

## **Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference**

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**Title:** Promoting deeper thinking and better decision making about road safety, by school students as drivers and passengers.

**Presentation stream:** Education

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**Organisation:** NSW Centre for Road Safety/Roads and Traffic Authority

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**Presentation Method:** Presentation only

**Audio Visual requirements:** Windows PC; Data projector capable of displaying PowerPoint and video content. Capacity to play DVD

### **Biography:**

Greg Meehan is the Education Sectors Manager for the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety (NSWCRS). He is responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of the programs in children's services and schools as well as the management of a program of professional development in road safety for educators throughout NSW.

He has worked in the area of education, specifically management and co-ordination of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) in NSW secondary schools and as a Senior Curriculum Advisor (PDHPE) Kindergarten to Year 12.

Greg has an educational consultancy background in the areas of mental health, drug and road safety education in schools working in policy, curriculum, program design and professional development of teachers prior to his appointment at the NSWCRS in 2002.

(Department of Education, Catholic Education and Independent schools) with schools that attended receiving copies of the resource during the 2010 school year.

This paper provides an opportunity for those working in road safety, in a variety of settings, to consider the concept of road safety using a framework that can be adapted to meet the needs of their audience. This model of delivery was trialled by students and teachers and received substantial endorsement as a tool for influencing the attitudes and beliefs of young people with regard to road safety. One hundred secondary teachers from all three education sectors in NSW were independently surveyed with respect to aspects of this resource and their insights and feedback from this is included.

### **Key words**

Education; schools; student welfare; road safety; driver; passenger; young people.

### **Introduction**

Road safety continues to be a significant national health issue for children and young people. The road death rate for children aged 0 to 14 years is still high compared with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, with Australia ranked 14th in 2008. Children are particularly vulnerable as unrestrained or incorrectly restrained passengers and also as pedestrians. Young drivers (under 26 years of age) in NSW are over-represented in fatal crashes, making up about 15 per cent of all driver licence holders but being involved in 27 per cent of fatal crashes in 2010.

One of the key components of the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety's (CRS) strategies in ensuring the safety of children and young people is a curriculum-based School Road Safety Education Program, now in its twenty fifth year.

Schools play a vital role in equipping young Australians with the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to lead safe and healthy lives and in developing behaviours that will keep them safe well beyond their school years. Road safety education provides opportunities through various teaching and learning strategies to promote deeper and more thoughtful and informed decisions about road safety by students.

### **NSW School Road Safety Education Program**

School road safety education programs contribute significantly to students developing positive attitudes and behaviours in the road environment. NSW presently includes mandatory content of road safety education embedded in the NSW PDHPE Primary K-6 and secondary 7-10 Syllabuses. It is important that children and young people continue to be taught to use the roads safely as pedestrians, passengers and

cyclists (including wheeled toys) and also later as riders and drivers as part of a mandatory school education curriculum.

The CRS has a long standing agreement with each of the education sectors in NSW, the Department of Education (DEC), the Catholic Education Commission (CEC) and the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) through which all schools in the state have access to support, designed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in road safety education. The CRS support includes free access for all schools to high quality best practice educational resource materials that are directly linked to syllabuses and funding provided to the education sectors to assist with professional learning around road safety education policy, resources and teaching and learning strategies.

These education programs are designed to instil safe attitudes and behaviours from an early age and are strongly supported and valued by parents and the wider community. Acknowledging this, school communities play a key role in assisting students to examine the responsibilities of being a road user, for themselves, for their peers, for their families and for members of their community. The knowledge, understandings, skill, attitudes and values which are necessary to fulfil these responsibilities as a passenger and future driver are best developed through sequential, comprehensive and age appropriate programs.

In NSW road safety education is part of a mandatory PDHPE curriculum from Kindergarten up to Year 10 (school years are identified as K-10), however this is not the case in the senior school Year 11 and Year 12. It is a component of the Senior 2 unit PDHPE Higher School Certificate (HSC) course, but this is neither mandatory nor a core section in the course. There are approximately 13,000 students who undertake the PDHPE course whilst there are approximately 76,000 students in Year 11 alone.

The objective was to produce a best practice teaching and learning resource that met the needs of both the teachers and the students and had the capacity to be delivered to all senior students in every NSW school.

## **Student welfare**

The most recent road safety school educational resource developed by the CRS, *Limiting risks – protecting lives. Choices for novice drivers and their passengers* is a road safety education resource that targets students across Stages 5 and 6 (Years 10-11). It has been developed to support student welfare/pastoral care programs in NSW secondary schools.

Student welfare encompasses everything that the school community does to meet the personal and social needs of students and enhance their well-being. It involves

recognizing, valuing and developing each student as a total and unique person in the context of society.

Most young people develop through adolescence to adulthood without great difficulty and experience good health. However, adolescence is marked by increased exposure to a range of risks to health and well-being. Some young people will be placed at risk of death or injury from road crashes, where a combination of behavioural and cultural characteristics, such as risk taking, over-confidence, inexperience and gender have been found to be factors in the over-representation of adolescents in these statistics.

Student welfare programs offer a specific opportunity for schools to invite senior students to reflect upon and share issues that are important to them. Through these courses teachers are able to encourage students to discuss their opinions, thoughts and feelings in a familiar and safe environment.

School-based driver education that focuses on challenging young people's behaviour and attitudes is a strategy that can contribute to safer young drivers and passengers and can enhance other whole school and community initiatives. Participation in well structured, engaging activities that stimulate student's thinking about road safety as a driver and passenger, can contribute to the development of safer drivers.

### **Design factors in the resource's development**

This particular road safety resource provides activities to examine students' attitudes to road use and aims to promote self reflection and better making decisions about road safety by students as drivers and passengers. There are eighteen key road safety messages for novice drivers and their passengers.

It consists of seven modules, including an introductory module specifically addressing teaching and learning strategies around the issue of speed. Each module has a clear theme and is comprised of a number of varied activities designed to support the delivery of key road safety messages for the targeted age group.

Introductory Module:

*Setting the scene – the single most critical risk factor for young drivers is speeding:*

Students learn about research and analyse statistical data to identify the risks young drivers face, especially focusing on the issue of 'speed'.

Module 1:

*Getting a licence – facts, challenges and reducing the risk:* Young people can explore the steps and requirements for a NSW driver licence, the responsibilities attached to having a licence and the potential risks and challenges facing novice drivers.

Module 2:

*Safer driving – it's all about thinking and acting safely:*

Students are able to investigate the hazards that can affect young drivers and examine influences on their driving.

Module 3:

*Driving – the early years:*

Focus here is on peer pressure, recognise the impact of crashes on family, friends and community and construct actions to reduce their risk on the road.

Module 4:

*Inexperience in the road environment:*

Students analyse their values in relation to the road, explore the causes of common crashes and focus on strategies to manage various road situations in order to become a low risk driver.

Module 5:

*Poor judgement – drugs, alcohol and driving:*

Exploring the risks associated with alcohol, drugs and driving, creating strategies to reduce their risks when in the road environment and considering available support networks.

Module 6:

*Let's make it personal – responsibilities and privileges:*

Students explore ways of being safe in a car when out in their local area, consider contracts and develop their own driver contract.

One of the features of these modules is the provision of a wide range of questions to promote deeper thinking and deeper knowledge.

The resource's teaching and learning strategies aim to encourage them to question their own and other's behaviours, increasing the likelihood that they will internalise the key messages and act on them at appropriate times. The focus within each activity is clearly placed on the responsibilities of the passenger/s and the driver.

The activities in this resource encourage students to:

- reflect on their own beliefs, behaviours, and experiences
- debate and challenge ideas
- interact and exchange ideas amongst peers and others
- construct knowledge through drawing connections
- be self directed learners.

Development of the resource's teaching and learning strategies utilised the expertise and skills of the three education sectors in NSW, with representatives from DEC, AIS and CEC being members of writing teams as well as members of the CRS' resource committee during the concept and development stages through to trialling by teachers and students in schools.

The components of the resource *Limiting risks, protecting lives. Choices for novice drivers and their passengers* are:

- Teacher manual;
- A CDROM – containing a copy of the teacher manual and media resources (includes introductory PowerPoint presentation);
- A DVD – containing video presentation and media resources.

Each module consists of activity instructions, teacher notes and support materials such as teacher sheets, group response sheets and student handouts. Teachers are also directed throughout the resource to support materials and information available as either hard copy from the RTA, or as downloadable files from the RTA website.

By including both printed and media resources all teachers and students are able to access the information irrespective of their technology capabilities or capacity. The intention is that they are able to utilise the resources that best suit their particular needs.

### **Getting the resource to the teachers**

The resource was distributed to all NSW secondary schools through the first phase of professional learning courses conducted by the Road Safety Education Consultant in each of the three education sectors throughout NSW.

A one day professional learning workshop was developed to support teachers and schools coinciding with the release of the resource. It provided teachers with an opportunity to explore the resource, to discuss its use in their own school setting and receive at the same time up to date information on young driver and passenger safety.

Participants were invited from all NSW secondary schools in each of the education sectors and the workshops were delivered by the road safety education consultants (qualified teachers employed in their own education sectors fully funded by RTA. They provide a variety of services to all NSW schools including assistance with programming road safety education into classroom activities and with linking road safety to the curriculum).

These workshops provided teachers with:

- activities that supported teaching and learning about driver education when using this resource
- implementation strategies into Year 10 (Stage 5) and Year 11 (Stage 6) curriculum areas
- increased awareness of current road safety issues and road safety education resources available to schools

- opportunities to access further support for road safety education at their particular schools.

Each school involved in these professional development workshops received a PowerPoint presentation to assist in the training of other teachers in their school faculties, a workshop resource booklet to guide them through the program, a copy of the resource *Limiting risks, protecting lives* to be sent to their school, and information on accessing the RTA's school education resources and support.

In the second phase of the rollout strategy, secondary schools who were unable to attend a workshop received in-school professional support in the form of one on one or faculty professional learning from their road safety education consultant. By December 2010 every secondary school in NSW had received a copy of this resource.

### Teacher survey

During 2010, one hundred teachers completed an independent survey with respect to their use of the resource. This was conducted via an online surveying tool with the three education sectors contributing the data from teachers in their own jurisdictions.

Almost all teachers (93%) who responded to the survey indicated that they had or were using the resource in their teaching.

1. Have you used the resource: *Limiting risks, protecting lives* in your teaching?

Option	Response count	Response percentage
Yes	93	93%
No	7	7%

Of the 7% who indicated they had not used the resource at this point in time they advised this was due to:

- the fact that they had programmed to use it later that year in Term 4 classes
- the resource was still being incorporated into future planning
- their school had not made a decision on where they were going to use it in their teaching and learning curriculum
- the teaching resource kit had been misplaced (1 school only)

2. How did you share this resource with other colleagues?

Option	Response count	Response percentage
At a faculty meeting	78	83.8%
Person to person	14	15.1%
Placed in library/staff room	1	1.1%
Did not share this resource	0	0.0%

Several schools indicated that they had used this resource to develop a new road safety education program of work utilising *Limiting risks, protecting lives* as the foundation document.

3. Which year groups have you used this resource with?

Option	Response count	Response percentage
Year 9 (Stage 5)	6	6.5%
Year 10 (Stage 5)	51	54.8%
Year 11 (Stage 6)	36	38.7%

This resource was specifically developed by the CRS to meet the needs of Year 10 (Stage 5) and Year 11 (Stage 6) students. The respondents indicate that 93.5% of the surveyed sample was finding the resource suitable for this targeted audience.

4. How useful did you find each of the modules?

Module	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Least useful	Did not use
1. Setting the scene	40	38	3	0	4
2. Getting a licence	44	37	2	1	1
3. Safer driving	46	38	1	0	0
4. Driving – the early years	42	34	7	0	2
5. Inexperience	41	42	1	0	1
6. Poor judgement	46	38	1	0	0
7. Make it personal	40	38	2	1	4

Teachers strongly commented that the resource was excellent and practical, with a great range of hands on activities. They noted the fact that it not only addresses young drivers but also importantly passenger issues. They indicated that students found the activities were very interesting and highly regarded. The PowerPoint presentation and videos were referred to as very thought provoking.

5. The teaching and learning activities in each module:

Option	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
Challenge student attitudes about driving	40	38	3	0	4
Promote student deeper thinking about road safety	44	37	2	1	1
Promote student decision making skills	46	38	1	0	0
Increase student knowledge and understanding	42	34	7	0	2
Promote student reflection on own beliefs	41	42	1	0	1



Teachers report here that *Limiting risks, protecting lives* is an excellent resource because it is linked to the latest research with the key road safety messages for new drivers and their passengers. The modules are well designed to support the delivery of key road safety messages and the resource is very user friendly and contains exceptional teaching and learning activities and teacher information.

The activities are age appropriate and use a preventative approach to address a significant individual and community health and safety issue for young people. They indicate that the resource is effective for students because it provides teaching and learning strategies and activities to challenge their attitudes about driving and requires them to question their own behaviour about the responsibilities of the passenger and the driver. The activities encourage students to think at a deeper level to encourage them to make better decisions. They comment that this is a very high quality teaching and learning resource.

6. Overall, the resource provides:

Option	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
A variety of engaging activities	49	35	1	0	0
Age appropriate activities	48	37	0	0	0
Useful teacher sheets	48	36	0	0	0
Useful student worksheets	45	39	1	0	0
Clear teaching and learning activity notes	48	37	0	0	0
Appropriate support for school's student welfare	39	35	1	0	10*

Teachers report that the activities engage all students and they are comfortable with the processes involved. That it is an easy to follow format and the students enjoy the creativity and variety of the lessons and the teacher notes are very comprehensive making it easy to teach any activity.

\* Ten teachers were unable to respond to this section of the question. It is most likely that these were teachers who come from a PDHPE teaching area rather than the student welfare background and were unable to comment in respect to their school's student welfare structures.

7. As a result of using this road safety education resource your:

Option	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not know
Knowledge of teaching about driver education has increased	38	45	1	0	1
Planning and programming for road safety has been enhanced	42	42	1	0	0

Teaching about driver education has improved	47	38	0	0	0
Confidence in the delivery of driver education has increased	44	39	1	0	0

## Conclusion

Teacher responses indicate that the resource, specifically designed to be delivered to Year 10 and Year 11 students through student welfare programs in schools has well and truly met its target. At the same time the resource has also been utilised by schools to be taught in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) curriculum courses as well – notably in Year 10. It has provided a range of activities and ideas that have increased student engagement.

This highlights the capacity of school teachers to implement relevant best practice educational teaching and learning materials/strategies to teach road safety education and meet the needs of their students in their own communities.

*Limiting risks, protecting lives*, has been readily accepted by teachers into the teaching programs of schools across NSW. It has done so with overwhelming endorsement of its quality and suitability for students across student welfare and PDHPE courses. Reports from teachers using this resource with their students regularly confirm a high level of student interest and engagement with the content and activities. This model of delivering road safety education has received support in the education community as a valuable tool for influencing the attitudes and beliefs of young people with regard to road safety.

Professional learning to up-skill classroom teachers in the use of this resource was provided to all secondary schools across NSW thus ensuring that the resource can be utilised to its fullest capacity by teachers who are trained in its use and are confident with the complexities of the materials. These professional learning courses were accredited with the NSW Institute of Teachers, meeting the standards of Professional competence criteria, to ensure recognition of the rigour of the material at the highest level for those participating.

An unexpected yet welcome outcome was the revelation that teachers after having worked with the resource's materials noted substantial increases in their own knowledge and ability to present road safety education to their students. They reported an enhanced capacity to plan and program for their students, nominating increased confidence in their delivery of road safety and driver education.