



Driving towards a better future

By SHARON BARNWELL

TOWNSVILLE teenager Claire Fallon was not afraid to take the wheel – even with her mum in the passenger seat.

The 17-year-old was one of more than 100 students last year to undertake specialised free driving courses with instructors.

“It helped with my confidence. With mum in the car the first time I went driving she wasn’t very confident with me, which made me not confident,” she said.

“I’d definitely recommend the course, it’s a real eye-opener.”

The free lessons are being offered by Leighton Contractors who gave away “drive-safe” packages to four Townsville high schools for students to test-drive life in the fast lane. The free lessons are practical, like how to navigate through a McDonald’s drive-through or how to make the weekly trip to the supermarket.

Ms Fallon said peer pressure was the biggest risk for young drivers.

“Someone has their Ps and everyone wants



TRAINING WHEELS ... Claire Fallon has gained more confidence with the help of a new training course

Photo: LEE WOODCOCK

to hop in the car with them and get lifts off them and it might encourage them to drink-drive,” she said.

“Driving on the roads is quite dangerous as the statistics show so you just don’t want that to be your friend.”

The students are also taught “eco-driving”

skills to help the environment as well as drive safely.

Main Roads Minister Craig Wallace said it was a coup that Townsville was chosen to be part of the program.

“This is the second year Leighton has carried out this program in Queensland and

Townsville’s been a major focus,” he said.

“The feedback I’ve had from Leighton is young drivers in Townsville took up their request last year with great numbers and that’s a good sign young drivers in Townsville want to take part in this program.”