



Chris Latimer

I experienced the loss of my 16- and 17-year-old daughters Wendy and Melissa in 1997. They were passengers in a car driven by Wendy's boyfriend Matt (18) who also died in the collision. He was the only son of a Bendigo family and I couldn't imagine what his mother had to go through with Matt's death and the finding that there was an illegal substance in his system, which would have contributed to his judgement that day.

Then in 2007 my only son Grant was a passenger in a car driven by his best mate Marcus who was driving 140kmh on a country road at 2am. He misjudged the road and went end over end into a paddock eight times destroying the car and killing himself instantly. My son was trapped in the back seat with head injuries and a nearly severed arm. If it hadn't been for the back seat air bags he would not have survived. He was airlifted that night to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. He recovered from his physical injuries but has struggled for many years with post-traumatic stress disorder.

On 9 October 2009, on a clear spring morning, my youngest daughter Nicole was in a car driven by her boyfriend Dave. They were going to breakfast when he went too fast through a roundabout and hit a sign. The car spun around at high speed and hit a pole. Nicole suffered a catastrophic head injury. She was 21 at the time of the collision with a two-year-old son named Blake. Her injuries were so severe that she only had a 30 per cent survival rate. Nicole's brain injury was extreme. She was conscious of her environment but has no consistent responses and has severe spasticity. She was totally reliant on 12 carers to look after her on a rotating roster. She never walked or talked again, and sadly died in December 2015.

Every month I get the opportunity to tell people my story in Greensborough and occasionally at Collingwood. I have also been fortunate to be part of the information mornings at the Victoria Police Academy in Glen Waverley and share my story with corporate organisations.

Being able to speak about my children and their tragedy, to have a voice, to at least try to change the reckless action on the road, gives me purpose and helps me in my recovery. It can be challenging to remember the details but if it can save someone's life it's worth it.

My children would want me to be trying to make a difference and I can't let them down.

If we can make a difference to change even one person's attitude towards their driving and commit to a safer community on the roads we have hopefully saved heartache and loss for another family. We need to aim high - the road to zero is the only acceptable toll.

Chris has recently launched her own business speaking about resilience, helping others and making great loss into a purposeful life. Find out more on her website ChrisLatimer.com.au



SHINE A LIGHT ON ROAD SAFETY

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria's **Shine a Light on Road Safety** campaign is to raise awareness, to stop deaths and injuries on our roads and to raise funds to support those impacted by road trauma.

The campaign is part of National Road Safety Week and the Fifth United Nations Global Road Safety Week. #shinealightonroadsafety.

Sunday 5 May there is a community walk at Albert Park Lake to enable community participation in advocating for safer roads.

Friday 10 May motorists are asked to turn on headlights to remember those impacted by road trauma and show your commitment to road safety.

ILLUMINATIONS

Australian landmarks will be illuminated in yellow for road safety from Monday 6 May to Sunday 12 May; thanks to the support of key partners including the Victorian Government, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), VicRoads, Victoria Police and campaign sponsors.

KEY CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

- Road safety is everyone's responsibility
- Giving the community voice about road trauma
- Our counselling and support services are available free and unlimited to anyone impacted by road trauma.

OUR ORGANISATION

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation contributing to the safety and wellbeing of Victorian road users. We provide counselling and support to people impacted by road trauma, and address attitudes and behaviours of road users through education. We are committed to educating the community and raising public awareness about road trauma and how it affects people's lives; we do this in part by sharing personal stories about road trauma.