

Texting in the car as dangerous as 'driving drunk'



Casandra Garvey | 7th Sep 2015 5:00 AM



IT ONLY takes a split second to lose concentration on the road, putting yourself, your passengers and others in serious danger.

That's the message from the Department of Transport Main Roads, which says picking up your mobile phone means you're as dangerous as a drunk driver with a blood alcohol content of 0.08 or higher.

But it seems Mackay motorists are slowly getting the message that texting, taking a call or selfie-snapping while behind the wheel can have serious consequences.

[MORE: Fact from fiction - what's legal phone use when driving?](#)

Figures obtained by the Daily Mercury revealed 758 motorists were nabbed for mobile phone offences in 2014/15 up to April 30.

A further seven were nabbed using their mobile phone on a bicycle.

While 758 motorists distracted behind the wheel may be 758 too many, the number is 319 fewer than the number caught in 2011/12.

A TMR spokeswoman said safety of all road users was their top priority.

"Distracted drivers are a danger to themselves, their passengers and other road users. It only takes a split second to lose concentration," she said.

A Daily Mercury reader, who wished to remain anonymous, asked for help answering a question about mobile phone use in cars.

"I haven't used my mobile phone while driving for years - long before it was illegal - because I knew it was dangerous," the Bucasia resident said.

"I'm glad demerit points and fines are going to be doubled for second-time offenders as I've seen dozens of near misses and people swerving over the road. However I'm on the road a lot for work and often get phone calls or text messages regarding work while doing so. I indicate and pull over to the side of the road and answer/return the call or read the text. While doing so my blinker is on, my foot on the brake, and the car is idling.

"Is this legal? Or do you have to switch the engine off entirely and put on the park brake?"

A Queensland Police spokeswoman referred the Mercury to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management - Road Rules) Regulation 2009 to help answer the question. It states:

The driver of a vehicle (except an emergency vehicle or police vehicle) must not use a mobile phone that the driver is holding in the driver's hand while the vehicle is moving, or is stationary but not parked. Maximum penalty - 20 penalty units.

Use, in relation to a mobile phone, includes any of the following:

- Holding the phone to, or near, the ear, whether or not engaged in a phone call;

- Writing, sending or reading a text message on the phone;
- Turning the phone on or off;
- Operating any other function of the phone.

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