

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 16 November 2009

Parents have more influence than they think!

Parents need to model the behaviour they expect from their children especially when it comes to driving and alcohol use. “Suddenly becoming considerate road users when teaching your children to drive is too late”, said Ray Clark, Road Safety Officer with Tweed Shire Council. “Your child has been observing your driving behaviour from as early as five years of age, long before they get their Learner’s licence”.

An alarming twenty per cent of Year 10 and 11 students surveyed during the evaluation of the RRISK (Reduce Risk, Increase Student Knowledge) program reported that they had been passengers in a vehicle driven by a family member who had been drinking. “The vast majority of vehicle crashes are caused by speeding, driver inattention or driving under the influence of alcohol. These are the result of bad driving behaviours, not bad road conditions” Ray explained.

How you use alcohol and your attitude towards drinking will not only influence your child’s drinking behaviour but also help them avoid and manage the risks associated with drinking”, said Sue Hetherington, Drugs and Road Safety Officer with Lismore Catholic Education Office. “There are no easy answers. Over permissiveness or harsh discipline do not work with adolescents. The best approach is to negotiate reasonable limits by identifying risks together and working out some protective behaviours that can be put in place when they are out partying and driving.” said Sue.

Parents need to be aware of the growing body of evidence of the damaging effects of alcohol and other substance use on the adolescent brain which is still developing until young people are in their early 20s. “The earlier people start drinking, the more likely they are to drink heavily, experience cognitive impairment and develop a dependency on alcohol as they move into adulthood’ said Reyna Dight, Coordinator Alcohol Projects, North Coast Area Health Service.

This is why by a strong message has been sent to parents in the new Australian Alcohol Guidelines, 2009. The guidelines recommend that for young people under the age of 18, not drinking alcohol is the safest option, especially for children 15 years and under. For young people aged 15-17 the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

Paul Dillon from Drug and Alcohol Research and Training, Australia, will be the keynote speaker at this year's RRISK seminars. He will explode some dangerous myths around alcohol and drugs and risk taking for the 3600 students from 48 high schools who will be attending RRISK seminars. "Unfortunately many young people get their advice from unreliable sources such as friends and the net. My role is to provide information that can save lives but the final decision is up to them" said Paul.

RRISK seminars will be held in –

- **Lismore at Southern Cross University from 17, 18,19 November 2009.**
- **Tweed Heads Civic Centre on 20 & 23 November 2009**
- **Coffs Harbour at Southern Cross University on 25 & 26 November 2009**
- **Port Macquarie Panthers on 1st December 2009**

The RRISK program is the product of a highly effective partnership between North Coast Area Health Service, Catholic Education Office, Lismore, Department of Education and Training, Northern Region, Lismore City, Tweed and Ballina Shire Councils and NRMA Coffs Harbour. Sponsorship is received from NSW Health, Southern Cross University, NRMA, RTA, local councils and registered clubs. The program is also supported by NSW Police, NSW Ambulance, NSW SES and VRA and the Hastings Men's Shed. The RRISK seminars have been running for 11 years in the Far North Coast and 3 years in the Mid North Coast.

Further information from:

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Paul Dillon, Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, keynote speaker at the RRISK Seminars.

Photo/filming/interview opportunities – see over

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Lismore: 17,18 &19 November 2009, Southern Cross University - Y Block Theatre:

Keynote speaker - Paul Dillon, Drug & Alcohol Research & Training, Australia. Contact Reyna Dight 0419983228 to arrange interviews

1.30pm - 2.10pm - Simulated Crash Scenario, Police, Ambulance, students, Barrister Prosecutor)

9.30am-3.00pm - RRISK presenters and committee

11.00am-11.30am; 12.45-1.30pm - RRISK peer facilitators and students

Tweed Heads: 20 & 23 November 2009. Tweed Heads Civic Centre

10.30am- Keynote speaker - Paul Dillon, Drug & Alcohol Research and Training, Australia

1.05pm -1.45pm - Simulated Crash Scenario, Police, Ambulance, students, Barrister

9.30am-3.00pm - RRISK presenters and committee

11.00-11.20am; 12.35-1.05pm - RRISK peer facilitators and students

Coffs Harbour: 25 & 26 November 2009. Southern Cross University. D Block Theatre

10.35am - Keynote speaker - Paul Dillon, Drug & Alcohol Research and Training, Australia

1.20pm - 2.00pm - Simulated Crash Scenario, Police, Ambulance, students, Magistrate

9.30am - 3.00pm - RRISK presenters and committee

11.20am -11.40am; 12.35-1.05pm - RRISK peer facilitators and students

Port Macquarie: 1 December 2009. Panthers Auditorium

10.35am - Keynote speaker - Paul Dillon, Drug & Alcohol Research and Training, Australia

1.15pm -1.55pm - Simulated Crash Scenario, Police, Ambulance, students, Magistrate

9.30am-3.00pm - RRISK presenters and committee

11.15am-11.35am; 12.35-1.05pm - RRISK peer facilitators and students