

ABC

NEWS

# Takata: Victim's father warns Australians to check for faulty airbags

The father of a Takata victim has urged Australians not to be complacent and proactively check whether their vehicles are involved in the recall after losing his daughter due to a defective air bag.

Alexander Brangman's daughter, Jewel, died in 2014 when shrapnel from a faulty airbag in the rental car she was driving exploded and punctured her carotid artery during a car accident in California.

"One of her last words were 'I love my life, Dad and I'll see you on the 15th', obviously that day never happened, due to blatant incompetence and unconscionable unethical behaviour," Mr Brangman told the ABC's *The World* program.

"I think it's an unethical corporate problem in making poor decisions basing profit over lives."

The Federal Government on Wednesday announced a new, compulsory recall of vehicles fitted with defective Takata airbags, which will affect 2.7 million cars.

The airbags have been associated with 20 deaths globally, including one death in Australia last year and Ms Brangman's tragedy in the United States.

Mr Brangman has since become an advocate for consumer rights, and says the lack of awareness is blatant.

"You would be surprised how many people still currently, with this being the largest recall in [automotive] history ... are unaware of this and don't know what to do," he said.

"First of all you have to challenge and ask manufacturers if you're purchasing cars, or whomever you're getting the cars from, are there any recalls on it?"

**"You can't trust the manufacturers, you can't trust the corporations in whole, you have to do your due diligence, you have to be assertive, you have to be proactive as opposed to reactionary."**

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) chairman Rod Sims said the recall — the biggest in Australia's history — **must be done by December 31, 2020.**

The recall will be staggered according to urgency, with priority being given to Alpha airbags which are classified as "critical".

The ACCC recommends car owners do not drive their vehicles if they have Alpha airbags. They should instead contact the manufacturer, who would come to collect the cars.

Spokesman for consumer body Choice, Tom Godfrey, said there was almost a one-in-two chance an Alpha airbag would fire shrapnel when deployed.

And Ms Brangman's case proves it doesn't take a huge accident to trigger an explosion.

"It was a fender bender. It's questionable that the airbag should have even gone off," Mr Brangman said.

"[It was] very low damage, and impact ... my lawyers were shocked and astonished that the airbag went off in the cabin of the car."

Mr Brangman firmly believes the death of his daughter, who he describes as an accomplished and honourable young woman, was preventable.

"She was aesthetically beautiful, but even more beautiful inside," he said.

"We used to have a saying, that I would always say to her 'when I grow up I want to be like you' and she would always say 'Dad you're the biggest kid I know'.

"This was an incredibly close relationship that was taken from me, I had her 26 years, 11 months, about 15 minutes and quite frankly I was devastated.

"But in her name and her honour, and the kind of person that she was, I wanted to spread awareness and immortalise her and let the world know what was lost and who she was."

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-01/victim-father-warns-australians-to-check-for-faulty-airbags/9495070>