



# Too many injured in car crashes just not covered



**CHRIS MCHUGH**

**D**RIVING a car is the most dangerous thing most of us do. What is well known is the horrible tragedy of 240 Queenslanders who die each year on the roads.

What is less well known is the number of Queenslanders who suffer significant injuries on the road – more than 14,000 every year.

What most people do not realise is almost half of these injured people will get nothing from their CTP insurance. That's about 6700 Queenslanders every year with real injuries, many of them extremely serious, who will not get one cent from the CTP insurance they pay for year-in, year-out.

These are the people we should be asking if the CTP insurance law in Queensland is fair.

It will come as a shock to most Queenslanders that these injured people get nothing. Surveys show the majority of Queenslanders believe their CTP insurance provides coverage that, in reality, it doesn't.

The Queensland Government CTP regulator's own research shows 53 per cent of people think their comprehensive motor insurance covers

their injuries. They're mistaken. Sadly, by the time they find out they'll get nothing, it's too late.

In contrast, everyone injured in exactly the same accident circumstances in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are covered. Their CTP insurance provides care and medical treatment, and if they're unable to get back to work, they get income replacement so they can pay the weekly bills.

The reality is, other Australians have the sort of CTP insurance coverage that Queenslanders think they have, but actually don't.

Yet some lawyers will tell you we should be proud of Queensland's CTP scheme and jealously guard its integrity. They will say that providing

“no-fault” coverage – where everyone injured on the road gets help from their CTP insurance – would reward people who “cause accidents”.

What that really means is anyone, drivers or passengers, who can't blame another driver for their injuries, gets nothing. Every driver of a single-vehicle accident, every parent who is dealing with their kids and makes a small mistake, everyone who hits a kangaroo, aquaplanes on a wet road or runs up the back of someone who brakes unexpectedly, gets nothing. Even a pedestrian, including children, hit by a driver who is not found negligent gets nothing. Does that sound fair to you?

Accidents happen and CTP insurance should help everyone injured on the road. That's what Australians expect, it's what Queenslanders expect, but are missing out on. The reason these lawyers vehemently oppose helping all injured people is their business model is built on blame, lump sum payments for minor injuries and the costly protracted legal process.

If CTP insurance was structured so that everyone who is injured quickly received medical treatment and income support as required, there would be no need for an adversarial legal process to claim a cash payout.

Lawyers are invested in this system because it's profitable for them. They can charge insurers legal costs, plus take 50 per cent of the injured person's cash payout. It's this system that makes Queensland a haven for “claim farming”, because the cold callers can sell their leads to lawyers.

As a result, according to the Queensland CTP regulator's report, only 31¢ of every dollar Queenslanders pay in CTP premiums actually goes to injured people. In NSW, it's over 60¢. This is because they recently legislated to reduce legal fees and increase coverage to no-fault coverage, so everyone injured gets help.

This change to no-fault cover, supported and long advocated for by Suncorp, not only provides a fairer scheme for motorists, but IT also sees insurer profits decrease.

Queensland should choose to legislate change so that, like most Australians, everyone hurt on the road gets help. Then Queenslanders who pay for CTP insurance will get the support they expect and deserve.

---

Chris McHugh is executive general manager personal injury portfolio at Suncorp