

Proudly supported by



RTSS offers...

- Support to the injured, family members and friends of those who have died or were injured, drivers, and witnesses of road crashes
- Free individual support and counselling with qualified counsellors
- Peer support from volunteers who really understand
- Information and referral to supporting agencies
- Support and debriefing for groups
- Education for traffic offenders in conjunction with the Courts
- Presentations to community and service groups, businesses etc.



# Shoulder-to-Shoulder

The quarterly newsletter of Road Trauma Support Services Victoria Inc.

**Summer 2011**

## Message from the editor:

Welcome to the new look Summer edition of Shoulder-to-Shoulder. In addition to our new look we have also introduced a new segment in which people within the road trauma/safety arena will share their thoughts and hopefully generate some debate around key issues.

We are delighted to have as our first contributor, Dr de Villiers Smit, Director, Emergency and Trauma Centre at The Alfred Hospital and a recent addition to the RTSSV Board. Since the last edition of Shoulder-to-Shoulder, RTSSV has said goodbye to our Executive Officer, Sarah Smyth and welcomed a new Chief Executive Officer, Paul Ashton. RTSSV would like to thank Sarah for the stability and focus she provided the organisation and for the harmony she fostered. In addition to Dr de Villiers Smit joining our Board, we also welcome Phil Ashfield in the role of Honorary Treasurer. Read more about both de Villiers and Phil further in the newsletter. - **Editor**

Operation RAID (Removing All Impaired Drivers) commenced on 26 November and runs until 12 December.

During the first 10 days of Operation RAID Victoria Police have:

- breath tested 252,084 motorists
- detected 957 BAC (drink-driving) offences
- conducted 1196 roadside drug tests
- detected 34 drug-driving offences

## How do healthcare workers deal with the psychological impact of managing trauma patients?

As an Emergency Physician working in the busiest Trauma Centre in Australasia, I deal with the severely injured patient on a daily basis. This is what we're trained to do, and we have rigorous processes to ensure that we provide the best care to our patients. What we don't get any training in though, is the psychological impact this could potentially have on us.

I was faced with an interesting scenario last week which made me think. A patient was brought in by ambulance following a serious accident in which she lost her arm, sustained multiple fractures to her limbs and injuries to her chest. A junior nurse, not involved with this patient's care approached me afterwards asking me about the management of the patient. As I began to explain the injuries to her, I couldn't help but notice the look of horror on her face. "Do you ever get any counselling after dealing with injuries like this?" she asked me. The answer is "no". We occasionally have debriefing sessions to discuss patient management and team work following a specific incident, but rarely do we ask for more formal support. The question is whether we need to? Have we become immune to this impact, or have we developed mechanisms to protect ourselves? Or will this impact be latent in our subconscious and manifest in other areas of our lives?

I don't proclaim to know the answer to these questions, but why do I cringe at seeing a seriously injured patient on TV, yet won't blink an eye when dealing with this in real life?

One thing I teach my junior doctors is to have a clear separation between work and private life. When at work, I devote all my time to my patients. When I leave work, I rarely take patients "home" in my head. Home is where I relax and recharge for the next day. I believe this is very important, and failure to do so will lead to the well described "burnout" that healthcare workers suffer from so frequently.

**Dr. de Villiers Smit**  
Director, Emergency and Trauma Centre, The Alfred Hospital

## Festive Season Giving

Whilst Christmas is a time of joy or celebration for many, it is also the most dangerous time of the year, especially for younger drivers aged 18-25. At this time of giving we would ask you to consider making a donation to support our work in counselling people who have had their life and dreams shattered by a motor vehicle crash. Your gift this Christmas could help someone start to rebuild their life.

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*I would like to support Road Trauma Support Service's Christmas Appeal.*

My donation is:  \$100  \$75  \$50  \$30 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(donations of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible and a receipt will be provided)*

Method of Payment: Cheque / MasterCard / Visa / AMEX

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you would like further information regarding our work please indicate below:**

- Please send me information on your bequest programme
- Please send me information on volunteering
- I would like to make a major gift, please contact me

To donate please complete the form with your cheque or credit card details and mail or fax to:

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria  
PO Box 1832, Blackburn North Vic 3130 **OR**  
Fax: (03) 9877 9799 Telephone: (03) 9877 7922

**Thank you for generously supporting our work**



The team at Road Trauma Support Services would like to wish our readers best wishes for the festive season and a safe start to 2011.



**Counselling Service Freecall 1300 367 797**

## Working together

After only nine days in the role of CEO at RTSSV, I was asked to give a two minute talk to a group of business professionals on what the organisation does and why business should support us. I started the talk by saying that 25% of people involved in motor vehicle crashes are aged 16 – 25 and went on to explain the organisation's role in counselling and education, finishing with a statistic; that every 26 hours, one Victorian dies on our roads.

Given the spate of recent tragic incidents on our roads it is not surprising that some members of the audience spoke to me afterwards and said that the work that we do is vital, and that as parents, they hold their breath every time their child goes out on the roads.

Whilst I am new to the role I believe that this organisation is very special, that its staff and volunteers have a role to play, not only in supporting people affected by road trauma, but also in working to change attitudes to driving, speed, alcohol and most importantly to the three in combination.

Our aim is to see RTSSV, in conjunction with TAC, Victoria Police and other agencies positioned as a key player in the fight against the road toll. I see our role in providing education as a key part of that process, our volunteers, those whose lives have been affected, as well as those who have offended and have changed their attitudes, play a critical role in influencing our community's attitudes to driving. This will not be an easy task, nor are there any quick fixes.

As road users we are all part of the problem and part of the solution. It is through vigilance, better skills and the development of a more responsible attitude that we will all be able to make our roads safer.

**Paul Ashton**  
Chief Executive Officer

### STOP PRESS

In an effort to further reduce the incidence and impact of road trauma, RTSSV has launched a facebook page. The purpose of the page is to inform the public of RTSSV's services and keep road safety uppermost in the minds of all Victorians.

If you are a facebook user, you can help us by:

- Logging into facebook and becoming a fan of 'Road Trauma Support Services Victoria'
- Click on 'Suggest to Friends' and send the link to all your facebook friends.



## New Board Members

**Phil Ashfield (bottom left)**

Phil is currently self employed, managing a Private Investment company. Prior to this, he was involved for 13 years in a family manufacturing business where he held the position of Financial Controller. Previous to this, Phil spent more than 10 years at KPMG in a variety of roles in the Finance Department. Phil has a Bachelor of Business in Accountancy which he achieved with distinction.

Phil is actively involved in his local community and is a past President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Warrandyte Junior Football Club, is the current Treasurer of the Warrandyte Festival Committee and is also a mentor in the World Vision "Kid's Hope" program.

Phil and his wife Joy also enjoy being involved in the lives of their 3 active teenage children and their many sporting, cultural and musical pursuits. Phil's other interests include golf, tennis and music.



**de Villiers Smit (above right)**

Dr. de Villiers Smit is an Emergency Physician with a keen interest in Trauma. He is the Director of the Emergency and Trauma Centre at The Alfred, as well as Director of Emergency Services for Alfred Health. He has worked in some of the largest Trauma Centres in South Africa, the UK, Hong Kong and New Zealand.

When not at work, he enjoys running, cycling, kick boxing and a good movie. His motto is " life is too short for drinking bad wine although any glass of wine tastes better listening to Dame Joan Sutherland".

## Time for Remembering

RTSSV commemorated World Road Trauma Awareness Day on Sunday 20 November through its annual Time for Remembering ceremony at Parliament House. Over 120 people attended, including families and friends directly affected by the loss of loved ones. As an indication of the commitment of Government to reduce the road toll and support RTSSV there was strong representation from TAC, Victoria Police and the Government with two Ministers, Tim Pallas and Tim Holding in attendance.

Tim Pallas, representing the Premier spoke from the heart about the governments understanding of the impact of road trauma on peoples lives and the ripple affect across the community and of how the government was committed to working to reduce the road toll.

RTSSV will continue to work with government and road safety partners to promote safe driving messages, deliver strong education programs aimed at changing driver attitudes and behaviours and provide support to people whose lives have been affected by road trauma and grief.

## Run to Reduce Road Trauma

RTSSV is fortunate to be the recipient of the proceeds from the Alpine Challenge to be held on 19-21 March 2011.

Taking in some of Victoria's best high country, with over 7,000 meters of ascent and descent, this run is the classic 100 mile mountain challenge and will test participants to the limit as it traverses some of the hardest and most exposed areas of the Australian Alps.

If 100 miles seems a bit daunting runners and walkers can do the short course (100km) option or the 60km Alpine Experience.

If you would like to support RTSSV in a fun, healthy way, why not join in the running of the fourth 100 mile (160km) Alpine Challenge in the spectacular Alpine National Park.

The event can be run individually, in teams of two or four or in a relay with colleagues or friends.

If the run sounds too much like hard work, why not support somebody who is running or become a volunteer.

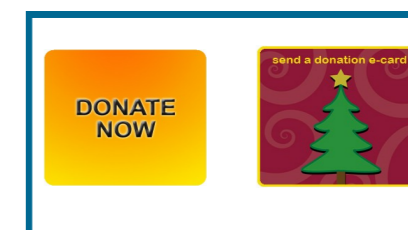
We are looking for volunteers to help out over the weekend of 19-21 March, as timekeepers, photographer, marshalls, drivers, gofers etc.

The event will not only change your life, but funds raised will assist RTSSV help those struggling with the impact of road trauma.

To support a participant or to donate to RTSSV click on the 'donate now' button above right or at [www.rtssv.org.au](http://www.rtssv.org.au). Alternatively you can donate by completing the donation form at the end of this newsletter. To volunteer to assist with the Alpine Challenge call Paul Ashton on 0418 136 070 or email [Paul.Ashton@rtssv.org.au](mailto:Paul.Ashton@rtssv.org.au) for more details.

## Christmas E-cards

If supporting an Alpine Challenge participant isn't for you then why not consider sending a Christmas E-Card and support RTSSV at the same time. Imagine the money you can save purchasing cards and postage not to mention the time!! Just click on the Christmas tree symbol above right to start your order.



## Did you know ....?:

- November 2010 had the lowest number of fatalities of any month since records began in 1952 with twelve people losing their life
- Ten men lost their lives and two women in November
- However, on the back of this record low, four people were killed in the first six days of December
- Traditionally December is one of the worst months of the year for fatalities