



*Reducing the incidence and impact of road trauma in Victoria.*

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- Support to the injured, family members and friends of those who have died or were injured, drivers, and witnesses of road crashes
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- Peer support from volunteers who really understand
- Information and referral to supporting agencies
- Support and debriefing for groups
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- Education sessions for community and service groups, schools, businesses etc.

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*Proudly supported by*



# Shoulder - to - Shoulder

The quarterly newsletter of the Road Trauma Support Team (Vic) inc.

## **Jeanette Suhr AOM**

### **Recognition for the founder!**

The Queen's Birthday Honours List included a very worthwhile recipient this year. The founder of RTSTV, Jeanette Suhr, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community through the establishment and development of the Road Trauma Support Team in Victoria. It is marvellous that all the hard work and dedication over many years has been recognised in this very public way.

### **Congratulations from all at RTSTV, Jeanette!**

#### **Message from the CEO**

So many lose their lives or are injured on our roads each year. How many tragedies must happen before driving habits change? Mildura, Donald, the Burnley Tunnel and most recently Kerang. It really does jump out at you that three out of four of the major disasters in recent times have been in regional and rural areas. It is therefore vital that our essential face to face services are available to all Victorians, regardless of where they live or work.

The RTSTV board and staff are working hard to plan the roll out of our services and to secure ongoing funding to allow it to happen. RTSTV delivers its core services of counselling and support free of charge so that we can help **reduce the impact of road trauma in Victoria**; we believe this is crucial as those who are traumatised from a collision do not need extra burdens placed on them.

We will use every ounce of energy to ensure our services remain free and to ensure they are accessible. Future income may come from a variety of

sources, but our independence and integrity will not be put at risk. Developing and building our educational programmes is one way of increasing our income. More than that, however, it is also a tangible way of trying to **reduce the incidence of road trauma in Victoria**.

Corporate sponsorship or partnerships are of course a two way street – RTSTV can gain income and support for the work we do, and businesses can know they are making a worthwhile contribution to a current and seemingly overwhelming issue, and at the same time their employees can benefit from the many opportunities to use their skills towards helping achieve our mission. RTSTV is proud of the relationship developed this year with Tenix Solutions and appreciates the support we receive. If you work for or head a business that would like to partner with us, please do make contact.

Regards

Julie Parke

helpline: 1300 367 797  
website: [www.rtstv.org.au](http://www.rtstv.org.au)

phone: 9877 7922  
address: 2 / 109 Whitehorse Rd, Blackburn Vic 3130

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*We do not believe if we do not live and work according to our belief.*

*- Heidi Wills*

CEO

#### Meet the Board

RTSTV has an amazing and dedicated Board and we would like to share a little of their background with you...

#### Ian Mikkelsen

Growing up in country Victoria (mainly Horsham) Ian attended RMIT where he graduated with a Bachelor of Business. Later he completed post-graduate studies in information technology.

Ian pursued a career in chartered accountancy and internal audit within major financial and non-financial organisations. Recently he retired after serving as Chief Internal Auditor of Tattersall's Limited for nearly seven years.

Married to Ruth for eighteen years, they have two teenage children - one just commenced driving on "L"s.

Always maintaining a keen interest in cars and safe driving, Ian is delighted to join the board of RTSTV to assist an excellent organisation with general business, financial and control matters.

Increasingly Ian is interested in general personal wellbeing and general community and environment issues – particularly water conservation and climate change.

#### Mary Harty

Mary has been on the RTSTV board for over three years and holds a Bachelor of Social Science Degree from Deakin University and a Bachelor of Social Work Degree from the University of Melbourne. Mary has worked as a social worker in the health sector for the last seventeen years.

Mary's social work experience at the Alfred Hospital Emergency Department and Intensive Care Unit brought home the reality of road trauma and its impact on patients and their families. Also having experienced the loss of life and injuries due to road trauma in her personal life, Mary has been inspired to help in this area. Since 2000, Mary has worked at the Austin Hospital, since 2000, in the Emergency and

Paediatric ward and so interfaces with the realities of road trauma .

Mary has always been heartened by the RTSTV 's ability to case manage / counsel people when they are at the end of the road with other organisations in terms of support. The beauty of the RTSTV is that the availability of support for those affected by road trauma need not end due to the organisation's wonderful programmes and the volunteer support that the organisation offers; this to Mary is one of the organisation's unique qualities.

#### Who else is on the board?

Andy Calder - President  
Don Callahan - Vice President  
Jilane Matinga - Secretary  
Vicki Withers  
Ann Holland  
Rob Read  
Kim Chatwin-Smith

Watch this space for more profiles about the board members!

#### Did you know?

- More than half of all fatal crashes occur at impact speeds under 60km/h
- A typical side impact fatality occurs at less than 40km/h
- Each 5km/h above the speed limit doubles the risk of being involved in a serious accident.

#### Thank you

It is through support that RTSTV is able to operate. This quarter we would like to thank the following for their support :

Ready Gifts have been kind enough to



donate a beautiful gift basket of goodies for our upcoming trivia night on 18 August.

#### Operations

The impact of road trauma

helpline: 1300 367 797  
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Interested in an education session?

Please contact the office and book a date - but hurry as the calendar is filling fast. We ask for a donation from all but other community groups and professionals working in the area of grief and trauma.

More than 300 people are killed annually on Victorian roads. Each day 46 people are seriously injured in motor vehicle collisions. Drivers, passengers, witnesses, first on scene and others are also impacted. Road trauma can involve anyone in the community.

#### Trauma reactions

Following a collision, or when a pedestrian has been hit, people who have been involved directly or indirectly, may experience psychological responses to the trauma.

In the following days and weeks the driver, passengers, witnesses and those first on scene may experience flashbacks, disturbed sleep, anxiety, confusion, guilt, anger, disbelief and feelings of helplessness. Some may become frightened of driving again or be fearful of having people close to them drive or to be a passenger in a motor vehicle. For some, their basic assumptions about safety in the world have been shattered, and they feel that nothing is 'safe' any more.

Some people may experience very few, if any, of these responses. For other people though, these reactions may, at times be overwhelming.

The Road Trauma Support Team Victoria offers counselling, information, education and support to anyone in Victoria who has experienced road trauma.

#### Grief following road trauma

Those who have had a loved one die as the result of road trauma experience intense grief as well as trauma. The suddenness and unexpectedness of deaths on the road leave family members and friends shocked, devastated, angry, numb, empty and confused.

The Road Trauma Support Team Victoria provides counselling, volunteer support and a recently re-activated monthly support group for people who have been bereaved as the result of road trauma.

Bereaved parents, partners, adult

siblings, friends and workmates are some of the people who access the services of the RTSTV following a death on the roads.

A brochure 'Grief following road trauma' is available. Please call **1300 367 797** to obtain a copy.

#### Support services

The Road Trauma Support Team Victoria offers a range of services to people experiencing the aftermath of road trauma. Qualified counsellors work in partnership, or 'shoulder to shoulder' with Volunteer Peer Supporters and Volunteer Support Group Facilitators to provide counselling, support and information to people who have been bereaved as the result of a motor vehicle collision, drivers, passengers, witnesses, people first on the scene, carers of loved ones with an ABI, and others who have been affected by road trauma.

#### Education services

The Traffic Offenders Program has undergone significant development with ten new educators currently undergoing training. All come with a wealth of knowledge and experience and will enhance the Traffic Offenders Program greatly.

RTSTV would like to grow this program through introducing it the peninsula region in the near future.

We are excited to announce the Youth Offenders Program will be receiving funding to maintain the programs that are currently operating in the Southern Region. In collaboration with Box Hill Youth Justice, RTSTV will be conducting a four week Youth Offenders Program. This is another area RTSTV is investigating developing.

#### Volunteering at RTSTV

As usual our volunteers are working tirelessly. Recently the organisation officially recognised their efforts during *National Volunteer Week*. Former Manger of the Victims Advisory Unit with the Victoria Police, Rob Read was the guest speaker.

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Highly regarded by many emergency workers and other professionals in the field, his talk was both informative and interesting. The evening was a huge success.

Those interested in volunteering at RTSTV please email Jan [jan.steele@rtstv.org.au](mailto:jan.steele@rtstv.org.au) or phone on 9877 7922.

As one volunteer peer supporter said so eloquently:

***"I support other (bereaved) parents for two reasons. First, I would've appreciated support from another bereaved parent at the time my child died, because I would've known that (she) would know what it was like, and (she) could've given me reassurance that what I was experiencing was normal. Secondly, because I have had the unique experience of having a child die, I want to use that experience by making something positive come out of that." (Bereaved mother)***

#### Membership Form

Support groups meetings  
 Bereavement support group (partners)  
 1st Wednesday of the month  
 Bereavement support group (parents)  
 2nd Wednesday of the month  
 Drivers' support group  
 3rd Wednesday of the month  
 ABI Carers' Support Group  
 three monthly - 3rd Wednesday  
*Please contact the office for more information.*

#### Contributions to this newsletter:

We welcome and encourage contributions of articles and news items from interested parties, but cannot accept anonymous contributions. Editorial right is reserved. Please submit in Word format to [info@rtstv.org.au](mailto:info@rtstv.org.au) or in hardcopy to the Blackburn office.

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