



Crash deaths of children may have been prevented if ‘buckle-up’ message heeded

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Kids are dying in car crashes because some parents and carers are failing to heed the ‘Buckle-Up Safely’ message, the NSW Child Death Review Team (CDRT) has found.

Ombudsman Michael Barnes has tabled a report in the NSW Parliament reviewing the deaths of 66 children aged less than 13 years who died as passengers in vehicle crashes in NSW between 2007-2016.

‘It is deeply concerning that 20 of the deaths – almost one in three – may have been prevented if the children had been properly restrained in the vehicle’, Mr Barnes said.

The Ombudsman said the 20 deaths did not include cases where a restraint or seatbelt would not have made a difference to survival due to the severity of the crash.

‘In total, just over half (35) of the 66 children were unrestrained, not using the right restraint for the child’s age, or were using a restraint incorrectly. We must take every opportunity to encourage parents and carers to ensure their children are properly buckled-up. That includes making sure the seatbelt or restraint fits the child, is properly tethered in the vehicle, and that straps are correctly placed’, Mr Barnes said.

The review also found clear links between the risk of a child dying in a crash and social disadvantage.

‘Risk of death was higher for children living in the most disadvantaged areas of the state, those living outside of major cities, and for Aboriginal children. This is alarming and I have recommended that strategies to improve restraint practices be specifically targeted to these communities,’ Mr Barnes said.

The report also recommended regular monitoring of child restraint practices across NSW, wider dissemination of information on best practice for restraining children, and measures to reduce misuse through restraint design and product standard requirements.

The Ombudsman thanked Dr Julie Brown from Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), who undertook the review on behalf of the CDRT.

Key statistics

Of the 66 children aged 0-12 years who died as passengers in NSW during the period 2007-16:

- More than half (35) were not properly restrained
- Correct use of a child restraint or seatbelt might have prevented the deaths of 20 children.

The report will be available on the Ombudsman’s website from 4.30pm. Read the [report](#).