

Media release



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State's most at risk drivers learn lifelong lesson

More than 2,000 country students from across Western Australia witnessed first-hand the consequences of distracted driving when the RAC, WA Police, St John Ambulance, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Royal Perth Hospital staged the inaugural Country Week bstreetsmart.

RAC Executive General Manager Pat Walker said Year 10, 11 and 12 students attending Country Week also observed the re-enactment of a crash scene at Perth Arena, which used actors as victims and real-life police, paramedics and firefighters to demonstrate how emergency services respond.

"This is the first time students attending Country Week will participate in bstreetsmart – which is designed to be a candid look at how poor decisions behind the wheel can change lives forever," Mr Walker said.

"Last year, regional WA accounted for 45% of fatalities, despite only 22% of the population living there. This year already 52% of fatalities have occurred in the country.

"In 2013, young drivers aged 17 to 24 made up 18 per cent of road fatalities, but only accounted for 11 per cent of the population. Young drivers are amongst the State's most vulnerable, and are over-represented in the crash statistics.

"We sincerely hope this is the closest these young drivers come to being involved in a serious car crash."

St John Ambulance WA General Manager Metropolitan Ambulance, James Sherriff, said the cost of road trauma to the community is enormous.

"Almost on a daily basis our paramedics and volunteer ambulance officers see young lives shattered because of road accidents. Many factors contribute to motor vehicle accidents, but education of drivers, particularly younger drivers, is important as it saves lives.

"It is also important that all take on the responsibility of learning first aid which is a vital part of the chain of survival in ensuring the best possible outcome for the patient in road traffic accidents, you being able to assist in those critical moments is vital when being confronted with such incidents."

Director of Trauma Service at Royal Perth Hospital, Dr Sudhakar Rao, said he too regularly sees the consequences of distracted driving.

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“As WA’s State Major Trauma Service, our job is provide the best care to patients after a crash, but the impacts of road trauma extend further than mending broken bones. We provide insight to the real impacts of road trauma which we hope will make young drivers think twice and pay greater attention to the road,” said Dr Rao.

WA Police Inspector Dom Wood said bstreetsmart is another step forward in educating our young and most inexperienced road users on the very real dangers they face when they start driving.

“WA Police have to deal far too often with the aftermath of fatal or serious crashes on our highways and the trauma of having to deal with families, often notifying parents and loved ones of the loss of a child. We hope the realistic sight and sounds of this event will highlight the trauma the police have to deal with and try to instil good attitudes and behaviours into these young drivers by showing them what can happen.”

Department of Fire and Emergency Services Operations Deputy Commissioner Lloyd Bailey said firefighters worked closely with other emergency services at the scene of road crashes and this collaboration continued through initiatives such as bstreetsmart.

“Firefighters see the devastation road crashes cause when they attend to free injured or trapped people. Ultimately we would all like to see crashes be avoided in the first place and this is why we wholeheartedly support initiatives such as bstreetsmart.”

An RAC survey of 700 17-19 year olds found 43 per cent read or send text messages while driving, and a further 20 per cent check social media behind the wheel.

This is the third year bstreetsmart has been held in Western Australia, and the first time students attending Country Week will witness the crash re-enactment. For more information visit

<http://racbstreetsmart.com.au/country-week/>

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