

# New legislation: buckle up the kids

In South Africa, 250 children are killed on the road each year because someone didn't buckle them up – causing the Western Cape government to consider various legislation in this regard.

According to statistics, more than twice as many children die as pedestrians. Furthermore road crashes in South Africa claim the highest mortality in the age group one to 18 years worldwide.

But this could be prevented by parents who opt to buckle their children up.

To this end, Childsafe, and the manage-

ment of Red Cross Children's Hospital, last week launched their "Buckle-up or you'll be back" campaign in an effort to raise awareness as to the dangers of not buckling-up when driving, particularly when driving with children in the vehicle.

"Children are among the most vulnerable on our roads, both as passengers and pedestrians. Through our Safely Home initiative, we will be gearing up our enforcement and educational efforts during the upcoming festive season to reduce the carnage on our roads. Last year, 139 lives were lost on the

province's roads during the festive season, with pedestrians and passengers making up the bulk of that number," says Minister of Transport in the Western Cape Robin Carlisle.

"Appropriate restraints are a crucial element in child road safety. The national statistics in terms of restraints, particularly for children, are shocking. In 2010, it was observed that 92 % of back-seat passengers (including children) were not wearing seatbelts.

According to Carlisle, the province is cur-

rently looking into child restraints regulations that would ban shared seating and mandate the use of seatbelts, rear and forward facing child seats, and booster seats, as appropriate to age with harsh penalties for non-compliance.

The introduction of an additional offence for reckless behaviour with children in the vehicle, such as speeding, drunk driving or cellphone use, is being considered.

"The penalties for this offence would increase exponentially should the child not be correctly restrained," he says.