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Making Our Roads a Safer Place

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Getting behind the wheel of a motor vehicle remains the single most dangerous thing a young Australian can do. Despite many state government initiatives and increased penalties, novice drivers continue to be over represented in motor vehicle crashes. The RYDA Program is a community road safety initiative that targets “attitude and awareness” of senior high school students to help stop the tragic loss of young people in road crashes.

The RYDA Program is presented by road safety professionals including police and driving instructors and to date over 215,000 high school students across Australia have had the opportunity to attend this national award winning road safety education program. RYDA is facilitated by local Rotary Clubs in partnership with Founding Sponsor BOC and is conducted during school term at over 65 venues located in most major cities and many regional centres.

Road Safety Education Limited (RSE) Program Director, Greg Rappo said “RYDA has been developed in consultation with relevant Government Departments and is designed to complement and supplement the school curriculum and government road safety messages. Mr Rappo added that “RYDA targets 16 to 17 year olds who are at the stage of their lives where they start to drive or ride in a vehicle driven by their friends. Peer pressure from passengers has a major effect on the way young people behave behind the wheel and by addressing students as both drivers and passengers, the program aims to change the environment in the car rather than focusing solely on the driver”.

“The RYDA Program includes six sessions that are designed to be interactive and cover a broad range of topics including a session facilitated by a Driving Instructor that helps students to identify and minimise distractions such as mobile phones and to explore their perception of hazards on the road. Students have an opportunity to design their own “safe” car and to participate in an interactive workshop on the impact that alcohol, drugs and fatigue have on driving ability. All vital information to know before getting behind the wheel or travelling in a motor car,” Mr Rappo added.

At RYDA, students also get to meet and speak with a person who has experienced a devastating road crash; to see and feel the distance it takes to stop a vehicle travelling at different speeds and to realise that an extra 10 Kph can, in some circumstances, have tragic consequences. The recently revised RYDA Program now includes a powerful and emotional video on the life and tragic death of an 18 year old provisional driver Genevieve and her friend Shannon – the video and a following discussion involving a Police Officer and the students also explores the “ripple effect” of a road crash.

The theme of the RYDA Program is MY LIFE MY CHOICES – by providing young people with an increased awareness of the causes of road crashes and the consequences of their choices, the RYDA Program is encouraging a positive attitude to responsible motoring and helping to make our roads a safer place for all in our community.

Further information on the RYDA Program is available from the Road Safety Education Limited – telephone 1300 127 642 or visit the website www.rse.org.au.