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MEDIA RELEASE

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CHANGES TO SLOW DOWN TO 40KM/H RULE

Changes will be made to the road rules following the completion of a trial requiring drivers to slow down to 40km/h when passing stationary emergency vehicles with flashing blue or red lights.

From September 26:

- Drivers will no longer need to slow down to 40km/h on roads with speed limits of 90km/h or over.
- Drivers will continue to be required to slow down to 40km/h on roads with speed limits of 80km/h or under.
- The rule will be expanded to include tow trucks and breakdown assistance vehicles, which are displaying yellow flashing lights while stopped on the road.

Minister for Roads Andrew Constance and Minister for Regional Roads Paul Toole said 926 infringements were issued during the 12-month trial aimed at keeping emergency service workers safe while working by the roadside.

“We’ve monitored the impact of the rule over the past year and taken on board feedback from the public and stakeholders about the trial. We’re now implementing changes to make the rule safer for everyone,” Mr Constance said.

These changes include the speed drivers need to slow down to in certain circumstances to avoid unsafe practices like hard braking.

On roads with speed limits of 90km/h or over drivers will need to:

- Slow to a speed which is safe and reasonable for the circumstances;
- Give sufficient space between their vehicle and the breakdown assistance or emergency vehicle and workers.
- On multi-lane roads, drivers must change lanes to keep the lane next to the vehicle free if it is safe to do so.

“These changes are about slowing down safely,” Mr Toole said.

“If you are driving on roads 90km/h or over you will need to consider how close you are to the stationary vehicle and slow to a safer speed and give as much space to the vehicle as you can.”

In the five years from 2014 to 2018 around 85 per cent of crashes where emergency service vehicles were stopped at the roadside happened in 80km/h speed zones and below.

NSW Police have also adjusted their practices so officers are stopping in safer locations which are more visible to approaching drivers.

New advance warning signs are being designed for use by emergency services.

Assistant Commissioner Michael Corboy said the new rule is about ensuring the safety of not only police, but also other road users.

“We need to provide a safe working environment for our police officers, whose job it is to enforce the road rules, in an effort to improve driver behaviour and drive down the road toll,” Mr Corboy said.

“Motorists should always ‘drive to the conditions’ as part of their road safety plan.”

President of Safer Australian Roads and Highways (SARAH) Peter Frazer supports the expansion of the rule to roadside assistance personnel and tow truck drivers.

“When you see flashing lights on the road ahead, commit to “Drive So Others Survive.” Slow down and give those who are vulnerable the space they need to be safe,” Mr Frazer said.

Vision of near miss on freeway: <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/g67zEnJvrD>

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