

Friday 5 July 2019

ROAD DANGERS AT DAWN AND DUSK

A key factor contributing to increased risk to road users at dawn and dusk is the effect the rising and setting sun has on our vision. Just after sunrise and before sunset the sun is low and can shine directly into a driver's eyes, the glare results in impaired vision which can impact a driver's ability. This is particularly noticeable when driving east in the morning towards the rising sun and west in the evening towards the setting sun.

Visibility is particularly poor at dusk and dawn because natural light is reduced and it isn't dark enough for headlights to be completely effective. Although the sky may still be light, the road will be darker with deep shadows and there is less contrast in colours.

In Narrandera many of the streets form an east-west and north-south grid which results in high risk intersections at dawn and dusk - particularly in the town centre with the combination of traffic, pedestrians and low visibility.

Wildlife and livestock on country roads pose an added risk to motorists. Wildlife, such as kangaroos and wallabies, are more active and harder to see at dawn and dusk.

Many people are on the roads around the time of the sunrise and sunset and may, have just woken up or are returning home after a long day at work. Tiredness has a severe effect on focus and reaction time, which is made worse by the position of the sun.

Both drivers and pedestrians should take extra precautions to compensate for the reduced visibility at dawn and dusk. Drivers should follow the tips below to minimise the effect of glare and low visibility, while pedestrians need to be conscious of the difficulty drivers will have seeing them.

Tips for drivers:

- Wear sunglasses – if the sun is directly in your eyes, put on sunglasses. Otherwise leave them off at dawn and dusk—they reduce the already limited light reaching your eyes. Keep a pair in your car where you can access them easily and safely.
- Use the sun visor – adjust the sun visor to block the sun from shining directly into your eyes.
- Adjust your driving – low visibility increases reaction time, reducing speed and leaving extra space between vehicles reduces the risk of a crash.
- Turn on headlights – this will increase your visibility to other drivers.
- Avoid driving at dawn and dusk – leaving just half an hour earlier or later can help avoid problems with glare. If glare is making it very difficult to see pull over in a safe place and stop for a break.
- Be aware of hazards – pedestrians, wildlife and livestock can all behave unpredictably and be difficult to see at dawn and dusk. Joggers, runners and cyclists are often on the road at these times and difficult to see.
- Keep the windscreen in good condition – keep your windscreen clean on both the inside and outside as clean glass reduces the impact of glare. Pitted and cracked windscreens make it harder to see so should be replaced.

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Tips for pedestrians:

- Avoid being on the road – use footpaths and nature strips to stay away from motor vehicles rather than being on the edge of the road.
- Cross roads with care – be mindful of drivers reduced visibility, particularly when they are driving into the sun. At pedestrian crossings don't assume drivers have seen you and will stop, wait until they have stopped their vehicle.
- Be visible – if you are out walking, jogging or running increase your visibility to others by wearing light coloured, reflective and high visibility clothing.
- Face oncoming traffic – walk, jog or run on the side of the road heading towards oncoming vehicles.
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Safety on the road is everyone's responsibility. Whether you are a driver or a pedestrian adjusting your behaviour is required to reduce the risks at dawn and dusk.



Caption: Reduced visibility at dawn and dusk requires extra precautions by drivers and pedestrians.

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Precis or Summary: July Road Safety Editorial – Road dangers at dawn and dusk			
Attachments	Nil	Embargoed: N/A	
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Distribution To: Media – Local		Number: 19/20-	03