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# On road to safety

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TEXTING, skylarking or not wearing a seatbelt – it can all seem like harmless fun to a young driver.

But as the RYDA road safety program shows, those small mistakes can have lifelong consequences.

Visiting Penrith last Friday Premier Nathan Rees presented a grant of \$20,000 to help equip more western Sydney students with safe driving and riding habits.

The grant will be used to transport students to the RYDA course, a Rotary Club initiative held at the Sydney International Regatta Centre.

“NSW figures clearly demonstrate the need to educate young drivers, with almost one-quarter

of road deaths 16 to 25-year-olds,” Mr Rees said.

“The program covers a broad range of topics including hazard perception, insurance and tips for buying a car, all aimed at influencing the attitude of young people before they get behind the wheel of a car.”

RYDA program development director Greg Rappo said the one-day program targeted year 11 students, who were at an age where they were preparing to either get their licence or ride in cars driven by their peers.

Powerful presentations from police, crash survivors and drug and alcohol counsellors help drive home the impact of bad driving

decisions, Mr Rappo says.

“Students hear from young people who’ve been in accidents and see the consequences of driving fast or being in a car with drink-drivers,” he said.

“It gives them time to pause and think about the small decisions that can have a massive impact.”

Blue Mountains Grammar School student and P-plater James Williams said the course helped him become more cautious.

“Some (young people) can get over-confident – they get their licence and they want to test things out,” James said.

“The course helped me assess situations better because I know accidents can happen.”



Blue Mountains Grammar student Michaela Jones gets some driving tips from Nathan Rees at Penrith Lakes.

Picture: MATT SULLIVAN