

Rod Harris 2003

Emergency Services Foundation Scholarship.

My scholarship was to investigate broad based models and initiatives to target the rising road toll of our young and inexperienced drivers, namely drivers between the ages of 18 - 25 years.

My experience of 23 years of road rescue, backed up with alarming statistics, shows this age group to be our most vulnerable road users.

I had sourced all the secondary school education programs, and found that even though informative, they lacked punch, so I concentrated my efforts on hard hitting programs, that have had successful results overseas.

My overall plan was to develop an intervention program with a "tough love" theme which could be delivered by emergency service workers, relating to the consequences of bad driving behaviour.

My scholarship took me to Los Angeles and New York, where I engaged the services of various police, highway patrol, sheriff and fire departments, all of which boast a variety of programs.

Most programs promoted over there were drug, alcohol and speed related programs, which are all delivered by

various agencies here in Australia. However, one program that was unique and of particular interest was the "every 15 minutes" program successfully being run through some of the states in the U.S. This program had qualities similar to that of what I had in mind for my concept.

Since my return, I was commissioned by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, to develop a teenage road trauma program, engaging partnerships with the ambulance and police, which was promoted as the T.E.E.N.S. program

The acronym of T.E.E.N.S. meaning Teaching, Enlightening, Encouraging, Nurturing Safe drivers.

The program has now been running for 7 years, with approx. 10,500, year 10 students from both private and government secondary colleges, having been through the program.

The day program was originally delivered by experienced police ambulance and fire department personnel who bring students up close and personal with precisely what happens before, during and after the event of a crash, pertaining to the expertise in their service with promotion of road safety issues.

Since the program began, it has gained its share of controversy, and has been bombarded with opposition

from various groups, believing that the program is traumatising students. However, support of the program remained strong in its early years.

Evaluation forms from students and teachers alike, have revealed a very innovative, informative no nonsense program, that makes a positive impact, and deals with the real issues.

Initially, politics & bureaucracy dogged the program, due to its graphic nature which unfortunately dissolved the partnerships, of the police and ambulance back in 2005.

The program which is fully funded by the brigade, was determined to maintain the program, so with some acute modifications and using the fire brigades expertise in its core issues was still able to develop an innovative program maintaining clear and strong messages, of the profound impact on novice drivers, and passengers, and due to strong school support, the brigade is now committing itself to rolling out the program, throughout the entire Metropolitan Fire District, over the next few years.

The program is now delivered by firefighters, with the program taking the following format. The week of t.e.e.n.s. is held at Caulfield race course. Each day is started with a DVD clip which was recorded by a Canadian band called Simple Plan, who recorded a song in memory of a friend who was killed in a car crash. It

is a very moving film, with words and lyrics that portray the sad loss of a good friend. This is followed up with a formal introduction speech, taking the students through their relevant age group statistics, emphasising on the importance of the t.e.e.n.s. program, and how their age group are so grossly over represented in the area of road trauma. Further to the opening introduction, the students are introduced to our regular guest Lloyd Simpson, who is wheel chair bound, and who was a young victim of a drunk driver.

The students are then broken up into 3 smaller groups, and delivered 3 concurrent 35 minute presentations.

The presentations are on "responsive road trauma management" from our emergency medical responders, highlighting initial first aid that can be provided to save lives, "responsible and accountable driving attitudes", emphasising the ripple effects of crashes, highlighting physical, emotional, financial & legal ramifications with further talks on several key messages such as accepting lifts, road rage distractions and road conditions for young drivers and passengers, and finally "learning to drive" focusing on important issues relating to car management, roadworthiness, safe driver tips and the latest road laws and rules pertaining to new drivers.

When lunch is taken, students and teachers enjoyed a sausage sizzle, hamburger and can of soft drink or

bottled water. Lunch also provided a good opportunity for some of the t.e.e.n.s. staff to interact with the students and have a bit of fun with the with drunk/drugged and night vision glasses while others got some useful motorbike tips from Adam Smibert and his "000 racing" outfit, or speak with Lloyd

After lunch Brentwood Secondary College, provide us with their drama students, to act out 3 role play scenarios, having a little fun but emphasizing and focusing on the consequences of making the wrong choices. The final scenario setting the scene of a crash. The students are then taken outside and presented with crash scene, with actors inside creating as close to a real crash scene as possible.

Students are given a narrative, while presenters take a selection of students from the audience, on a walk through the crash scene and participate in helping firefighters attend to trauma management. Students are then quizzed for information they have received during the day, pertaining to the presentations they have received, regarding trauma management procedures, being accountable and responsible, and emergency call tips, in the event that they came across a crash or were in fact involved in a crash. The day concludes with students being given handout material highlighting safe driving practices, as they leave the area of the crash scene.

