

# 'Death knock' prompts cop to spread message

## Young driver program in constable's sights

By ANNA YEO

The knock that nobody wants to receive is one that Senior Constable Martin Paice hopes to never deliver again.

Six years ago, Senior Constable Paice delivered that harrowing knock on the door to the father of a 17-year-old girl who was killed in a car crash.

With rising levels of dangerous driving behaviour on our roads, he fears more police officers will find themselves in the position he was in that day.

On Wednesday two men fronted Dubbo Local Court charged with driving offences while their licences were either suspended or disqualified.

One of the men was caught driving 45km/h over the speed limit.

That same day a 21-year-old man was fined \$2500 and lost his licence for 18 months after he crashed his car while drink-driving.

During the recent long weekend 102 people were fined for breaking the law on our roads.

Today, Senior Constable Paice is a school liaison officer for Dubbo police and works closely with youth in a driving education program called RYDA (Rotary Youth Driver Awareness).

He hopes that extra education about dangerous driving behaviour will save the lives of people on our roads.

This week Senior Constable Paice shared his story about delivering "the knock", describing it as one of the hardest things he has ever done in his time as a police officer.

"To tell a daughter or son that their 70- or 80-year-old father or mother has passed away is difficult, but to tell a father that his 17-year-old daughter has been killed in a car crash is ... very hard," he said.

"I was asked by my supervisor to tell the parents of a 17-year-old girl who had been killed in a car crash in Victoria that their daughter was dead.

"I remember walking up to the front door and asking this girl's father if it was okay for me to come in.

"It's hard because you know that at that stage they know it's going to be bad news.

"I sat her father down and told him that his daughter was killed in a car crash ... I just saw the life get sucked out of him.

"He slumped in his chair.



Orana Local Area Command school liaison officer Martin Paice believes the RYDA driving program can help educate young drivers to be safe on the road.

"I can still see that man's face clear in my mind, as if it was yesterday.

"It is something that will stay with me for a long time."

Speed was a factor in the crash that killed the 17-year-old girl that day, and today - six years on - Senior Constable Paice said it was frustrating to see that the message still wasn't getting through to drivers.

He said he didn't see car crashes as accidents, but rather as foolish

acts. "These people aren't thinking about their loved ones when they speed or drink-drive," he said.

"It's not just fatalities, some people are left with serious injuries like brain damage or the loss of limbs.

"They aren't thinking about all the people who could be affected.

"Car crashes are so easily prevented by sticking to the speed limits, wearing your seat belt and not driving when you drink."

Senior Constable Paice has been involved with the RYDA driving program for the past two years and hopes to continue his role for years to come.

He believes the program is the right education young drivers need to be safe on the road.

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