



NATIONAL MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 6am, Thursday 25 February, 2010

Car Kids Driving Us Crazy

Research conducted on behalf of leading insurer AAMI is indicating that the household challenges of raising today's kids are spilling over into the mobile microcosm of the family car. With parents spending an increasing amount of time ferrying children through dense traffic, the resulting pressures are clearly starting to affect driver behaviours negatively.

In a nationwide poll¹, nearly half of drivers interviewed (44%) said their children were distracting them from concentrating on the road. Nearly one-in-three (29%) admit they sometimes feel their behaviour behind the wheel is a bad influence on their children.

AAMI Corporate Affairs Manager Yves Noldus said that although worrying, the findings were not entirely surprising. "The person behind the wheel is often doing the routine parenting, but in a confined space, in which children have few outlets for their energy. That means coping with typical child behaviour, keeping them safe, providing some supervision and acting as a positive role model, all while already dealing with the stressful task of negotiating traffic. For many, that is proving just too much," he noted.

Safety is clearly the primary concern for driver-parents. Only one-in-25 (4%) say their children don't always wear their seatbelts or child restraints.

"The safety benefits of seatbelts are clearly well recognised. For many parents, they probably also help keeping the kids in one spot and out of major mischief," Mr Noldus said.

"However, the pressure of the driving workload does seem to make us cut corners in other areas, with drivers often failing to live up to their task as perfect role models for their children. Very often conflict with other road users is the trigger," he said.

A report published by AAMI in August last year² indicated that more than half of drivers (56%) admit to having gestured rudely or yelled at another motorist, and many take it to even more extreme levels.

"With one-in-three drivers admitting they sometimes set a bad example, there is a clear risk that many children end up witnessing the impact of traffic stress on their parents' actions and words and assume such behaviour is part and parcel of life behind the wheel. This has the potential to define the driving behaviours of coming generations and lead to more road rage incidents in the future," Mr Noldus warned.

"Driving is a complex task and requires full concentration. We urge drivers to remain calm at all times, whether the distraction is coming from other road users or from their own children. Keep your eyes on the road at all times and resist the temptation to check on the kids by continuously looking in the rear view mirror. If things do get a bit too wild, find a safe spot to stop or wait until you get to your destination before dealing with the situation. Don't turn around while driving under any circumstance.

"After all, our primary concern should be the children's safety and getting distracted while driving is often the cause of an unsafe and costly incident," he concluded.

**For more information, contact:
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¹ AAMI's research is based on an independent telephone and internet survey of 2523 Australians, conducted by Sweeney Research across all states and territories. Collected data is carefully weighted in line with current ABS population demographics to ensure any extrapolation of results is representative of age, gender and population on a regional, state and national basis.

² See AAMI 2009 Crash Index, at: <http://www.aami.com.au/Resources/File.aspx?id=158>