

MEDIA RELEASE

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* *For immediate release*

Esperance teens urged to take road safety seriously

This week, Esperance students will have the opportunity to learn the lesson of road safety from two presenters who know the consequences of bad decisions first hand.

Former Kalgoorlie resident, Anton Zappelli, and RAC representative Rachael McGeehan are traveling to the sea-side town as part of their regional Goldfields expedition.

Anton was just 17 years old when a road crash near Ora Banda left him confined to a wheelchair for life. Anton now urges students in years 10, 11 and 12 to think about their decisions before they get behind a wheel of a car.

Anton is an employee of the national not-for-profit organisation the Paraplegic Benefit Fund (PBF). He presents his story as part of the award winning **PBFPREVENTION-road** program.

PBF and the RAC have joined forces to share Anton's story and the RAC Community Education program to students at Esperance Senior High School and Esperance Residential College.

The presentations will take place on the 12th & 13th of March 2008, with the team traveling to Wongutha Aboriginal Christian School on Friday the 14th.

The road program includes scenario-based activities, which help students identify risk-reduction strategies, and a DVD featuring other West Australians who have been seriously injured in road crashes.

The Community Education presentations and workshops cover a range of issues including learning to drive, buying a car, road safety and money management.

Anton speaks to the students about the impact split-second decisions may have on the rest of their lives.

"My message is to think about the choices you have now, while you are young, fit and healthy, and be responsible for these choices," Anton says.

PBFPREVENTION-road spokesperson Hazel Hodgkins says the partnership between the RAC and PBF allows for the crucial message of road safety to be spread to people in regional areas who often missed out, due to the high level of cost.

"Young people aged 15-24 years are most at risk of being involved in a road crash. It is important that as many young people as possible have access to both of these programs," Ms Hodgkins says.

RAC Community Ed Program Developer Suzanne Bertolini says that communicating road safety messages to young people was an important part of the organisations road safety strategy.

“Young people who are taking to the road for the first time are often the most at risk and engaging them through a range of innovative presentations and seminars can help them to prepare for their time behind the wheel.

“There were 59 more road deaths on regional roads than metropolitan roads in 2007, so it is important we raise awareness of road safety in these areas,” says Ms Bertolini.

****To arrange an interview or photo opportunity, call Cristin Plath on 9443 1777.***

For further information on PBF or the **PBFPREVENTION** – road program, visit www.pbf.asn.au/road or call PBF Australia on (08) 9443 1777.

For more information on the RAC Community Ed programs, visit www.rac.com.au and click on the Community link or call 9436 4471.

Media Contact:

Cristin Plath

PBF

Ph: 9443 1777

Email: cplath@pbf.asn.au

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