



Teaching kids to drive safely



G'day, you know what I reckon?
 Back in August 2008 the NRMA, Westmead Hospital and a number of other NSW government departments ran the last Youth and Road Trauma Forum at ACER Arena. At the time two local blokes Greg Smart and Andrew Foley worked tirelessly to have the forum re-funded and broadcast into rural and regional schools.

They spent 12 months bashing their heads against brick walls with all sorts of government bureaucrats only to be told that this is too expensive to run and it's not really in the purview of this government department; health, transport, education, each passed the buck to the other until they wore these blokes, and others down.

Well their work was not in vain, on Monday March 7 2011 the Libs and Nats announced that if elected a NSW Liberals & Nationals government would provide \$1 million to fund the Youth and Road Trauma Forum for the next four years.

The Youth and Road Trauma Forum is a unique annual event aimed at vividly conveying the dangers and consequences of unsafe driving to high school students. The Youth and Road Trauma Forum provides students with:

- An understanding of their responsibilities as a driver and as a responsible passenger
- Information and strategies to avoid serious injuries and death
- Information on how to reduce risk taking behaviour through greater awareness of the consequences of distracted driving, inattention, speeding, drink and drug driving, and driver fatigue.

To quote from the forum website back in 2008:-

"The forum is a one-day program held at the Acer Arena that is repeated

over three days. Students gain an understanding of the responsibilities involved with driving. They witness and experience firsthand the potential risks associated with driving and being a passenger. This is road safety being delivered in an engaging and dynamic manner.

The forum provided students who are most at risk, a realistic look at the trauma caused by road crashes and provided them information and strategies in an attempt to reduce serious injuries and deaths. The forum's contents and structure aimed to treat young people as adults allowing them freedom to choose from a range of interactive exhibits."

This means 12,000 of our kids, each and every year, will get up front and personal with their responsibilities and the potential repercussions of their actions regarding driving.

So just what is it that brings about the harrowing statistics that a 17-year-old driver with a P1 licence is about four times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than a driver aged 26 or older. Young drivers hold 15 per cent of licences but are involved in 36 per cent of road fatalities. I have 23 of them that have got their licenses in the past 12 months from my footy team and it scares the living daylight out of me... Just how many of our boys, and to lesser extent girls, from here in Dubbo are we going to lose to this menace of the next couple of years?

Why does this happen, Graham Blight from the NRMA has spoken about this before and mentioned the old adage "10 foot tall and bullet proof", and it seems to be as simple as that. It will be great to see the Youth and Road Trauma Forum back but could it be brought to regional centres? This is of course the next step, not just

have it in Sydney but bring it to the bush. This got me thinking and I wondered just how much a traffic accident would cost the community. Some figures released by Flinders University and prepared by Jerry Moller in June 1998 using data supplied by the National Injury Surveillance Unit and a methodology developed by the Monash University Accident Research Centre for estimating injury costs. In this report for the period July 1995- June 1996 the cost was a staggering \$1.306Bn for around 1,970 deaths and for total injuries and death was \$2.236Bn.

If we put that into terms that I can understand each fatality cost the community \$662,944.16.

And that's back in 1996 what would it be now... A million dollars? Easy!

I think that somewhere in our vast budgets that we might find some spare change to run this in a number of regional areas and bring the kids in to see it. And while we're at it start by have driver training as part of the school curriculum.

Surely it's not going to cost BILLIONS, and if we save just three lives, that's almost two MILLION dollars towards the program.

A million here and a million there and all of a sudden we're talking some real money, but more importantly some real lives, maybe one of them yours or one of your loved ones.....

Nice to see Macquarie Street starting to listen, easy when you are in opposition; let's see if they can pull it off when in government.

Something to think about over the morning coffee,

*What do you think,
 'cause that's what I reckon.
 Saulie*



A 17-year-old driver with a P1 licence is about four times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than a driver aged 26 or older.



Libs promise funding for driver forum

A DRIVER forum aimed at reducing the number of young people dying on the roads will be given a \$1 m boost under a state Liberal Government.

The youth and road trauma forum involves trauma specialists and young people who have suffered a brain injury from a crash speaking to school students about the importance of staying safe while driving.

It is held at Homebush each year.

NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell announced the funding at Westmead Hospital on Monday.

Mr O'Farrell said the funding meant 48,000 young people would attend the forum over the next four years.

"Like other parents, I want to know my 16-year-old son is as well prepared as possible when he drives solo for the first time," he said.

Opposition roads spokesman Andrew Stoner said: "Sadly we know that even if a young person survives a crash, they may never complete school, have a career or family or live the life they had imagined due to severe head injuries, spinal trauma, loss of limbs or serious chest and abdominal injuries."



Funding for student driver education

ROAD trauma education for local students is in the spotlight with prospective funding announced by Oxley MP Andrew Stoner.

The shadow Roads Minister announced \$1 million (over four years) to fund the Youth and Road Trauma Forum for NSW students under a Coalition government.

The money would go towards promotion of the Sydney-held forum, which features presentations by trauma staff and survivors, to make schools aware they are eligible to access the program.

He said the forum accommo-

dates 12,000 students and last year half were from regional areas but numbers from the North Coast were low.

Mr Stoner said he wanted to see better promotion of the forum and more liaison with local schools.

“Young people account for 15 per cent of licence holders but represent more than a third of road fatalities,” he said.

“The funds would promote the forum to schools that send their Year 11 and 12 students on excursions to Sydney.

“We need to help students understand the link between speed-

ing or talking on phones and the serious consequences.”

Mr Stoner said an education program run through local schools would minimise the number of students who miss out on drivers’ education during school excursions.

“We would be looking to do both, while the Youth and Road Trauma Forum is a success, programs in schools would minimise those who fall through the cracks of drivers education,” he said.



CALL TO ACTION: Oxley MP, leader of the NSW Nationals and Shadow Roads Minister Andrew Stoner.



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MTWTFSS-

Cash will fund grim message

Gemma Jones

ALMOST 50,000 school students will get a graphic lesson in road safety for the amount of money it would cost to treat just four young car crash victims.

Liberal leader Barry O'Farrell pledged \$1 million to the Youth and Road Trauma Forum, which is run by Westmead Hospital staff, yesterday.

It will allow them to take the forum of police, paramedics and crash survivors to the bush as well as deliver the program to 48,000 students at Homebush over the next four years.

The announcement coincided with an Access Economics report which showed one severely injured young person cost the health system \$231,611.

It costs just \$21 for a school student to attend the forum where they watch a simulated fatal car crash. Access Economics estimated road crashes involving young people cost the economy \$1.5 billion last year.

"I went to the forum two years ago and it takes your breath away. Some people have fainted," Mr O'Farrell said.

Road trauma survivors Paul Sheppard and Lina Pollifrone visit schools to share their horrific experiences with students.



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MTWTFS-

Promise of funds for road forum

NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell says a coalition government will support an annual youth and road trauma forum.

Mr O'Farrell on Monday pledged \$1 million to secure the future of the community-based forum over the next four years, if he wins the state election on March 26.

Mr O'Farrell has attended the forum in the past and said it had a positive impact on young people on their way to getting drivers licences.

"What's impressed me about this program when I saw it was that it is confronting," he told reporters in western Sydney.