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MEDIA RELEASE

10 years of data on pedestrian crashes highlights the need for targeted safety upgrades

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A new study by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) has highlighted opportunities to enhance pedestrian safety across the Northern Territory (NT) through targeted improvements at identified crash hotspots, including better lighting and visibility, lower speed limits, and increased support for harm reduction services.

Published in the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia,* the study examined more than a decade of police and hospital data (2013–2023) to better understand the causes and patterns of crashes involving pedestrians.

A total of 709 pedestrian crashes occurred during the study period, with 84 deaths recorded. More than 1 in 5 crashes were hit and runs, with this increasing to 1 in 4 for fatal crashes. Speed limit and darkness were found to be crucial factors for crash severity.

Pedestrian crashes typically happened when traffic was light and the weather was clear, on flat, dry, sealed roads. Visibility was a major factor in pedestrian injuries, with a fatal crash more likely at dawn and dusk and in areas without streetlights at night.

When considering speed, most pedestrian fatalities occurred on roads with speed limits of 70 km/h or higher. The influence of alcohol and drugs also greatly elevated the risk of a crash being fatal or causing severe injuries.

A Menzies-led report has also mapped the locations of crash hotspots across the NT to support targeted measures to enhance road safety. Some examples of these hotspot areas include:

- Sections of the Stuart Highway in Garramilla (Darwin), Katherine, Tennant Creek and Mparntwe (Alice Springs).
- Garramilla: sections of Progress Drive, roads around Casuarina and Palmerston Shopping Centers, sections of Trower Drive/ Bagot Road, roads around the CBD and the intersection of Vanderlin Drive and Leanyer Drive
- Katherine: intersection of Maluka Road and Acacia Drive
- Mparntwe: Gregory Terrace, Stott Terrace and sections of Gap Road.

Along with key road upgrades, targeted public health approaches like enhancing harm reduction measures (e.g. courtesy buses) are also important services to improve the safety of pedestrians.

Globally, people who use walking as their main form of transport are generally those with lower incomes due to costs involved with other modes of transport (like vehicle and fuel costs). Across the NT, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also

disproportionally affected due to broader social and structural factors, highlighting the importance of equity in road safety.

This research was supported by the Northern Territory Motor Accident Compensation Commission and contributes to ongoing efforts to improve road safety across the region.

Read the study in full online: https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.70191

Maps of pedestrian crash hotspots across the NT can be found on pages 16-19 of the Pedestrian deaths and serious injuries report.

Quotes attributable to lead author of the study, researcher from Menzies School of Health Research and Drug Policy Modelling Program, University of New South Wales, Dr Sarah Clifford:
"What this study shows is that there are some clear, practical opportunities to reduce the risk of a pedestrian crash ending in a fatality - like improving lighting on roads and reducing speed limits in higher-risk areas.

"At the same time, pedestrian safety in the Northern Territory is shaped by broader structural factors, including how safe environments are designed. Addressing both these immediate fixes and the underlying systems that contribute to risk will be critical to reducing pedestrian deaths and improving equity in road safety outcomes."

Quotes attributable to co-author and Program Lead of Menzies Alcohol and other Drug Program, Dr Cassandra Wright:
"All Territorians deserve to be safe on the roads, no matter how they get around. Reducing speed limits in areas where lots of people walk costs absolutely nothing and keeps our Territorian families safer.

"There are practical things we can do to reduce the number of lives lost on NT roads, and some are very simple. Targeted investments in lighting on high-risk roads keeps not only pedestrians safer, but drivers too.

"The high proportion of hit and runs is alarming, occurring in almost 1 in 4 fatal crashes. Post-crash care is an overlooked aspect of pedestrian crashes in the NT that needs our attention. As well as having a legal obligation to stop and notify police, what a driver does in the event of a crash has the potential to change the chances of and quality of survival for the pedestrian."

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About Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies is at the forefront of health and medical research dedicated to improving the lives of peoples across the Northern Territory, Asia Pacific and beyond. By joining scientific knowledge with community wisdom, Menzies strives to Close the Gap, and shape a healthier, more equitable future where communities can thrive.