



**AUSTRALIAN  
AUTOMOBILE  
ASSOCIATION**



**Australian Mobile  
Telecommunications  
Association**

**Anthony Albanese**

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Local Government

## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

**19 December 2008**

### **DON'T DRIVE TO DISTRACTION THIS CHRISTMAS**

Two of Australia's leading racing car drivers have joined with the Federal Government, motoring clubs and the mobile phone industry to warn drivers about the dangers of text messaging while driving.

Australia's newly-crowned V8 Supercar champion, Jamie Whincup, multiple Bathurst 1000 winner, Craig Lowndes, and Federal Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese, have warned drivers about being distracted by illegally using their mobile phones while driving.

Mr Albanese said texting was very risky and endangered lives on the road, and welcomed the support of the two racing stars.

He hoped Whincup's and Lowndes' timely appeal would make it clear that driving is not the time or place to send any of the 100 million text messages expected on Christmas Day alone in Australia.

"Whether we're driving at 260km/h down Conrod Straight or 60km/h on the main street we all have to give it 100% – anything less is asking for trouble," said Jamie Whincup. "Mobiles are great for staying in touch with friends and family, but those same loved ones will want you to take every precaution possible to arrive safely at your destination this Christmas."

"Driving demands our full attention and yours. Texting behind the wheel takes your eyes off the road for up to 40% of the time when sending or receiving a text – that means you're not looking where you're driving for 12 seconds every 30 seconds."

Craig Lowndes said: "Don't drive yourself to distraction this Christmas by texting behind the wheel. Remember, safety is your most important message when you are on the road. Let's all give our driving and other road users our full attention."

The Australian Automobile Association (AAA), the peak motoring organisation, and the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA), representing the mobile telecommunications industry, joined the Minister, and TeamVodafone's Jamie Whincup and Craig Lowndes in the Christmas safe driving message.

A recent survey by an Australian motoring insurance organisation revealed an alarmingly high proportion of young drivers, 71 per cent, say they have sent or read a text message while driving.

Whincup and Lowndes said parents of young drivers should talk to them about the dangers of texting and driving.

“It is equally important that the parents set a good example for their children by behaving in a responsible manner – not texting and only using hands-free mobile phones when it’s safe to do so,” they said.

Drivers face a range of potential distractions, not just mobiles – adjusting radios and CD players, talking with passengers, adjusting climate controls, and eating and drinking – all need to be taken into account.

AAA Executive Director, Mike Harris, and AMTA Chief Executive Officer, Chris Althaus, said a legal hands-free kit was not a guarantee of safety on the roads.

“Although a hands-free can reduce the physical effort to make and receive calls, drivers should avoid making calls in adverse traffic, road or weather conditions and avoid complex or emotional conversations,” they said.

AMTA’s driver safety tips can be found at [www.amta.org.au](http://www.amta.org.au)

Media wishing to contact Jamie Whincup or Craig Lowndes **today only** can do so through AMTA contact Randal Markey (contact numbers below).

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