

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Power of Choice Committee
Name: Senior Constable Jason Bentley
Position: Co-ordinator
Date Received: 19/11/2007

POWER OF CHOICE

Designed to help Young Drivers and Passengers make the right choice.

Staysafe
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY. 2000

Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs

Submission by the Power of Choice Committee, Port Macquarie

Background:

During 2004, Carl Lockwood of Port Macquarie became concerned about the relatively high incidences of young people involved in fatal crashes within his local area. Carl had a long association with many charity organisations and was prepared to do what he could to develop a programme for young people which might benefit their futures on the road. One of the high schools in his area agreed to assist in developing a programme which led to the programme being trialed at the beginning of 2005. The programme has grown into its current format. The programme has been delivered to more than 2000 Year 11 students in the Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area. This represents almost all students who have reached Year 11 since 2005. (In 2005, the programme was delivered to Year 12 students to 'catch up' with the 2005 school population.) The programme is delivered at all State High Schools and nearly all non-Government High Schools in this LGA. It is delivered during November and December when Year 12 have finished school which provides free classrooms and teachers for supervision.

In the early days of forming the programme, a decision was made to attempt to turn around the peer pressure upon young road users. The aim was to have passengers pressure their drivers into making the right choices and decisions – that speaking out against a dangerous situation was more socially acceptable to the young people than saying nothing and living with the consequences. The attitude of road users is seen as paramount to the consequences of what happens on the roads. This focus on peer pressure and choosing the outcome of your decisions led to the name of the programme, The Power of Choice. 'Choice' continues throughout our driving careers; it's not just for the first few years of a young persons driving experience.

The Power of Choice is a road safety awareness programme. It focuses on the attitudes of all road users: drivers, passengers, pedestrians, their friends and families. The Power of Choice is delivered without cost by the Committee. The presenters are voluntary or from Government bodies. The schools meet the cost of bus transport for their students. A voluntary donation is requested from the students for the local volunteer rescue unit.



The Power of Choice Programme:

Our programme is a **free** 3 hour presentation. It is delivered within the school grounds. Due to the numbers of Year 11 students within the local high schools, two schools combine at each venue for an audience of around 150-180 students. The visiting school pays for the cost of bus transportation; it is not recovered from the attending students. The programme is in the following format:

OPENING SESSION: Road Rescue

All students watch a 25 minute 'rescue'. A donated wreck containing two drama students is cut open by the local accredited rescue unit. This is narrated by the senior officer from the rescue unit so the students have an appreciation of what is happening and why. Local ambulance officers treat the patients to add some realism to the demonstration. Whilst the demonstration is an abridged version, it has all the elements of a real rescue. Following the rescue, the students divide into five groups, which is 25-35 students. They rotate through the following five presentations which last 20 minutes each. The sessions are in individual classrooms apart from Session 5. There is no set order how the sessions should be arranged.

SESSION ONE: Ambulance officer.

Explains the treatment carried out at the scene, prior to arrival at hospital. The officer explains that patients are often conscious and experience terrible pain during the administration of the initial attention. The presentation is done without being offensive. It requires the students to consider the reality of being in that situation, even if they're uninjured where they're required to watch their friends or family being treated.

SESSION TWO: Head-injured Victim.

A driver whose car was involved in a head-on crash talks of her experiences of suffering critical injuries in a crash more than 10 years ago. She speaks of her long and ongoing recovery, which is yet to provide her with full mobility or full cognitive functions. The session is delivered with a Police Crash Investigator. The police officer explains that a simple incident of inattention can lead to a life altering situation. The students are asked to think of their local traffic environment. Almost all students are exposed to high speed undivided roads on a daily basis, whereas metropolitan students may never be outside a 50km/h or 60 km/h area for long periods of time. A crash in the country areas is always more catastrophic simply because of the high speed involved.

SESSION THREE: Victim's Relatives.

Often forgotten in the process of a serious crash are those left to deal with the outcome. In our programme, the mother of a young male driver who had a fatal crash is joined by the sister of a young male passenger from the same crash. The passenger died in the crash; the driver survived and was charged. Each woman speaks of how the crash changed the lives of so many people. The boys were local students in the area. The students are made to think of the boys who were sitting in school only a few years ago, and to think 'who will it be next?' The only way to avoid that situation is through making the right choice.

SESSION FOUR: Professional Driving Education.

The committee recognised that many students are not able to be provided with professional driving tuition. The students are given some tips on correct steering and cornering technique, following distances, roundabouts, etc. This helps to break up the sessions so that it's not all pure emotion and devastation, which helps to keep the students attention throughout the programme.

SESSION FIVE: Mechanical Demonstration.

Following with the same idea of keeping the programme practical as well as thought provoking, the students are shown the basics of car maintenance. A local mechanic uses a roadworthy car to show the students what to look for as part of regular maintenance as well as things to consider when buying a car.

FINAL GROUP SESSION: Local Court Magistrate

The students come together in the hall at the end of the five individual sessions. The Magistrate takes them through a scenario as if they're a young person involved in a fatal crash. This highlights their exposure to the Court system regardless of their age at the time of a crash. Legal issues such as insurance and it's implications are also briefly explained.

ASSESSMENT OF THE POWER OF CHOICE:

Feedback for the programme has come from teachers and students. The schools have maintained a commitment of having the programme delivered to Year 11 each year. Staff have indicated the presentation of the sessions in smaller numbers is of more benefit than having the presentations delivered to the students as an entire group. There is far more interaction between the presenters and students in small group numbers. While this places a greater commitment upon the presenters, our presenters are willing to provide more time for a better result.

Some students have approached presenters months after the presentation. They have told presenters that they've been in a position where they've said to the driver "Do you remember the power of choice?" which has changed the driver's behavior immediately.

Measurement of the programme is very difficult. Because we don't rely on any funding, there has been no need to carry out detailed analysis of the programme. The students are asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the day. While this helps us to keep the programme relevant and worthwhile, it is no measure or guarantee of what's going to happen late one Saturday night, six months later. The true test is what happens where the potential exists for two choices to be made – the right choice or the wrong choice. **Since the programme started in 2005, there have been no fatalities involving any of the past students.** The current fatality free period is in contrast to the years prior to the programme being developed. We believe this is the only figure that matters.

GROWTH OF THE POWER OF CHOICE:

During school holidays, high schools on major roads are asked to display our theme on their message boards which are visible to passing traffic. They carry the message REMEMBER THE POWER OF CHOICE.

Through support from local businesses, a DVD and presentation package has been produced. This is available to any group considering setting up a similar programme. There are known difficulties for smaller and remote communities to have access to large presentations such as ours. If there is strong community interest, with the right choice of presenters, a similar programme can be delivered in any community. The success of our programme is keeping it relevant to the local area. Using local presenters, especially young presenters, from the community provides a closeness to the reality of the road trauma. In return, the presenters have a sense of achievement in helping their local youth.

A series of television commercials have been made without charge for the Committee. They are shown as community announcements at various times throughout the year. This year the commercials were shown over the Easter period, and more recently, during the telecast of the Bathurst 1000 V8 Supercar race.

The name "Power of Choice" has been registered as a trademark with the Australian Government IP Australia. As our committee is a not for profit organisation, we felt it was important to protect the name for the benefit of future students and to maintain the integrity of the programme. The committee has endorsed free Power of Choice presentations to local seniors groups on the same basis – that driving as a senior and it's consequences is a matter of choice. The committee hopes this adds strength to our message and increases awareness in the community of the Power of Choice.

Final Comment:

There is a copy of the promotional DVD and presentation pack attached with our submission.

Young people in rural areas have a higher representation in fatal crashes than those in metropolitan communities. Given the smaller population outside the metropolitan area, the per capita rate for rural young people is much greater. We are concerned for the need of ongoing education in the area of road safety and awareness. We are especially concerned for young people without access to an effective programme, which was the basis for producing the DVD package

Our committee is extremely fortunate to have strong support from the presenters and the local school community. There is no drug or alcohol awareness component within the programme. The schools have indicated those issues are covered in other parts of the curriculum. In any case, the committee is trying to highlight that road trauma can affect anyone at anytime, it's not discretionary. There is no place for complacency based on a misconception that not drinking, not speeding and wearing a seat belt will always protect you all of the time.

The Power of Choice Committee would be pleased to assist Staysafe with further information and of course, we would welcome any feedback or advice from your Committee.



Jason Bentley
Co-Ordinator,

Power of Choice Committee, Port Macquarie.

Contact details of Committee members are in the attachment.

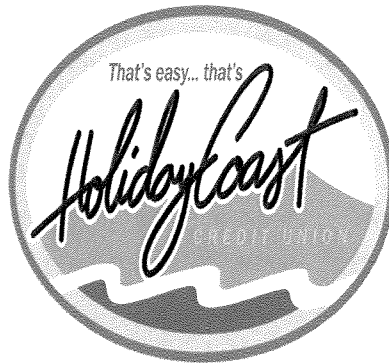


The Power of Choice at Port Macquarie High School, presented to 160 Year 11 students from Port Macquarie and Westport High Schools, 14th November, 2007.

“Power of Choice”

A Driver and Passenger awareness program

Proudly supported by



PRIME



“Power of Choice”

By: Driver Educator Barry Hacker JP & Local Court Magistrate Wayne Evans

(A program designed to help young drivers and passengers to make the right choice)

This program is recommended for all year 11 students

These notes are to accompany the promotional DVD

Committee:

Chairman: Carl Lockwood

Co-ordinators: Driver Educator Barry Hacker and Sen/Const Jason Bentley

Magistrate: Wayne Evans

Automotive Professional: Terry Clifton

Lions Club Member: Allan Rapley,

Ambulance Officers: Stephen Towle & Terry McDermott

Secondary School Representatives: Tim McCosker & Andrew Marsh
(Catholic Colleges)

Sue Bolton & Trevor Taylor
(State High Schools)

Accident Victims & Relatives: Yvonne Chedwidden, Alithia Mylonas and
Tom Kennedy.

000000000000

Proudly Supported By:



PRIME

The ***Power of Choice Program*** is a community initiative designed to help young drivers and passengers to make the right choice while they are in a motor vehicle. The program is not intended to intimidate or ridicule the younger driver and it is not a “***how to drive***” program. Students are constantly reminded that choosing the right attitude is their decision. Choosing the right attitude could help them to ***survive the drive***, even as a passenger. They are shown the ***consequences*** of making the wrong choice. The presentation runs for approximately three hours.

This document is designed to assist a committee to deliver the program to senior students. It will be necessary to co-opt the services of the relevant people and include them on the working committee. The committee could also consist of members of Rotary and/or Lions and members of the general public.

In 2004 there were a number of “P” Plate driver fatalities in the Port Macquarie area. Since this program was introduced in early 2005, there has not been one Port Macquarie “P” Plate driver killed.

The fact that this program is compact (twenty minute sessions), is run and organized by the presenters and makes use of audio- visual equipment, helps to make it more acceptable to the students.

The program is recommended to all year eleven students.

Opening Presentation

Emergency Services: (SES or Rural Fire Service) (20 minutes):

The program commences with a demonstration by the emergency services. Students are dressed up to resemble accident victims and are placed in an old car. The car is brought to the venue courtesy of a local service club. One student plays the part of a deceased person while the other represents a seriously injured victim. The injured student is removed from the vehicle after the cutting and spreading equipment (*jaws-of-life*) are used in front of all the students. During the presentation a commentary is delivered by one of the emergency services personnel. While this is happening, another student rushes from the crowd screaming for their friends in the car. This student is comforted by a Chaplain or one of the Emergency Services Officers, while the ambulance officers are attending to the victims as they are being removed from the vehicle.

This presentation is not only a demonstration for the students to witness; it also allows the emergency services personnel to have a training session.

Classroom Presentations:

The Presenters:

Police, Local Court Magistrate, Accident Victims, Ambulance Officer, Automotive Professional and a Driver Educator.

(Any two presenters could share one room)

At the completion of the emergency services presentation, the students are divided into five groups (approx. 20 students). The presenters will be waiting for them in four separate rooms and the mechanic is situated in an outside area. With the aid of TV/Videos, Overhead Projectors, Power Point and Black/White Boards, five twenty minute programs are delivered as the students rotate from room-to-room. This means each presenter delivers their session five times. While this is arduous on the presenters, it is very beneficial to the students. If the program was to be held in an auditorium with all students together, it would mean that the students would be in the one room for three hours while the presentations take place. The students would become very bored and the presenters would *lose* them. By moving from room-to-room it gives them the opportunity to rest their minds and to stretch their legs before the next presentation. This has proven to be most successful.

We believe one of the reasons this program is perhaps better than other similar programs, is because it is compact. Three hours is long enough. Similar programs run for a full school day with a break for lunch. Many students find this boring.

We also believe it is more beneficial not to have an in-car session in the program, as this only encouraged the students to repeat such acts with their mates on the following weekend and usually in the main streets.

Police:

This program could come from a police accident investigator. With the aid of a video presentation, the students are shown how the police investigate an accident to identify who was at fault. The police officer will also explain to the students that it is not always a speeding motorist that has an accident.

Accident investigation police are also able to provide graphic evidence of accident cases and explain how simple it can be to kill or seriously injure someone you care for.

Accident Victims:

Victims who are left in a wheel chair or who have suffered some form of brain injury are usually the best for this presentation. Family members of an accident victim can also help and offer a presentation. The students can see first hand what happens to so many victims of road accidents and the effects it has on the families. They are reminded that for every death on our roads, there are 20 or more seriously injured drivers and passengers like these presenters. The presenters could show photos or videos of their accident and of themselves during their recovery period.

They can identify the permanency of their injuries and how their lives are affected.

Ambulance Officer:

With the aid of a video showing motor vehicle accidents, this provides a confronting experience for all students. Also with the use of body bags, the presenter is able to deliver the message that accidents do not discriminate, as they also produce a baby's body bag. Drug and alcohol is also a big part of this presentation. (*The Ambulance Service of NSW has the necessary video tapes of actual fatal accident scenes*)

The Driver Educator:

Most reputable driver educators will agree that correct steering and cornering technique is not taught enough to those learning to drive. The presenter can deliver a sound message on these two important skills. A video on correct following distance and how to use roundabouts, is another useful tool. A Power Point Presentation can deliver a sound message on the various aspects of driving and driver responsibilities. Alcohol Simulation Goggles can also assist with this presentation.

Automotive Professional:

With the aid of a clutch, brake and spring systems, the presenter is able to demonstrate their role and importance in a motor vehicle.

They also explain the importance of regular servicing of a vehicle and the risks in removing a spring sleeve when lowering their car. It is also explained to the students the importance of smooth braking and accelerating and the risks involve should they ignore this advice.

This also identifies a car as a powerful and potentially dangerous machine, not a toy.

Local Court Magistrate or Solicitor:

This session is delivered with all students coming together to conclude the program. The magistrate explains what the consequences could be if they choose the wrong attitude. The Magistrate encourages the audience to look through the eyes of the accused. Requesting the students to close their eyes, the magistrate adopts a typical courtroom voice, and takes the student on an imaginary walk into a court room. The charge is *driving in a manner dangerous or a similar charge*. The Magistrate finally announces that they have been found guilty and passes sentence. The atmosphere created by the narration is very moving and leaves the students with the sense of guilt any accused would feel.

The Magistrate can also outline the legislation penalties by distributing relevant information. This identifies that minimum and/or automatic periods of disqualification apply notwithstanding just how much a young person requires a licence.

Conclusion:

Following all presentations, the school Principal addresses the students to formally close the session. Schools are encouraged to make a donation to the SES. Usually this donation representing at least \$1 per student.

Foot Note:

The students are given a lot to think about. It is a challenging program. The Power of Choice has been endorsed by all students who have witnessed the program.

Publicity:

Since this program started in early 2005. Prime television has made four fifteen second and one 30 second advertisement. These will continue to run on Prime TV from time- to- time. A promotional DVD has also been compiled, thanks to the generosity of the Holiday Coast Credit Union and Gillespie Media Productions.

Training Aids

Video tapes and the simulation goggles are available from;

Safe Driver Training
P.O. Box 3747
Loganholme Hyperdome
Queensland 4129

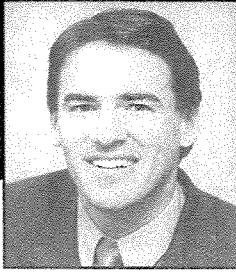
Other Material from;
Video Education Australia
111A Mitchell Street
Bendigo
Vic 3550
Phone: (03) 5442 2433
www.vea.com.au

For further assistance and information about the program contact;

Barry Hacker JP
6 Merinda Drive
Port Macquarie 2444
Phone: (02) 6582 1775
e-mail: bhport@bigpond.net.au

or

Sen/Const Jason Bentley
Police Station
Hay Street
Port Macquarie 2444
Phone: (02) 6583 0199



Robert Oakeshott

MEMBER FOR PORT MACQUARIE

2/68 Clarence Street Port Macquarie NSW 2444 tel 6584 0977 fax 6584 0978

Parliament House Macquarie Street Sydney NSW 2000
tel 9230 2620 fax 9230 2283

THE POWER OF CHOICE

The "Power of Choice" program is a well-designed and well-presented program, which has been proven to effect the attitudes and influence the decisions made by young drivers in our local area. It is presented in a way that allows the students to draw their own conclusions from the real-life scenarios that are put before them and highlights the potential consequences of decisions that they will be faced with both as young adults, and drivers of a motor vehicle.

The program allows interaction with other members of the community who are often most affected by the poor decisions of drivers, ranging from the S.E.S., police and ambulance crews that deal with the immediate affects as emergency service workers, to family members, magistrates and victims of drivers whose actions have affected many other lives.

We are fortunate enough to have the services of a number of passionate members of our community actively working to save young lives through their involvement in the Power of Choice program and I thank them all for their skill, their professionalism and their dedication in providing the youth of Port Macquarie with this opportunity.

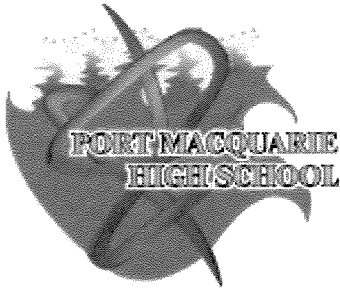
In commending this program to you, it is important to note that since the program was adopted, there have been no "P" plate fatalities from any of the schools that have participated in this program, which is testament to the work being done to help save local young lives through this initiative.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone involved in supporting this program and may we continue to achieve success through the further education of our young drivers.

Yours sincerely

ROBERT OAKESHOTT MP
MEMBER FOR PORT MACQUARIE

ro:pb



Port Macquarie High School

Owen Street, Port Macquarie NSW 2444

Telephone: (02) 6583 1844 Facsimile: (02) 6584 1632

ABN 65 476 841 140

Email: portmac-h.schools@det.nsw.edu.au

Website: www.portmac-schools.nsw.edu.au

Port Macquarie High School has made the Power of Choice a compulsory part of its Preliminary HSC Curriculum.

We believe that this programme, with its direct, practical and at times confrontational approach, hits directly at the psyche of the beginning driver. Such methods as using the 'jaws of life' to extricate students from smashed vehicles, talking directly with victims of road accidents and the 'eye-witness' accounts of clergy, ambulance officers, magistrates and police are most empathetic ways of portraying the results of risk-taking for young drivers.

Our school community values this programme very highly and believes it has a demonstrably beneficial effect on inculcating safe practices amongst our young drivers.

Mark Longstaff