



Mobility & Accessibility
for Children in Australia

Response to NSW Coronial inquest findings and recommendations

Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd (MACA) supports the recommendations of the New South Wales Coronial inquests into the deaths of 8-year-old [Riley Shortland](#) and his temporary carer [Rachel Martin](#).

The two were both tragically killed on the M1 Pacific Motorway in 2017 when Riley, who was diagnosed with Global Development Delay, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder, escaped the vehicle they were travelling in and Rachel ran onto the road to attempt to catch him and protect him from harm.

The inquest found it is likely Riley removed his car seat harness while they were travelling.

In her findings, NSW Deputy State Coroner, Magistrate Harriet Grahame, said the deaths were preventable and made a number of recommendations in relation to the transport of children with disabilities and medical conditions, such as improving policies and training.

This includes, in her findings in relation to Riley's death, recommending that the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ):

"Make enquiries with Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd. (MACA) for the purpose of, subject to funding limitations, exploring whether MACA can assist in the formulation of transport related policies and learnings (the "Safe Travels" learnings), particularly within the focus of safety harnesses for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder".

MACA Chief Executive Helen Lindner, who submitted a report to the inquest, said MACA would meet with DCJ as soon as possible to act on the Coroner's recommendations.

"Riley and Rachel's deaths were preventable tragedies, and we send our heartfelt condolences to their loved ones," Ms Lindner said.

"This is a sobering reminder of the challenges many families and carers of children with disabilities and medical conditions face daily on our roads. In fact, recent Australian research has revealed that over half of parents reported that their child had gotten out of their car seat (45%) or seatbelt (36%) while driving, with 10 per cent of children moving into the road environment.

"MACA's purpose is to change this situation. We are addressing the gaps in Australian policy, research, products, and practice impacting on the transport of children with disabilities and medical conditions – to improve road safety for children, their families and carers.

"We have developed training for allied health professionals who assess and prescribe for children's motor vehicle transport needs. Training participants receive the MACA Guide, a comprehensive prescribing resource, including a template for developing a child's motor vehicle transport plan.

"MACA strongly advocates that all children whose disability impacts on their transport have a motor vehicle transport plan that includes essential information about their transport requirements.

"MACA will meet with DCJ as soon as possible to discuss the Coroner's recommendations and provide information about our research, resources and training."

To find out more about MACA, visit macahub.org