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Free young driver education targets road trauma

Hundreds of young Queenslanders will be offered free professional driving tuition as part of the 2009 Leighton Contractors Youth Drive Safe Initiative.

The timely initiative was launched in Brisbane today by the Transport Minister, The Honourable Rachel Nolan MP, and offers secondary school students from participating schools in Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich, Caboolture and Townsville the chance to win one of 625 drive safe packages.

Each package consists of five hours of free driver tuition from an RACQ recommended driving school and is equivalent to 15 hours in the Queensland learner logbook.

Darren Weir, General Manager for Leighton Contractors Northern Region, said the company was committed to creating safer communities through its Leighton Contractors Road Safety Program.

“Because we work in partnership with the State Government to build better roads for Queensland, it has made us aware of the disproportion of young people being killed on our roads,” Mr Weir said.

“Through the Leighton Contractors Youth Drive Safe Initiative we are keen to help develop safer young drivers as summarised in the initiative’s theme, *Building Safer Roads; Creating Safer Drivers*.

“Sadly, road accidents remain a major cause of death for young Queenslanders. Last year alone young drivers aged 17- 24 accounted for 73 deaths on Queensland roads – 22 percent of all fatalities.

“Although this is a challenging economic climate, we are increasing the level of our commitment to this initiative in 2009.”

The Leighton Contractors Youth Drive Safe Initiative equips school-based learner drivers with essential knowledge and skills to set them on-course to a long and safe driving future. The tuition will take place in the six months leading up to Christmas, putting students in a good position to drive safely through the holiday and Schoolies Week period.

Professional driving tuition has a strong emphasis on road safety skills, which may not always be the case with tuition through family or friends.

Students who took part in a pilot initiative last year were surveyed to find out how much impact the professional tuition had on their attitudes to road safety. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with 90 percent of students stating their understanding of road safety was better, while 94 percent said their driving ability had improved as a result.

In launching the 2009 expanded initiative, Transport Minister Rachael Nolan commended Leighton Contractors Northern Region for its progressive approach to corporate social responsibility and safety.

“The safety of the community on our roads is taken very seriously by the Queensland Government, and these steps to train young drivers with better skills, patience and confidence will make the roads safer for everyone,” Ms Nolan said.

“We want Queenslanders to drive safely and be here for life. Road safety is a community issue that is everyone’s responsibility.

“I applaud Leighton Contractors for their Youth Drive Safe Initiative and for taking the initiative to help train better drivers for South East Queensland.”

Leighton Contractors has taken a holistic approach to road safety, with the Youth Drive Safe Initiative forming just one component of the company's Road Safety Program.

The second component is a research partnership between Leighton Contractors Northern Region and CARRS-Q (Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety - Queensland) to conduct road safety research focused on the safety of workers and road users around road infrastructure projects.

The third element is sponsorship of the 2009 Queensland Road Safety Awards and 2009 Leighton Contractors Queensland Road Safety Awards Business Development Workshop.

For more information about the Leighton Contractors Youth Drive Safe Initiative visit www.leightondrivesafe.com.au

Additional Road Safety Facts (from Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads)

- The latest available information indicates that in 2008, Queensland road users aged between 17 and 24 years accounted for 22% of the state's road toll; however they represented just 12% of Queensland's population.
- 80 young people died on Queensland roads in 2007; 82 died in 2006.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among young Australians aged 16–25 years.
- In 2007, young people suffered over 900 serious injuries.
- In 2006, young people suffered over a quarter of all serious injuries caused by road accidents.
- 14% of young drivers crash within first 12 months; young, newly licensed drivers have the highest crash risk.
- Young people aged 15–24 years represented over a quarter (27 percent) of all land transport-related serious injury cases in 2005-06.
- Between 2000 and 2004, Queensland drivers aged between 17 and 24 years were involved in more than 5,800 accidents.
- Young drivers aged between 16 and 19 were more likely to experience a fatal crash if they carried one or more passengers. The more passengers that were carried in a vehicle, the higher the crash risk.
- Males aged 17–25 represent only 6% of the population but 20% of road fatalities.
- 20% of drivers under the age of 25 admit to speeding by 10km/h almost every time they drive.
- The main causes of youth driver accidents are inexperience, inattention, alcohol or drugs and speeding.
- Research and community consultation indicated a combination of approaches works best to change young driver behaviour including:
 - more on-road driving experience
 - support and education for parents and guardians
 - the new two-phased graduated licensing system, which requires learner drivers to undertake 100 hours of supervised driving and completion of an approved logbook.

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About Leighton Contractors

Leighton Contractors is one of Australia's leading construction, mining, services and telecommunications groups with over \$8.3 billion work in hand, employing more than 9,000 people across Australia and New Zealand.