

The Daily Liberal, 11 March 2009

Program aims to teach students safe driving techniques **Don't ruin your life: survivor**

By ANNA YEO

After celebrating his acceptance into the NSW Police Force Andrew Murray jumped behind the wheel of his car and wound up in a devastating car accident that changed his life forever.

This was just one compelling story young students from schools in Dubbo and surrounding areas heard as part of the Rotary Youth Driver Awareness program (RYDA) that began yesterday at Dubbo Showground.

Each year Mr Murray speaks of his heart-breaking accident, which almost killed him and left him without peripheral vision in his left eye, poor balance and other impairments.

"I was involved in a drink-driving accident after celebrating my acceptance into the NSW Police Force," Mr Murray said.

"Ambulance crews had to resuscitate me two times before I was even out of the vehicle, then I was then taken to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for emergency brain surgery.

"I want young drivers to know how this can completely ruin your life."

Mr Murray has been speaking at RYDA for the past five years and said it was essential

teenagers learn as much as they could about the dangers of driving before they got their P-plates.

The RYDA program is organised by Dubbo's Rotary clubs and flags risk areas for young drivers.

More than 400 students attended this year's program, which finishes today, and undertook lessons in hazard perception, car insurance and finance, talks from crash survivors and police, and stopping distances.

Former police officer and current driving instructor Greg Reichart runs the stopping distance lessons which allows students to drive with him as he outlines how long it takes for a car to stop when driving at speeds of 60, 70 and 80km/h.

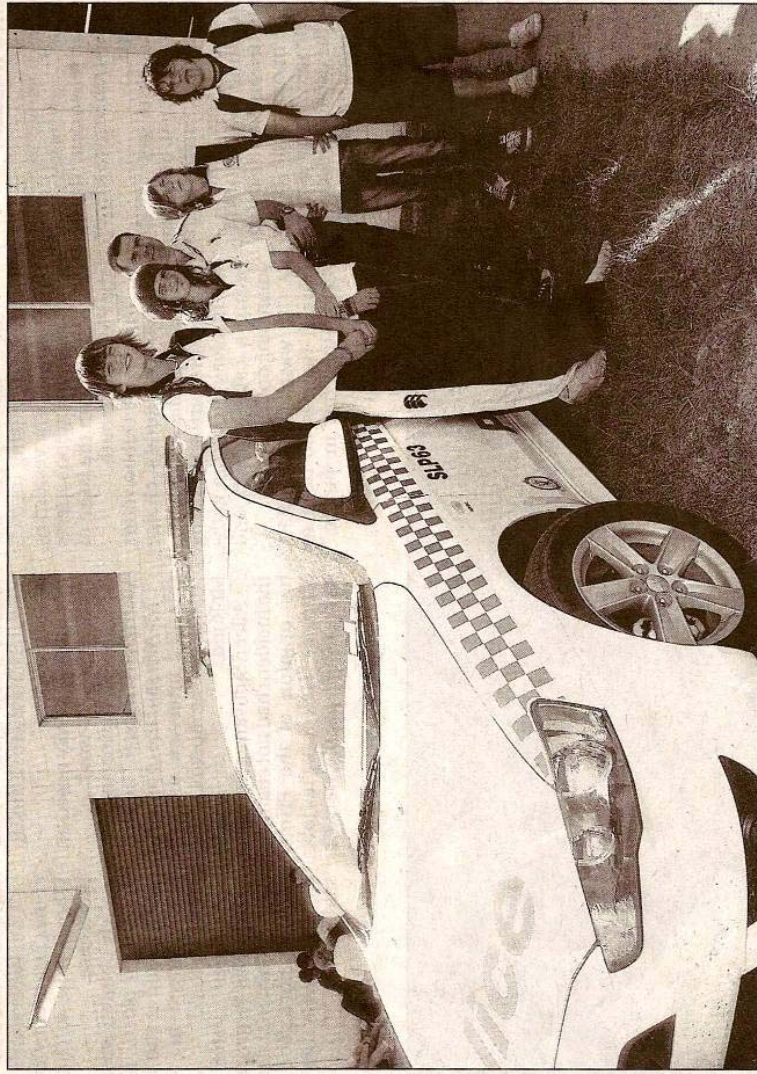
Dubbo College Senior Campus student Eric Fernando said a re-enactment video of a girl killed in a car accident when her boyfriend drove drunk was a real "eye-opener".

"This girl Sara had an 18th birthday party and then her drunk boyfriend drove a car and she got killed."

"It was a real eye-opener, it makes you think," he said.

Students from schools in Narramine and Wellington take part in the program today.

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Jessie Johnson, James May, Marty Paice, Peter Benett and Brady May at yesterday's Rotary Youth Driver Awareness program at the Dubbo showgrounds