

0244 PARENTAL BELIEFS ABOUT SUPERVISING CHILDRENS ROAD CROSSING AND CYCLING

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Injury to vulnerable road users is a significant public health issue world-wide, with pedestrians and cyclists accounting for 11 to 30% of road fatalities in highly motorised countries such as the US, UK and Australia. Children are particularly at risk due to their still-developing cognitive and perceptual abilities. In Australia, children aged 0–16 year accounted for 10% of all pedestrian deaths, and 18% of all cyclist deaths during 2006–08. Parents are the primary models for childrens early behaviour and their attitudes toward safety have important implications for childrens road safety. As part of a population-based telephone survey on injury prevention, parents of 5–9 year old children (N=147) responded to questions on their beliefs about preventability of injury and appropriate ages for children to cross the road or cycle independently. Parents reported how often they held their 5–9 year old child's hand while crossing the road. Results suggest parents of 5–9 year olds believe that most injuries, including those on the road, are preventable. The majority indicated that children should be at least 8 years old (75%) before being allowed to cross the road on their own at least 10 years old (85%) to cycle independently. Consistent with this, most parents of 5–7 year old reported holding the child's hand when crossing. However, parents were significantly more likely to report holding a boys hand than a girls. Implications for prevention efforts targeted at both parents and children are discussed.