



## *Media Statement*

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**Media Release**

### **2007 RPH Trauma Registry Report**

#### **More Western Australians hurt not using seatbelts or helmets**

More road users are being maimed on WA roads for refusing to use helmets and seatbelts.

The 2007 Royal Perth Hospital Trauma Registry Report – released this weekend – shows Western Australians are flouting the laws and being injured in the process.

**Helmet compliance has fallen 16 per cent**, with only 63 per cent of hospitalised motorbike patients reported as wearing helmets compared to 79 per cent compliance in 2006.

In 2007, 43.6 per cent of rear-seat passengers admitted to RPH had not been wearing a seatbelt, up from 36.4 per cent in 2005.

**Over two years this represents a 7 per cent increase in the number of injured back seat passengers not wearing a seatbelt.**

State Director of Trauma Dr Sudhakar Rao said the number of people still not wearing seatbelts was a concern.

“All the literature and evidence we have says that seatbelts save lives, yet people chose to ignore this fact,” he said.

“When travelling at speed and there is a collision, those not wearing belts can be flung from the car at even greater speeds, putting them at risk of death or permanent head and spinal injuries.

“The use, or non-use, of helmets tells a similar story. In 2007, more motorbike users not wearing helmets were brought into hospital than in the previous year.

“This trend is a worrying one. Like seatbelts, these devices are designed to save lives.”

Dr Rao said the Trauma Registry Report showed that those people not using helmets faced much longer stays in hospital and in rehabilitation.

“The sorts of injuries we see that involve motorcycle riders not wearing helmets are extreme – some of these people lose mental and physical capacities and go on to live a life of greatly reduced quality,” he said.

Dr Rao said risk taking behaviour such as not wearing seatbelts or helmets was exacerbated when people took drugs or used alcohol.

The Trauma Registry Report showed that RPH dealt with an overall 10 per cent increase in trauma patients in 2007, with the hospital treating 4490 patients, up from 4080 the previous year.

While the overall number of trauma cases was up, the number of major trauma cases was down 24.7 per cent from the previous year.

Based on an internationally recognised injury classification system, a major trauma is defined as an injury that threatens life or limb.

The total number of major trauma cases for 2007 was 389. Most trauma cases were unintentional (85.7 per cent) and 10 per cent were the result of personal assaults.

The report also showed that the major cause of death for RPH trauma patients after a car crash in 2007 was head injuries (22 per cent of hospitalised trauma deaths), followed by respiratory (20 per cent) and cardiac events (13 per cent).

There were 479 spinal admissions in 2007, of which (28.6 per cent) were from major trauma.

**Patients suffering neurological damage as a result of spinal injury went up by 29.4 per cent in the past year.**

Most of the spinal injuries were a result of vehicle-related trauma (54 per cent) followed by falls (27 per cent).

Young males (in the 15 to 44 age group) were most prone to suffering a trauma injury. This group made up 66 per cent of all trauma cases, compared to 32 per cent in females.

By age, people aged 15 to 24 were most likely to suffer a trauma injury (26.2 per cent of all trauma cases in 2007), closely followed by the 25 to 34 age group at 20.8 per cent.

Dr Rao said the opening of the State Major Trauma Unit at RPH last February was a significant step in helping the Hospital to deliver exceptional care to trauma victims.

***To organise an interview with Dr Sudhakar Rao today (Sunday, July 27) please contact: RPH Acting Public Relations Manager, Dennis Bertoldo, 0404 894 034.***