

# You may think it won't happen to you

## Every year in Australia over 5,000 children are rescued from vehicles after being left unattended.

In South Australia alone, RAA patrols responded to over 1,600 calls in the last 4 years where a child was locked in the vehicle. Accepting it can happen is the first step in preventing a potential tragedy.

Leaving children in the car, even for a short time, puts them at risk of serious injury or even death. It's important to understand there are different reasons leading to children being left alone in vehicles.

### Intentionally left behind

Never leave your child unattended in the car, even if you think you won't be gone long. It's easy to get distracted and lose track of time, and a car's interior can quickly become 20-30 degrees hotter than outside. Anything could happen while you're gone, including the child overheating or choking, or even the theft of the vehicle.

If you're going into the shops or need to fill up with petrol, plan to do these chores without the kids. If this isn't possible, either take them inside with you when you shop, organise home delivery or click and collect. When buying petrol, pay at the pump or use an online app, so you don't need to leave the kids in the car when you pay.

### Child enters and locks the car

Children like to play games like hide and seek, so it's not unusual for a child to think the car is a good place to hide or play. Always keep the car locked and make sure the keys are in a safe place out of their reach. Discourage them from playing with car keys, and in and around cars. When putting children in the car, keep the keys with you – if they lock the door, you're able to unlock it again.

### Forgotten child

Sleep deprivation, stress and even simple distraction can affect the function of our short-term memory. Just like it's easy to forget to pick up the car keys in the morning, we can also forget about a child in the back seat.

Make a habit of placing reminders in the car, like putting the child's kindy bag in the footwell of the front passenger seat. Or, put your own bag on the floor in the back seat, so you'll see the child when you get the bag. If someone else is looking after your child, check in with them to make sure they haven't left them in the car.

In 2017, a review of *AS/NZS8005: Accessories for child restraints for use in motor vehicles* Standard resulted in a number of new devices and apps becoming available that can help remind parents to check the back seat.

### If you see a child alone in a car:

- look around for the owner of the car
- call 000 for assistance
- if possible, and safe to do so, remove the child from the car.



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### We're here to help

Call our Child Safety Centre on 8202 4592  
or email [childrestraints@raa.com.au](mailto:childrestraints@raa.com.au)  
[raa.com.au/roadsafety](http://raa.com.au/roadsafety)