



Crash Scenario at RRISK

RRISK is a health promotion program that addresses risk-taking behaviour amongst year 11 students in the North Coast of NSW. First developed in 1999, the RRISK program has grown rapidly in response to demand, initially involving 300 students from 9 high schools and now attracting students from 48 schools across northern NSW from Tweed Heads to Port Macquarie.

Adolescent risk taking associated with alcohol, drugs, driving and celebrating results in unacceptably high levels of injury and trauma. Young people are over-represented in every category of risk-taking behaviour resulting in injury (Elkington 2000).

RRISK is relevant to the social life, developmental stage and concerns of adolescents. It extends the school based drug education and road safety curriculum by providing opportunities for senior high school students to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills to reduce risk taking and develop safer celebrating strategies. The program includes a well-designed, multi-strategic seminar day, preceded and followed by a range of in-school activities. It incorporates factual presentations on risk taking, alcohol, drugs, safe driving and vehicle safety, and is enlivened by drama, life stories and role models. Student-led activities include peer-facilitated small groups discussing potentially risky situations and learning how to respond in an emergency and a crash scenario, which involves students, police, ambulance, emergency services and the local prosecutor. Over the years, the seminars have been supported by community meetings, newsletter inserts, art competitions and professional development sessions for health professionals, teachers and community workers. RRISK includes keynote presenters from Drug and Alcohol Research & Training Australia and the RTA.

Each school that attends RRISK nominates a coordinator who is responsible for organising and promoting the aims of the program within their school. Students are involved in planning and presentations to ensure that RRISK is relevant and empowering to adolescents. Over 350 students are trained each year as peer facilitators to help other students understand the risks, make informed decisions, plan ahead and look after friends when socialising.

A comprehensive evaluation, funded by the NSW Motor Accident Authority (MAA) in 2002-2006 has demonstrated that RRISK is positively influencing student knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Annual process evaluations of students, teachers and stakeholders allow the committee to refine and improve the program's quality.

RRISK is successful because of its relevance to adolescents; it complements the school curriculum; it is considered core business by partners; is well supported by peak organisations; and receives good media coverage. Components of the evaluation have been published in peer-reviewed journals and the program has been a finalist in the National Drug and Alcohol Awards and winner of the North Coast Area Health Service Excellence Award and a finalist in Excellence in Road Safety Award.

RRISK is an intersectoral partnership between North Coast Area Health Service, NSW Department of Education, Catholic Education Office Lismore, Lismore City, Tweed, Ballina, Coffs Harbour City and Port Macquarie-Hastings Councils. The partnership is also supported by, Southern Cross University, NSW Health, NSW Police, Ambulance, SES, RTA NRMA Motoring and Services, Motor Accidents Authority and local media.
