



THE PAEDIATRIC SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

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30 October, 2008

NZ Paediatricians Urges Gov't to Give Child Car Restraint Law a `Boost'

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand today passed a unanimous resolution urging government to amend the 10 year-old child restraint law, identifying it as inadequate out of date and unsafe. The resolution was passed by the Doctors at their Annual Scientific Meeting at Waitangi this week.

"The use of correctly fitting child car restraints is one of the most convincingly proven and effective interventions for the prevention of transport related injury to children," said Dr Rosemary Marks, President of the Paediatric Society. Yet New Zealand's lack of provision for children who are older than five years means we are lagging behind the world in providing safety for children who are car passengers.

The New Zealand Road Code requires drivers in New Zealand to be responsible in ensuring all children younger than five years old are properly restrained by an approved child restraint, however older children need only use a seat belt or restraint if one is available in the vehicle.

"Advice that primary school age children require a booster seat to benefit from the full safety effects of a seat belt was known about as long ago as 1983. While seat belts offer some protection in the event of a crash, they are designed to fit the anatomical structure of an adult. Child car restraints and booster seats are essential because they offer the protection necessary for the unique body structure of a child," Dr. Marks added.

Dr. Marks said although improvements in the use of child car restraints for children aged five years and younger have been achieved, booster seat use by New Zealand children older than five years remains low. "Research has shown that over half (60%) of the children who require a booster seat, are not using one," she said.

The recommendations

To achieve more effective booster seat use within New Zealand, The Paediatric Society of New Zealand has put forward the following recommendation, strongly urging Government to:

- Amend the New Zealand Road User Rules to require the compulsory use of booster seats for child passengers who are five years and older.
- Update booster seat safety information provided by New Zealand Government agencies.
- Fund booster seat provision within existing child car restraint distribution programmes.
- Provide a widespread public education campaign on the dangers of failing to use correctly fitting child car restraints and booster seats for children.
- Commence routine monitoring and reporting of booster seat use rates in the population

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