



DAYLIGHT SAVERS

Your headlights can save your life, even in broad daylight.

TURNING YOUR HEADLIGHTS on during the day may save your life.

Even on sunny days, unlit vehicles can be difficult to see at times. NRMA research has found that more than half of all collisions in daylight are due, in part, to one road user failing to see the other road user in time to avoid a collision. In fact, failure to see other road users early enough is a contributing factor in four out of five daytime intersection accidents.

However, it's important that you use the right lights and use them correctly. Fog or parking lights, for instance, are of little benefit during the day, and high beam headlights can dazzle and irritate oncoming traffic. Low beam headlights are the best available option until specially designed 'Daytime Running Lights' become more widely available and accepted in Australia.

Daytime Running Lights or DRLs are in use in Europe and North

America. DRLs are more visible in daylight than standard low beam headlights and are more energy efficient. They are permitted in Australia under the Australian Design Rules for Road Vehicles (ADRs) but are not yet readily available.

It is estimated that well-designed DRLs could prevent a quarter of all fatal daytime collisions and more than a quarter of fatal daytime pedestrian accidents. Cyclists and motorcyclists

would also benefit from being better able to see approaching vehicles.

What are daytime running lights?

Daytime Running Lights (DRLs) are bright white forward-facing lights designed to increase the visibility of vehicles. They are common in Europe and North America.

Overseas studies have shown that DRLs reduce daytime accidents by making vehicles more conspicuous to other road users. The greatest benefits are with more severe accidents, including head-on and intersection crashes, and collisions with pedestrians and cyclists.

Other important benefits of DRLs reported in the studies are:

- Improved driver reaction times and estimation of speed and distance.
- DRLs make vehicles appear closer, which makes drivers less likely to launch into hazardous manoeuvres.
- The positive effects produced by DRLs do not dissipate over time.

The only negatives are that DRLs incur a small additional cost to install in a new car, estimated at less than \$50 per new car, and they cause a small increase in fuel consumption (estimated at 0.5%).

How to use your lights

If you don't have Daytime Running Lights, follow these tips to be seen:

- Don't take chances: if you have any doubts about whether you are being seen by other road users during the day, turn on your low beam headlights. A simple guide is whether vehicles using headlights are more noticeable than unlit vehicles. Low beam headlights use very little extra fuel and the globes last for a long time.
- Don't use your fog lights — it's illegal to use them unless visibility is poor and they are not designed to direct light towards oncoming drivers. The glare from fog lights is irritating for other drivers.
- Never use your parking lights when moving. They are of no benefit in improving your visibility to others in Australian conditions.
- Check whether your vehicle has an alert if you try to leave it with the headlights on. To check, simply turn on your headlights when the key is out of

the ignition and then open a door. If there is a beep, you can be confident that you will not leave your lights on when you park. If your vehicle doesn't have this feature, get into the habit of always looking at your car as you leave it to ensure the lights are off.

● Some vehicles automatically turn the headlights off when the ignition is turned off. If your vehicle has this feature, consider leaving your headlights on all the time.

● Check whether your vehicle turns the headlights on and off automatically. Some modern vehicles, such as the Holden VY Commodore, have an 'Auto' setting that senses when light is poor and automatically turns the lights on. If your vehicle has this feature, leave the lights on 'Auto'.

Using fog lights


Judging by *The Open Road's* mail bag, nothing irritates drivers more than being dazzled by motorists who are not using their lights correctly.

The biggest complaint is about drivers who have their fog lights on in normal conditions. Not only is this dangerous because it can temporarily blind other motorists, it's also illegal.

Australian Road Rule 219 states that: "A driver must not use, or allow to be used, any light fitted to or in the driver's vehicle to dazzle, or in a way that is likely to dazzle, another road user."

Australian Road Rule 217 is even more explicit about the correct use of fog lights, stating: "The driver of a vehicle fitted with a rear fog light must not operate the fog light unless the driver is driving in fog or other hazardous weather conditions causing reduced visibility."

Some drivers may be unaware that they are driving with their fog lights on. Check your owner's handbook if you are unsure.

You should also be careful about how you use your high beam headlights. Australian Road Rule 218 states that you must not use your headlights on high-beam if you are "less than 200 metres behind a vehicle travelling in the same direction... or less than 200 metres from an oncoming vehicle." 



DRLs in action.



Headlights: use low beam.

What NRMA wants

NRMA believes dedicated Daytime Running Lights (DRLs) should be made a standard feature of all cars because they shine in the best direction for improving a vehicle's chances of being seen.

Well-designed DRLs could prevent one quarter of all fatal daytime collisions between vehicles, and more than one quarter of fatal daytime pedestrian accidents. Cyclists and motorcyclists would also benefit immensely from being able to better see approaching vehicles.

However, NRMA would like to see the following improvements to DRLs before they are widely used in Australia:

- They need to be brighter than the current Australian Design Rule specifies. The current Australian regulation is based on a European regulation. However, Europe is now looking at a 50 per cent increase in brightness. This increase in brightness will make DRLs more useful on bright days in Australia.
- A light sensing system should be combined with DRLs to ensure that the lights automatically switch to low beam headlights when light levels are low. This will eliminate lingering concerns about bright Daytime Running Lights causing uncomfortable glare at dawn or dusk.