



# Learners out to save lives

By BESSIE BLORE

AN initiative to help save young lives on the roads was launched in Townsville yesterday.

Leighton Contractors' Youth Drive Safe program offers Townsville secondary students the chance to win one of 125 packages, each consisting of five hours of free driving tuition, saving around \$300.

The initiative aims to create safer roads and communities by offering young learner drivers the essential practical skills and knowledge before gaining their driver's licence.

The first three Townsville students to win packages were Townsville State High School students Jamie-Lee Sard, Thomas Reaston and Kyle Pace.

Northern Regional Traffic Co-ordinator Inspector Brian Cannon said road deaths were tragic and three of the 10 fatal crashes in the region this year had involved young drivers. He said he supported the initiative and it was vital for young drivers to use all their practice hours in their log books.

"Realise at the end of the day it's you who will be responsible for your driving behaviour, you need to know your limitations and the limitations of the vehicle you are in," Inspector Cannon said.

The students said the free lessons would help to teach them to be aware and in control of their actions while driving.

"I think it's a really good idea and opportunity for young drivers to get lessons and to learn how to drive safely," Jamie-Lee said.

"It'll be easier to get my Ps when I'm finished getting all my hours up," Kyle said.

"I don't know anyone who has had an accident, but I know they do happen, you see them on the news every night. It is something I'm afraid of," Thomas said.

Inspector Cannon said young Queensland drivers were twice as likely to be involved in crashes as other drivers on the road.

He said inexperience, speed and alcohol were the main causes of crashes involving drivers under the age of 24.

Main Roads Minister Craig Wallace officially launched the program.

Mr Wallace said he knew firsthand the pain road crashes caused after his best mate was killed in an accident when he was only 22.

He said he was proud Townsville was the first regional area in Queensland to have the Youth Drive Safe initiative.



**DRIVING HOME MESSAGE . . . Inspector Brian Cannon with Thomas Reaston, Jamie-Lee Sard and Kyle Pace**

*Photo: SUZANNE LOWE*