**ASK THE TAFE TEAM**
With Rural Studies Teacher, Darryl Aspinall
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TRAVELLING IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

There are many hazards associated with travelling long distances in rural Queensland, and we share the roads with more than just other vehicles. It is not just that you are travelling long distances, quite often the areas you are travelling in can be remote which requires you to take extra precautions.

Some of the hazards you will encounter may include stock or animals wandering or jumping out onto roads, oncoming road trains or overtaking road trains and other oversized vehicles, changing weather conditions from water across roads to reduced visibility from dust, varying road conditions including pot holes, corrugated roads, loose gravel and soft road edges, reduced visibility from driving at sunrise or sunset and fatigue associated with driving long distances.

When driving in these areas don’t forget to pack, at a minimum, maps for the roads you will be travelling on, your mobile phone (fully charged), a first aid kit and plenty of water.

Important things to remember:

- Check the vehicle before leaving. A general vehicle maintenance check should include checking the fuel, oil, tyres, windscreen wipers and water.
- Let somebody know your itinerary and estimated time of arrival.
- Check you have sufficient fuel for the trip. Not all towns have a service station so make sure you know where and when you need to fuel the vehicle.
- Be aware of the warning signs of fatigue and take regular 15 minute breaks for every 2 hours of driving, or sooner if needed.
- Where possible, plan trips so you are not driving in excess of 500 kilometres in one day.
- Avoid driving out of daylight hours where possible.
- Drive with the vehicle’s headlights on at all times to maximise visibility to other vehicles, especially on dusty roads.
- Reduce your driving speed according to road conditions and time of day. Animals such as kangaroos are more likely to be on the road before 7am and after 4pm.
- Don’t swerve to avoid animals on the road. Gently brake and slow down. Beep your horn to alert the animal.
- If your vehicle breaks down and you require assistance, put the vehicle bonnet up and hazard lights on, these are the recognised signals of vehicles in need of assistance. Stay with the vehicle and wait for assistance. Do not wander.
- When travelling with others, make sure you share the driving to reduce fatigue.
- Before departing, check the Queensland Police Service website for any road closures and/or incidents in your area.
During droughts it is also quite likely you will encounter large mobs of sheep or cattle on the road, slow down and drive very slowly through the mob. People moving stock should have warning signs which will alert you to the hazard. You generally don’t need to stop and wait for the mob to move. These reminders are especially important to keep in mind during school holidays when there are more people than ever travelling on the roads. Visit www.stayontrackoutback.qld.gov.au for more tips on safe travel in rural areas.

For more information about TAFE Queensland South West’s rural qualifications, upcoming Term 4 courses, or for any other information, please visit www.tafesouthwest.edu.au or call 1300 914 754.

Disclaimer: The comments provided in this article are general in nature only and are not a substitute for professional advice. The author accepts no responsibility for any action taken by a reader in relation to this article.

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