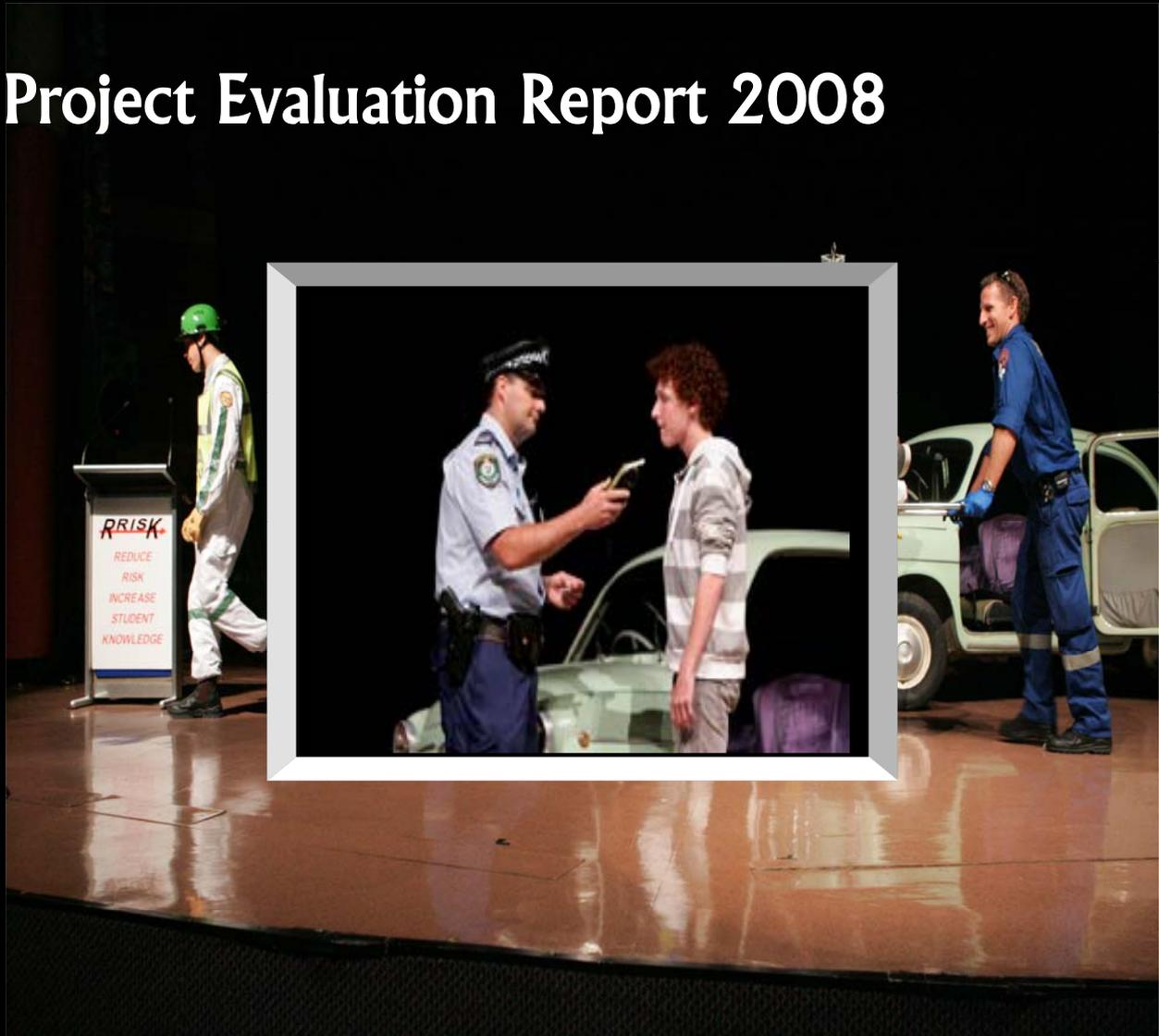


# RRISK (Reduce Risk, Increase Student Knowledge)

## Project Evaluation Report 2008



**For:**  
NSW Health Community Engagement & Action Program  
(formerly Drugs & Community Action Strategy)  
Risky Drinking Fund

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Authors:

Reyna Dight - Coordinator, Alcohol Projects  
Gavin Dart - Project Officer  
Avigdor Zask - Research and Evaluation Officer  
Denise Hughes - Research Officer  
Chalta Lord - Research Officer  
North Coast Health Promotion

For further information please contact:

Reyna Dight  
RRISK Coordinator  
Population Health, Planning & Performance  
North Coast Area Health Service  
PO Box 498  
LISMORE NSW 2480

Phone: (02) 6620 7500  
Fax: (02) 6622 2151

March 2009

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REDUCE RISK – INCREASE STUDENT KNOWLEDGE



# Background

The RRISK (Reduce Risk, Increase Student Knowledge) program aims to reduce adolescent risk taking associated with alcohol and drug use, driving and celebrating. The program targets year 11 students in North and Mid North Coast high schools. It combines a purposefully designed multi-strategic seminar day, training for peer facilitators, newsletters for parents and community meetings. RRISK is a resilience building program that provides opportunities for participants to develop the cognitive and social skills needed to make safer choices when confronted with a range of developmental and environmental risks. The program employs a range of best practice educational strategies to meet different learning styles and engage participants.

RRISK seminars have been running in the North Coast of NSW for 10 years and the Mid North Coast for two years. The program is the product of a highly effective partnership between North Coast Area Health Service, Department of Education and Training, Lismore Catholic Education Office, Lismore City, Tweed and Ballina Shire Councils in the North Coast and Coffs Harbour City and Port Macquarie-Hastings Councils in the Mid North Coast. Members from Casino and Port Macquarie CDATS are also represented on the RRISK Committee.

In 2008 sponsorship and funding was received from North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS), NSW Health, Drugs and Community Action Strategy, Southern Cross University, NRMA, Lismore City, Ballina, Byron Bay Councils. The program was also supported by the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, NSW Police, NSW Ambulance, NSW SES and Volunteer Rescue Association.

This report outlines the results of a detailed process evaluation of the 2008 RRISK seminars. It has been prepared by North Coast Area Health Service, Health Promotion for NSW Health Community Engagement and Action Program and the RRISK Committee. The accompanying financial report has been prepared by Community Health Education Groups Inc. which administered the funding.



## School/student participation in RRISK

All high schools from Tweed Heads to Port Macquarie were invited to attend one of eight RRISK Seminars held in:

- **Lismore** Southern Cross University, 18-20 November 2008
- **Tweed Heads** Civic Centre, 21 and 25 November 2008
- **Coffs Harbour** Southern Cross University, 27 and 28 November 2008
- **Port Macquarie** Panthers, 2 December 2008

In 2008, 48 high schools participated in RRISK, this represents approximately 85% of high schools in the catchment area.

## Professional development/community meetings

Four sessions were held in support of the RRISK seminars; one each in Tweed Heads, Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie. These were conducted by Paul Dillon, Manager, Drug & Alcohol Research and Training Australia. Over 340 people from a wide range of backgrounds attended these sessions, including teachers, drug and alcohol workers, community and youth workers, police and parents. Topics included the latest drug use trends with specific emphasis on alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy and related drugs, exploring drug myths and the latest web based resources developed for those working with young people.



# RRISK seminar presentations

A RRISK seminar day contains six presentations covering the following topics:

## – alcohol and other drugs

The latest research on adolescent risk taking and drug and alcohol use is provided by Paul Dillon, keynote speaker from Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia. Students are encouraged to plan ahead to avoid risky consequences, make informed decisions after assessing risks, look after friends when out socializing, and know when to call for medical assistance should a friend become unwell. Sobering up myths are exposed and substance use and risk taking are discussed in the context of an adolescent's social life.

## – peer led small groups

Student led activities and peer education are features of RRISK. The key message of the RRISK program is “Plan ahead and look after your friends, you could save their life”. This message was reinforced by incorporating elements of the Red Cross “Save-a-Mate” program into the training of over 350 student Peer Facilitators. Peer Facilitators were then able to demonstrate to their classmates how to physically help a friend who may be unconscious. . The session was structured so that every student actively participated.

Twelve Peer Facilitator training sessions were conducted in the month leading up to the RRISK seminars. These were held in Byron Bay, Ballina, Lismore, Casino, Murwillumbah, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca Heads, Kempsey and Port Macquarie.

Peer Facilitators are encouraged to continue supporting the aims of RRISK in school and in their social lives. They were presented with a leadership certificate, following their participation in the seminar day. Principals were encouraged to present these at school assemblies.



## 4

### – safe drivers

This session provides information on why young people are at greater risk of injury as drivers, passengers and pedestrians. It is presented by local government road safety officers, police school liaison officers and an officer from the Roads and Traffic Authority NSW. The potentially fatal combination of speed, risk taking and inexperience that contributes to high motor vehicle injury rates among people aged 17-25 years is highlighted. The session includes an experiential exercise related to the complex tasks of driving, how easy it is to be distracted and the responsibilities of passengers as well as drivers. Every student in the audience participates in this session. A segment on sharing the roads with trucks and other heavy vehicles is included. The Pacific Highway runs through many towns in the North and Mid North Coast and heavy vehicles are an ever present danger to all drivers.

### – safe vehicles

A session on how to buy and maintain a safe vehicle is presented by a Roads and Traffic Authority officer. The session provides practical advice on how to choose a second hand car and which vehicle modifications are legal. During the session, students are invited on stage to assess a range of tyres, seatbelts, windscreen wipers and lights to determine whether or not they are roadworthy.

### – simulated crash scenario

This is a role-play involving students, police, SES, ambulance officers and public prosecutor. The main themes examined in this session are:

- How easy it is to be over the legal blood alcohol concentration limit the morning after a heavy drinking session
- How easy is it to be involved in a crash
- How this situation could have been avoided
- How the crisis could have been handled to enable a better outcome for those injured in the crash
- Potential consequences for the driver, both personal and legal



## – my story

Tweed Heads and Lismore seminars – This is a personal story by a young man who has been permanently injured as a result of a motor vehicle crash involving alcohol and drugs. The presenter reflects on how his decision to take risks resulted in the tragic death of two young women and his own permanent disability and limited options for a fulfilling life.

Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie seminars – This presentation is by a young man who was seriously injured in a motor bike crash which occurred while speeding and attempting to avoid police. The presenter discusses how his attitudes towards driving, road rules and disregard for the safety of others led to his permanent disability.

# Evaluation

## Process evaluation

Process evaluation was conducted at the RRISK seminars to assess the relevance of the RRISK program for students and teachers. Surveys were handed out at the beginning of each day and collected at the end. Completion of the surveys was voluntary and some students and teachers did not hand in their evaluation forms. Lack of time at the end of the day and travel requirements were contributing factors.

## Components of the evaluation

Three surveys were conducted:

1. Students
2. Peer Facilitators
3. Teachers

The process evaluation covered the following domains:

- Reach
- Satisfaction with the RRISK seminar program
  - Organisation (teachers)
  - Presentations (teachers, students)
  - Comparison of teachers' and students' ratings of presentations
- Peer facilitators' perspectives
  - Peer led small group activity
  - Supporting the aims of RRISK
- Impact of the seminar
  - What students learnt (qualitative responses)
  - Teachers' views

## Reach

Number of students who attended seminars	2929
Number of student surveys returned	1212
Number of teachers who attended seminars	150
Number of teacher surveys returned	107
Number of peer facilitators who attended	350
Number of Peer facilitator surveys returned	84

Schools attending RRISK at Lismore on 18, 19 or 20 November 2008:

- Alstonville High School
- Ballina High School
- Bonalbo High School
- Byron Bay High School
- Cape Byron Rudolph Steiner School
- Casino High School
- Emmanuel Anglican College
- Evans River High School
- Kadina High School
- Kyogle High School
- Lismore High School
- Maclean High School
- Mullumbimby High School
- Nimbin Central High School
- Richmond River High School
- St John's College Woodlawn, Lismore
- St Mary's High School, Casino
- Trinity Catholic College, Lismore
- Xavier College, Ballina

Schools attending RRISK at Tweed Heads on 21 and 25 November 2008:

- Banora Point High School
- Kingscliff High School
- Lindisfarne Anglican School
- Mount St Patrick's High School, Murwillumbah
- Murwillumbah High School
- Shearwater Steiner School, Mullumbimby
- St Joseph's High School, Banora Point
- Tweed River High School
- Wollumbin High School

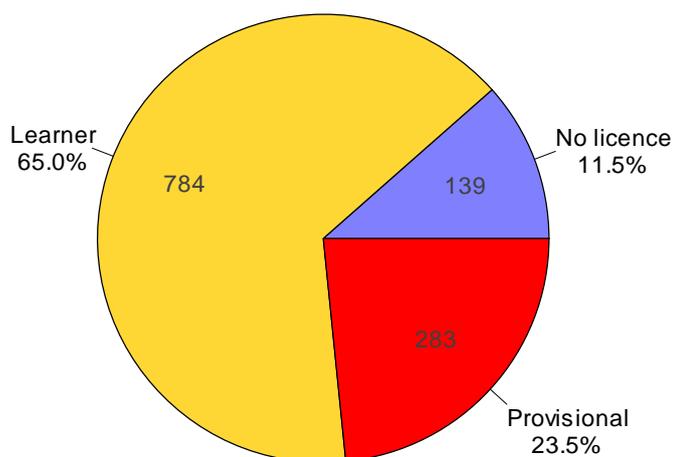
Schools attending RRISK at Coffs Harbour on 27 and 28 November 2008:

- Bellingen High School
- Bishop Druitt College
- Bowraville Central School
- Clarence Valley Anglican School
- Coffs Harbour Christian Community High School
- Coffs Harbour High School
- Coffs Harbour Senior College
- Dorrigo High School
- John Paul College, Coffs Harbour
- McAuley Catholic College, Grafton
- Nambucca Heads High School
- Orara High School
- St Grafton High School
- Toormina High School
- Woolgoolga High School

Schools attending RRISK at Port Macquarie on 2 December, 2008

- Australian Technical College, Port Macquarie
- Kempsey High School
- Port Macquarie High School
- St Columba Anglican School
- St Paul's College, Kempsey

### – licence status of participants



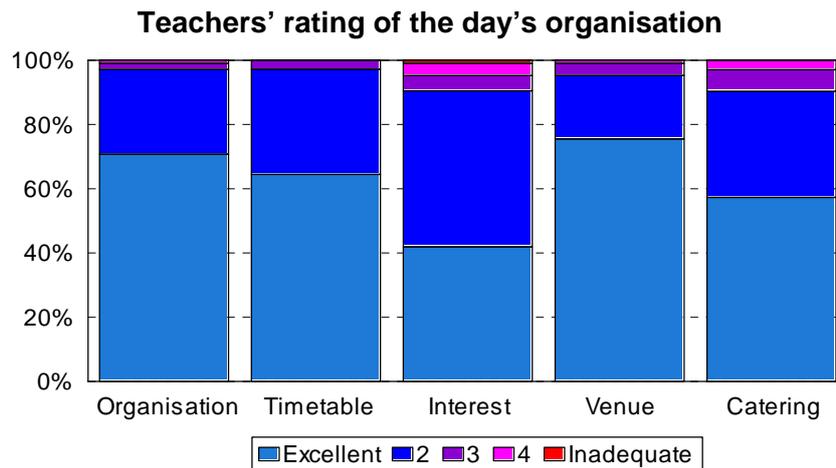
Of the students who attended RRISK, 88.5% were either learner or provisional drivers (65% - learners; 23.5% - provisional; 11.5% - no licence).

## Satisfaction with the RRISK seminar program

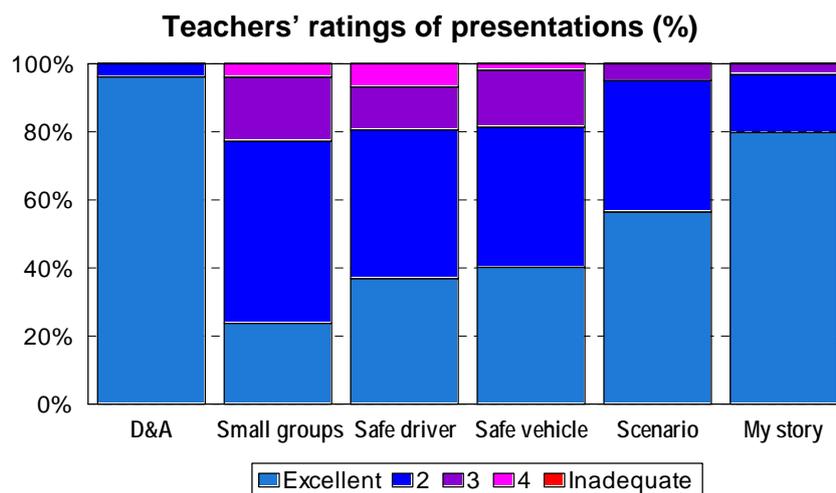
Five point Likert Scales were used to evaluate organisation and presentations.

### – organisation of seminars

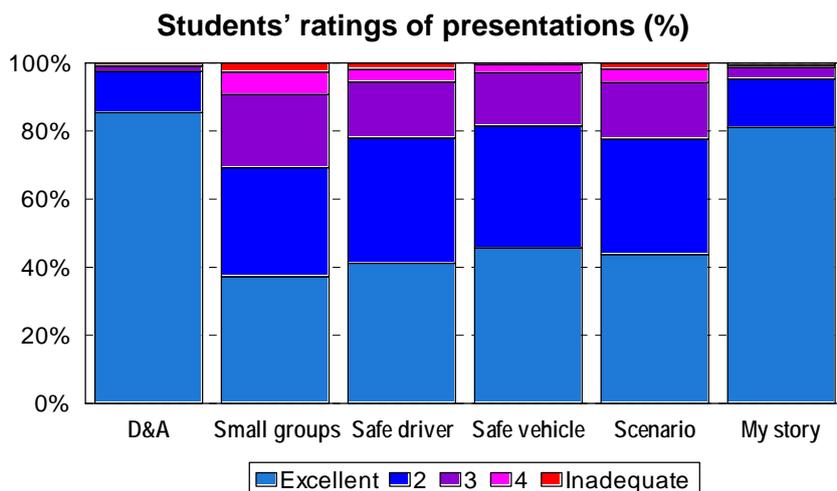
Teachers were asked to assess the general organisation of the seminar day, timetable, student behaviour, suitability of the venue, catering and amenities on a Likert Scale ranging from 1- excellent to 5- inadequate.



### – rating of presentations by teachers and students

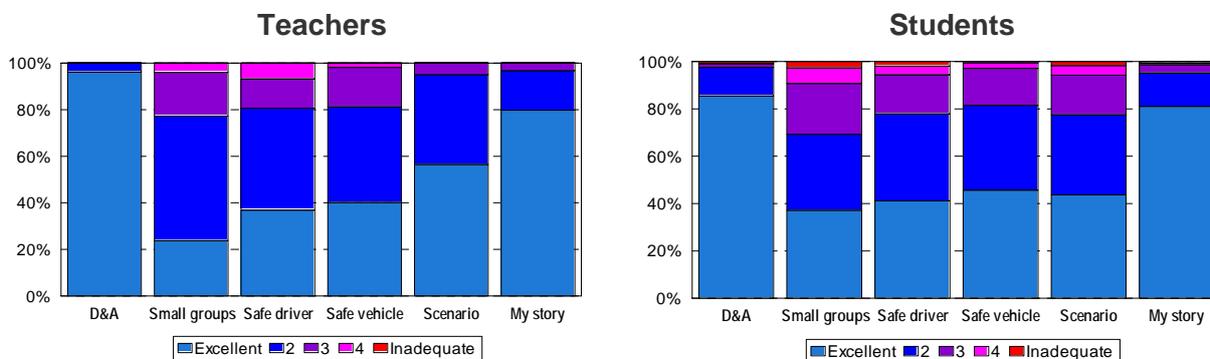


All sessions were rated highly by teachers. The Drug and Alcohol, Crash Scenario and My story sessions were rated most highly. 100%, 95.1% and 96.8% of teachers rated these sessions as excellent or very good respectively. Excellent or very good ratings were given to the Small Groups (77.2%), Safe Driver (80.1%) and Safe Vehicle (81.3%) sessions.



The Drug and Alcohol and My story sessions were rated most highly by students with the majority rating them as excellent or good. Excellent or good ratings were also given to the Small group activities run by peer facilitators (69.3%), Safe Driver session (77.9%), Safe Vehicle session (81.5%) and to the Crash Scenario (77.6%).

– comparison of teachers' and students' ratings of presentations

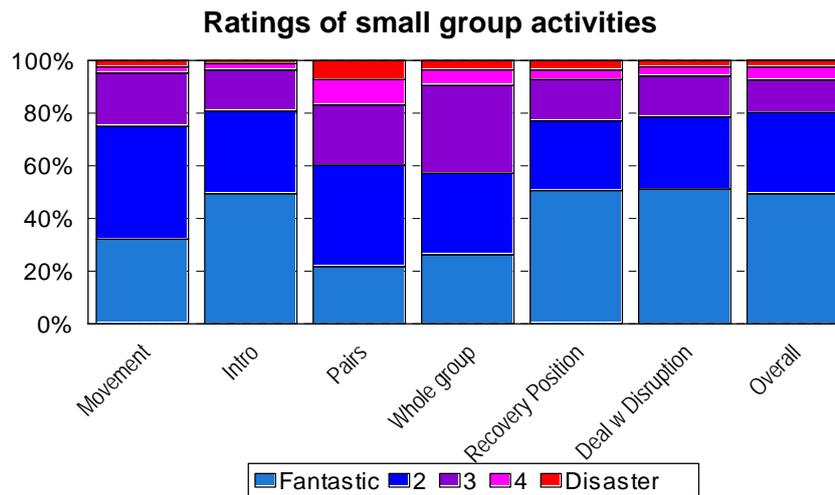


There was similarity between teacher and student ratings of all the presentations. Teachers rated the Drug and Alcohol session slightly higher than students. Students were more critical of the Crash Scenario and Small Groups session compared to teachers.

## Peer facilitators' perspectives

Peer facilitators were asked to complete an additional survey as a self assessment of their role as members of the RRISK team. They were asked to rate their facilitation of the small group activity and how they would support the aims of the RRISK program inside and outside of school. Due to lack of time at the end of the day some peer facilitators were not able to complete this survey.

### – Small group activity



One of the key logistical challenges of each seminar day is dividing students into groups of up to 25, making sure they know who their Peer Facilitators are, and then moving them out of the main auditorium to the breakout rooms. 75% of Peer Facilitators rated this movement as either fantastic or good.

Peer Facilitators were most critical in their assessment of the activity which required students to discuss and rank a number of risky situations in pairs (60.2% rated this as fantastic or good) while they were most positive about introducing themselves and explaining the activity (80.7% rated this as fantastic or good).

Peer facilitators gave a very positive rating to the recovery position demonstration and practice with over 77% rating this as fantastic or good.

Overall, 80.2% of Peer Facilitators rated the small groups as fantastic or good. They were slightly more enthusiastic about this component of the seminars than teachers who gave a 77% excellent or very good rating to the small groups and students, 69.3% of whom rated them as good or excellent.

### – supporting the aims of RRISK

Peer facilitators were asked 'How will you support the aims of the RRISK program inside and outside school'? Not all peer facilitators answered this section of the survey. The following is a sample of responses.

### Inside School:

- Promote healthy decisions amongst my grade
- Inform peers about myths
- Encourage students to be safer, wiser drivers – make better decisions
- Be a positive role model
- Support continue going to RRISK
- Look to help students and educate them

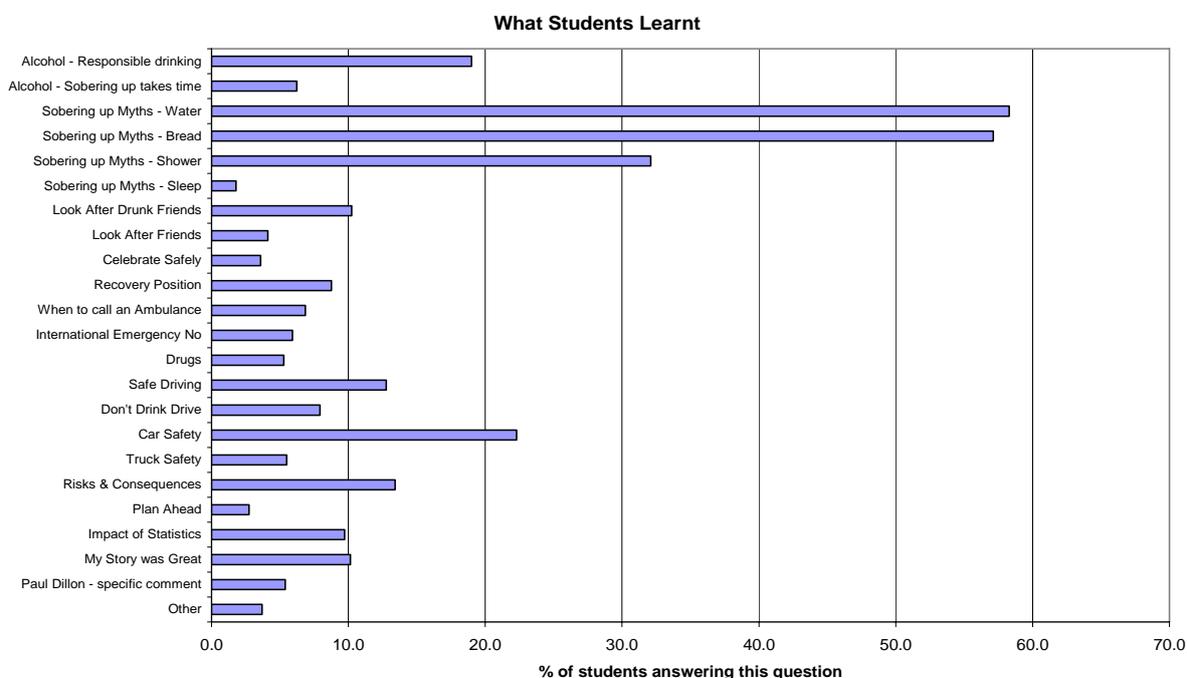
### Outside School:

- Take care of my friends
- Spread awareness of the program
- If I'm at a party I'll help people in the right way
- Setting a good example
- Use the information to make better life decisions
- Personally be responsible and assess consequences

## Impact of the seminar day

### – What students learnt (qualitative responses)

Of the 1212 student surveys returned, there were 1109 responses to the question 'What are 3 things you learnt today'. The table below gives a breakdown of the main categories students commented on.



## – examples of students' comments

- *I never knew a lot of these things. Learnt so much, it was a real eye opener*
- *Thank you for a brilliant reminder to look out for each other by making the right choices*
- *This was great, every year 11 student should be here, it was an awesome day*
- *I never knew that my life had been in danger until today*
- *I think it was good that you didn't tell us not to drink but what to do when drinking*
- *Was entertaining enough to maintain interest and informative enough to be worth paying attention. I feel more people should view this seminar*
- *The seminar was really effective and informative and it made me think more carefully about drinking and driving*
- *It was really good. Heavy information, really engages audience*
- *It was very useful and I learnt things that I didn't know before that I will definitely apply*
- *Good, informative but not pushy*
- *Entertaining, shocking, effective*

## – what students learnt – Safe Driving

- *Don't be scared to tell people when you're driving to be quiet*
- *How important it is to not speed*
- *Do not drink and drive!*
- *What to do in the case of an accident*
- *The consequences (in court) for crashing*
- *Never go in a car with a driver who's over the limit or a stupid driver*
- *The difference in stopping distance between cars and trucks*
- *How to drive safely near trucks blind spots*

## – what students learnt – Car Safety

- *Don't use frayed seatbelts*
- *How to choose and buy a safe car*
- *About under and over-inflated tyres*
- *Check the tyres, lights and windscreen wipers on a car at least once every fortnight*
- *Maintaining a car properly*
- *You can't have V8 or v6 turbos*

### – what students learnt - Alcohol

- *Have a meal one and a half hours before drinking*
- *Have a glass of water after each glass of alcohol*
- *Binge drinking can kill, I didn't realise the severe consequences*
- *How bad spirits are*
- *How to look after drunk mates*
- *If you want to sober up; time is the only way*
- *Alcohol stays in the blood even early the next morning*
- *Water, bread and cold showers don't sober people up*
- *Don't put drunk people to sleep until sober*

### – what students learnt – Alcohol Emergencies

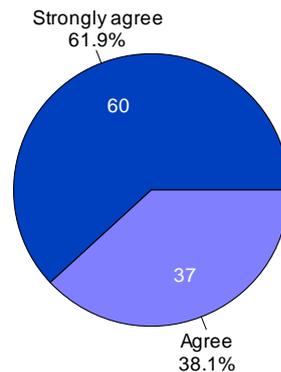
- *How to look after a drunk person properly*
- *How to put someone in the recovery position*
- *If someone's unconscious and doesn't respond call an ambulance*
- *When you ring 000 ambulance the police don't automatically come*
- *Emergency numbers 112 and 000*
- *New updates of DRABC – new techniques*

### – Risks and consequences

- *Your actions can be fatal, everything has a consequence*
- *Think seriously before you act and plan ahead*
- *I am not invincible*
- *You are very vulnerable under the influence of alcohol*
- *Don't take chances with your life and others*
- *Act responsibly and look after your friends*

## Teachers' views on students' ability to apply what they learnt

Teachers were asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement with the following statement: *I believe students will be able to apply the knowledge and skills acquired today to reduce harmful outcomes.* They were given 4 choices: Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. There were 97 responses – all positive.



Teachers were asked for any other comments about the seminar or the professional development session. 82 out of 107 teachers responded to this question.

## Examples of teachers' comments about the RRISK seminars

- Fabulous day. Would like to have brought more staff
- This is the way to present this information. At a special venue with specialised presenters. Much more effective than a school presentation by everyday teachers
- I would like to commend Paul on his presentation, all students were interested and engaged and they and staff found his presentation highly captivating
- Professional, powerful and so worthwhile – well done
- Noticed a few changes in presentation which I think were very effective, eg Paul Dillon talking about 'hard liquor', the information on trucks, and the breakaway session focusing on DRABC
- Great way to get a message across to all kids. Relevant information. Fantastic.
- 'My Story' – Wow! What an impact. An excellent day. I think that the re-telling of personal stories made a big impact on the students. The venue added impact and the importance to issues. Thanks for a great day.

## Media coverage

Three releases were provided to North Coast media leading up to and during the RRISK seminars. The themes were 'looking after friends can save lives', 'parents pass on risky driving and drinking behaviours' and 'Mid North Coast youth at RRISK this week'.

The aim was to attract media coverage for the seminars in the four cities that they were held. NBN TV news covered the seminars in Tweed Heads, Lismore and Port Macquarie. Radio interviews were conducted by ABC North Coast in Lismore and Coffs Harbour and on community radio in Coffs Harbour. An interview was also held with 2LM commercial radio in Lismore. Newspaper articles were published in the Northern Star on 22 November, 2008 and the Tweed Daily News on 3 February 2009.

### Kids told life's not a licence to take risks

Teenagers welcome high school seminars showing the dangers they face from driving, alcohol and drug abuse and partying

By KIMBERLEY SMITH  
ksmith@northernstar.com.au

PLAN ahead, know the risks, make informed decisions and look after friends.

These were the key messages that more than 3000 Year 11 students



AT RISK: Attending a RRISK seminar are St Mary's Casino students (from left) Marlaine Garcia, Bill Roache, Jodie Walters and Sean Mccarthy

**26. THE NORTHERN STAR, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2008.**

**8. THE NORTHERN STAR, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2008.**

## RRISK website

A RRISK website will be built in the near future. Quotes for the construction of the website are due back to the RRISK Committee by 20 March 2009. The Website will be a resource for schools and the community and include information about the RRISK program and seminars, including dates, expressions of interest to participate, schools attending, peer facilitator training information etc. Video footage and photos from the RRISK seminars and RRISK newsletter inserts will also be included. Information and frequently asked questions on young people and risk taking and evaluations of the RRISK program will be available on the website.

## Sustainability of the RRISK program

The RRISK program enjoys a high profile and support from many sectors in the community. This is evident from the number of key organisations that are represented on the RRISK committee and the growing number of schools involved. In 2007 participation grew from 28 to 41 schools with the expansion of the program to the Mid North Coast. In 2008, 48 high schools participated. Process evaluations from students, peer facilitators and teachers were very positive. Ratings of the individual sessions closely match the responses from previous years. The qualitative responses from students indicate that the key messages of *plan ahead, understand the risks, make informed decisions and look after friends* made a strong impact on those attending.

Feedback from teachers was very positive with 100% of respondents agreeing that students would be able to apply what they had learnt from the seminars. The RRISK seminars are viewed by principals and teachers as a quality enhancement to the compulsory 25 hour alcohol, drug, road safety and risk taking education curriculum provided by schools for senior students.

There is an expectation from schools and the community that the program will continue. Venues and presenters have been booked and expressions of interest to attend RRISK in 2009 will be sent to all schools in the North and Mid North Coast by the end of term 1.

The major risk to sustainability of the program is lack of recurrent funding. The program does not have sufficient funds to run in 2009. The RRISK Committee will approach NSW Health, NSW Motor Accidents Authority and NSW Roads and Traffic Authority for a major grant. Southern Cross University, local councils, the NRMA will also be approached for small grants to support RRISK.

The RRISK Committee gratefully acknowledges the support given to the program from North Coast CDATS and wishes to thank NSW Health, Mental Health Drug & Alcohol Office, DCAS (now Community Engagement & Action Program) for funding major components of the RRISK program from the Risky Drinking Strategy.

