

Julie Metaxotos

It was Christmas Eve 2013, a day I cannot remember but will never forget. My world came to an abrupt halt and completely changed course in the moment when those two cars collided.

I'd been dropping our cat Roly off in anticipation of our annual festive holiday, a simple normal activity at a busy time of year. I had a list of other last minute Christmas things running through my head. Little did I know I'd never quite get around to any of them.

Other people are better able to tell about those first moments and days after my crash. I have no memory of them. Not of being trapped in the car or being airlifted to the Alfred Hospital.

I'm told was heavily sedated for days while the doctors tried to contend with my injuries, each and every limb in my body broken and damaged from the neck down.

I had the love of my beautiful family and friends to thank for getting me through. They cancelled their Christmas to instead fill the hospital waiting room willing me to pull through. They took turns sitting by my bedside whilst I remained resolutely somewhere far away under the deep sleep of sedation. They visited and buoyed my spirits when I did finally awake, caring for me, supporting me, loving me.

It was a gradual awakening, learning how badly my body was broken and my life was changed. No one sat me down in any one conversation and explained all that was wrong and the extent of the road that lay ahead to recover. I had to come to that realisation slowly, over time myself with the support of the amazing doctors, nurses and specialists who worked with me to help both understand what was happening and what process of recovery might be like.

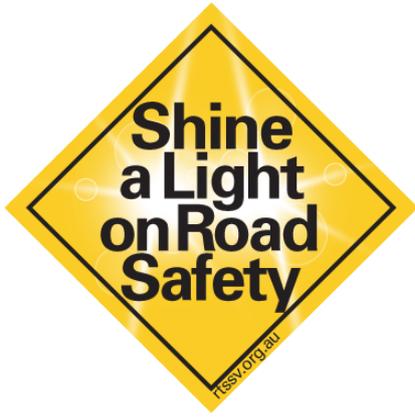
I've had over 50 surgeries and numerous setbacks with infections, failures and complications all making the path to health more treacherous to navigate but I made a commitment to myself and my family early on that I would focus and dedicate myself to whatever I had to get myself home and back living my life.

My love for my family and passionate desire to return to them drove and pushed me when I had little more to give and ensured I could always find some more energy or some more will to get me through.

My journey is still not over but I am now back at work part time, have published a book called A Fractured Life, about my experiences and give talks about how I have rebuilt my life after being so close to death.

If what I am sharing helps one person to avoid or to cope better in the aftermath of their own crash, then everything I have been through has been for something.

The Shine a Light on Road Safety campaign by Road Trauma Support Services Victoria is such an important means of getting the message out to be safe on the roads every single time you drive, because the consequences of not are devastating.



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: #shinealightonroadsafety.

Friday 4 May motorists are asked to turn on headlights to remember those impacted by road trauma and show your commitment to road safety.

Sunday 6 May there is a community walk at Albert Park Lake to enable community participation in advocating for safer roads.

ILLUMINATIONS

Australian landmarks will be illuminated in yellow for road safety from Monday 30 April to Sunday 6 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.