

Podcast 99 – Car Safety Ratings in Australia

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 99 – Car Safety Ratings in Australia

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast99.mp3>

Hi,

Australians love to travel by road. It gives us flexibility when travelling and takes advantage of our large system of roads and highways. I have owned many cars and motorcycles throughout my life, so travelling by road is something I have done a lot. I have been very lucky in that I have never been involved in a major traffic accident (touch wood – I hope that continues). Sadly, many people die in road accidents in Australia each year. Thankfully, the number of road deaths has been steadily decreasing over the last 40 years or so. Car safety has been an important contributor to that reduction. In this podcast I would like to tell you a little about car safety in Australia.

In 2017, there were 1225 deaths on our roads in Australia. While this is obviously unacceptably high, the number of road deaths has actually been in decline in Australia over the last 40 years or so. This has occurred despite the population increasing and also despite the fact that the number of vehicles on the road has increased by around 300% over that time. Our number of road deaths per 100,000 people in 2017 was around 5.00. That means there were around 5 roads deaths for every 100,000 Australians. In 1975, this number was around 26 road deaths per 100,000 people. So we have improved a lot in the last 40 years and many lives have been saved. Of course, even one death is one too many. However, by world

standards, Australia is one of the safest places to drive. In some parts of the world, annual road deaths of over 30 deaths per 100,000 people are commonly experienced. That's more than 5 times the rate in Australia. By contrast, Sweden's rate is 2.8 deaths per 100,000 people. So notwithstanding Australia's low number, we can still do better.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_traffic-related_death_rate

Our governments, both Federal and State, are constantly looking for ways to reduce our road toll. For example, our Federal government is responsible for new vehicle safety standards. Cars, trucks and motorcycles have become increasingly safe over the years. I'm certain this is one of the things that has helped reduce the number of deaths on our roads. For example, our family car is a 2017 model and it has many safety features including 7 airbags, seat belt warnings, lane exit warnings, traction control, anti-skid brakes (ABS) and it warns you when you are too close to the vehicle in front. And they are just a few of the many safety features it has. I am continually amazed how smart and safe it is. My motorcycle also has ABS brakes, which I think is very important on a motorcycle, especially when riding in the rain. ABS stands for Anti-skid Braking System. It stops the wheels from locking up under hard braking, no matter how hard you press on the brake lever, even if the road is wet. If you lock up the front wheel during braking on a motorcycle, it's crash time so ABS is essential in my view. It's great to know that, from November 2019, the government has decided that all new motorcycles sold in Australia will need to have ABS fitted. That is an excellent decision that will save motorcyclists' lives.

As far as new cars are concerned, the most important safety information in Australia is the ANCAP safety rating. This rating is used on all new cars sold in Australia and New Zealand.

<http://www.ancap.com.au/>

ANCAP stands for Australasian New Car Assessment Program and it started in 1993. It measures all the safety features in new cars by using the information from actual crash tests of the cars. The top safety rating is 5 Star and the lowest safety rating is 0 Stars. When the crash tests are undertaken, there are dummies put inside the cars with measuring instruments attached, so it can be determined how real people would be affected if they had been inside the car during the crash. The testing is quite complicated so I'll only give a summary here. (See <https://www.ancap.com.au/safety-ratings-explained> for a full explanation). There are 4 areas that are measured regarding how safe the car is in a crash. They are:

1. Protection of the adults in the front and rear seats,
2. Protection of children seated in a child restraint in the rear seat,
3. Protection of pedestrians who may be hit by the front of the car, and
4. Safety assistance features which help prevent a crash from occurring or which help in reducing the effects of a crash.

Points are scored for each of these areas and they are used to calculate an overall Star Rating. If a car gets a 5 star ANCAP rating, then it is the best and safest car to choose. Anything less and the car is considered less safe. Obviously, older cars have lower ANCAP ratings. You can look up the ratings for all new cars, and some older cars, online at www.ancap.com.au. It is no wonder that car makers are very keen to get a 5 Star ANCAP rating for their new cars. Everybody wants to be safe in their new car. Getting a 5 Star ANCAP rating will help sell more cars in Australia.



Car safety in the future is going to be more and more about advanced technology. You only have to watch the news to know that driverless cars will be common place in Australia and other developed countries around the world in the not too distant future. Personally, I hope that people will always to be able to drive if they want to, assuming they have the required skill. To me, to be able to drive, especially on a good country road, is really an enjoyable experience.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 99 Quiz - Did you

understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

accident = when something goes wrong, like a car crash

actual crash = real crashes, where a car is driven into a wall at high speed

advanced technology = a machine or piece of equipment which is technical. For example, a computer

affected = when something causes a change in something else

amazed = when you like something, or when you are surprised by something

annual = every year

assessment = to test something

assuming = when you believe something is true

attached = when one object is put onto another object

braking = when you make a car slow down

by contrast = in comparison

calculate = to add, multiply, subtract or divide numbers together

child restraint = a special seat in a car where you place a baby or a young child

common place = when something happens a lot

complicated = when something has many parts and is hard to understand

considered = thought to be

constantly = when you do something over and over again

continues = when something doesn't stop

contributor = someone or something which helps

decline = when something gets smaller, a reduction

despite = even though, nonetheless, notwithstanding

determined = to find out

developed countries = countries which are thought to be rich such as Germany, United States, Canada, Australia, etc

driverless = without a person driving

dummies = things which look like people but are made of plastic or rubber or metal

effects = the changes that happen when you change something (don't confuse with affect which is a verb)

essential = necessary

experienced = when you have done something before

features = the characteristics

fitted = attached, put onto

flexibility = when we have many ways of doing something

governments = the people who make decisions for everyone, who run the country

improved = to be made better

increasingly = getting higher or bigger

instruments = things which measure something e.g. speed

involved = when you are part of an activity

keen = when you want to do something

lane = part of a highway where you drive

lever = something you press to control a machine

locking up = (for wheels) when they stop turning or stop going around

measures = a number which tells you how big, small, strong, safe etc something is

notwithstanding = despite this, even though

obviously = when something can be easily seen or understood

occurred = happened

owned = when something belongs to you

pedestrians = people who walk on the footpath next to a road

points = (here) when you count the number of times something happens

prevent = to stop something from happening

protection = when you keep something safe

rating = a score or measure of how much there is

reduce = make smaller

reduction = when something gets smaller

responsible = when you must make sure something happens

standards = something that you can compare with, normally something that is good

steadily decreasing = going down at the same speed

takes advantage = when you use something in order to get a better result

throughout = in all parts

touch wood = (an expression) I hope I have good luck in the future

traction control = when a car automatically reduces how much power is going to the wheels

unacceptably = when something is bad and we don't accept it

undertaken = done

vehicles = something which can carry you from one place to another. For example, a car, bus or truck