



## *Media Statement*

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### **2006 RPH Trauma Registry Report**

#### **More West Australians not wearing seatbelts – and getting hurt**

More West Australians are refusing to wear seat-belts when they are a passenger in the back of a car – and as a result they are ending up in hospital with significant injuries.

The 2006 Royal Perth Hospital Trauma Registry Report – released this weekend – shows that the number of rear-seat passengers admitted to RPH after a car crash, who were not wearing seatbelts, rose significantly in the past year.

In 2005, 36.4 per cent of rear-seat passengers admitted to RPH had not been wearing a seatbelt, and **in 2006 that figure rose to 51.8 per cent.**

State Director of Trauma Dr Sudhakar Rao said that failure to wear a seatbelt often meant the difference between walking away from a crash with just a scratch - or not walking away at all.

Dr Rao said people who had used drugs or alcohol were less likely to use seat belts, and that drivers and front seat passengers tended to wear seatbelts significantly more than rear-seat passengers.

“People who don’t wear seatbelts are ejected from their seats when the car crashes, which increases the severity of their injuries,” he said.

“These people present to hospital with severe head and spinal injuries – many of them will never recover and many of them will die.”

Dr Rao said that an increasing number of head and spinal injuries was straining rehabilitation services. "People who sustain these injuries require intensive ongoing care from medical and rehabilitation services and this can also strain families," Dr Rao said

RPH received 452 spinal injury admissions in 2006, with vehicle-related trauma the main cause (59.2 per cent), followed by falls (25 per cent).  
**This is a 22% increase in major spinal injuries from the previous year.**

RPH received 330 head injury admissions in 2006 – which were mostly major injuries, caused by vehicle-related trauma (41 per cent), followed by falls (25 per cent).

**This is a 30% increase in head injuries from the previous year.**

The Trauma Registry Report showed that the major cause of death for RPH trauma patients after a car crash in 2006 was head injuries (29 per cent of hospitalised trauma deaths).

For the second year in a row, the postcode 6107 (Beckenham, Cannington, Kenwick, Queens Park, Wattle Grove, Wilson) was the top metropolitan location for road trauma presenting at Royal Perth Hospital.

While road / vehicle related trauma remains a significant cause of major trauma, accidents in the home such as falls, still cause the largest number of presentations to Emergency Departments a year.

Of RPH's 4080 total trauma admissions last year, 40 per cent were from falls.

Another statistic that does not show any change, is that of the total number of trauma admissions, 65.7 per cent are male – mainly in the 15 to 35 year age group.

While the vast majority of trauma injuries were unintentional, about 12 per cent were the result of assault or domestic violence. Dr Rao said it was concerning that the percentage of personal assaults had risen from 8.9 per cent in 2005 to 10.5 per cent in 2006 - equating to an extra 64 cases in 2006.

The statistics in the past few years' Trauma Registry Reports show that people are most likely to be injured on a public holiday, followed by a school holiday, rather than a "normal" day, and that significantly more injuries occur on Saturday and Sundays.

The 2006 Royal Perth Hospital Trauma Registry Report can be found on the RPH website, at: <http://www.rph.wa.gov.au/trauma.html>

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