

Helping young people avoid or manage risks

By JENZ DAVIDSON

A HANDS-ON program, which helps young drivers reduce the risk of being involved in a vehicle accident, is being offered to Year 11 Coffs Harbour students.

The program, RRISK (Reduce Risk, Increase Student Knowledge), has been running for the past 11 years on the Far North Coast and three years on the Mid North Coast. The George Institute, an independent research organisation, has shown that participants who attended a RRISK program had a 44 per cent reduced risk of having a road crash.

"RRISK has a much broader focus than other road safety programs," North Coast Area Health Service alcohol projects co-ordinator Reyna Dight said.

"Each program includes a one-day seminar with peer training workshops and other activities such

WOOLGOOLGA BLAZE

FIREFIGHTERS worked quickly to contain a blaze that spontaneously ignited at the old sawmill site at Woolgoolga yesterday. While the fire only burnt a small section of land on the site, firefighters had to be wary of the nearby Woolgoolga industrial area where there are large petrol and gas tanks.

as newsletters for parents and community meetings. It builds resilience by providing strategies to help young people avoid or manage risks across many aspects of their lives such as pressure from peers around alcohol and drug use, planning a safe return from parties and the importance of looking after friends; as well as developing safer behaviour as drivers and passengers," Ms Dight said.

"Previous evaluations of RRISK found increases in a range of protective behaviours for students who participated in the program. This latest research goes further in endorsing our resilient approach as a more effective way of designing young driver education programs to reduce injury and death."

A unique resilience building feature of RRISK is the training of more than 300 peer facilitators leading up to the RRISK seminars. Students are trained to lead small groups of classmates in applying practical solutions to risky situations. Elements of the Red Cross 'Save-a-Mate' program have been incorporated into this training.

More than 3600 students from 48 high schools will be attending the program. In Coffs Harbour, the seminar will be held on November 25 and 26 at Southern Cross University, D Block Theatre. The keynote speaker is Paul Dillon from Drug and Alcohol Research and Training, Australia.