

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP
Minister for Public Transport
Minister for Roads and Road Safety



Monday, 20 December 2021

WORLD-FIRST PROGRAM FOR OUR MOST PRECIOUS CARGO

In a world-first program, the Andrews Labor Government is crash testing specialised child restraints used by children with disabilities and medical conditions to shed more light on their safety performance.

Nine special purpose child restraints imported and sold in Australia will undergo frontal and side impact crash tests at the Britax Childcare Crash Test Facility Laboratory in Melbourne's west as part of the Australian Safety Assessment Program (AuSAP).

Regular child restraints sold in Australia are held to very high safety standards, but families of children with disabilities and medical conditions have not had access to the same level of information on child restraint safety.

Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd (MACA) has launched AuSAP with funding from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and in-kind support from Britax Childcare and Neuroscience Research Australia.

The testing program will provide the first national information about the safety and performance of special purpose child restraints for children with disabilities and medical conditions.

While imported special purpose child restraints all comply with one or more overseas standards, there is limited independent information and advice available about their safety performance and how they stack up against the rigorous Australian Child Restraint Standard.

Special purpose child restraints are used by children with disabilities and medical conditions including cerebral palsy and autism who are often unable to travel in standard Australian child seats.

MACA's national research also shows that children with disabilities and medical conditions continue to be inappropriately restrained in vehicles, adding to the ongoing road safety challenges.

Over half of parents report that their child had gotten out of their child restraint or vehicle seatbelt and 10% report that their child had escaped the car onto the road.

Over half of Australian health professionals report they do not have the knowledge required to address car seating and travel needs for children with disabilities and medical conditions, and 70% of parents report never receiving any information on how to safely transport their child.

The AuSAP findings will be translated into practical advice and information for allied health professionals to guide best-practice prescribing and use of each restraint. AuSAP also aims to expand safe vehicle restraint options by making it easier for organisations to supply and promote products to the Australian market.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Roads Ben Carroll

"Choosing the most appropriate vehicle restraint, based on the individual needs of the child, is the first step in supporting a child's safety."

"This program is the first of its kind globally and will give Victorians greater knowledge and options on how best to protect their loved ones."

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Quote attributable to Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia CEO Helen Lindner

“The Australian Safety Assessment Program will provide the first national information about the safety and performance of special purpose child restraints for children with disabilities and medical conditions.”

Quote attributable to Transport Accident Commission CEO Joe Calafiore

“Child passengers put their lives in our hands every time we get behind the wheel, and it’s critical that we continue to invest in projects like this for their safety, especially when the unexpected happens on the road.”