].
- Drivers are able to use their mobile phone as a driver's aid (e.g. GPS) only if the phone is in a cradle fixed to the vehicle and doesn't obscure their view of the road.

Drivers or riders cannot use their mobile phones for anything else, including:

- Texting or audio texting
- Emailing
- Using social media
- Taking photos
- Video messaging

To use these functions, the vehicle must be parked out of the line of traffic and not be used when the vehicle is stopped, including waiting in traffic.

Young Drivers

Learner, P1 and P2 licence holders in NSW are not allowed to use a mobile phone at all while driving, including use as a drivers aid (e.g. GPS)[18 19]. However, they are able to use a GPS device as long as the device is secured in a mount fixed to the vehicle and does not obscure the driver's view of the road.

Outdated road rules

The NRMA believes that it is critical that drivers have control of the vehicle at all times. While the current laws are sufficient, they should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain up to date with the latest technological advances. An example of this is NSW Road Rules 2014 Rule 300 (3) that states:

For the purposes of this rule, a driver does not use a phone to receive a text message, video message, email or similar communication if:

(a) *the communication is received automatically by the phone, and*

(b) *on and after receipt, the communication itself (rather than any indication that the communication has been received) does not become automatically visible on the screen of the phone.*

This sub rule is outdated as many mobile phones now provide summary information of messages rather than just an indication of receipt.

ACT Legislation

In the ACT, fully licensed drivers and riders cannot use hand-held mobile phones. Like in NSW, drivers are able to make or answer a call and use the audio playing function (e.g. music) only if the phone is either:

- In a cradle fixed to the vehicle and doesn't obscure their view of the road;
- Can be operated without touching any part of the phone, such as via Bluetooth or voice activation.

There are currently no additional mobile phone restrictions for young drivers in the ACT.

Given the increased crash risk of young drivers and the greater prevalence of this cohort using mobile phones, the NRMA believes that mobile phone restrictions should apply for ACT Learners and Provisional licence holders.

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Comments & Queries

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