



GRAND FINAL
WEEK 2004

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GRAND FINAL
WEEK 2004



THE Daily Telegraph

Tuesday, September 28, 2004

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LABOR FAMILY DEAL

One free day of child care every week

FAMILIES with children aged three and four will get a free day of child care each week under a \$1.6 billion Labor plan which saves the average family \$22 a week.

Mark Latham yesterday unveiled Labor's childcare counter-attack which offers fewer savings than the Coalition package — but does more to create extra places.

It creates an extra 14,500 childcare places to help the backlog of parents struggling to find answers.

Childcare centres would also become learning centres, with Labor promising to provide three free books a day to willing parents to read to their children.

The free day of care will be paid through an increase in the childcare benefit scheme to \$4.88 an hour for the first 10 hours of care.

Launching the package at a Perth childcare centre, where a little girl gagged him with his tie, Mr Latham said: "I know as a parent that money is important, but what is just as important is a good start for the children."

Report: Page 10

ROOSTERS SETBACK

Ricketson faces ban over striking

ROOSTERS' forward star Luke Ricketson faces missing Sunday's NRL grand final against the Bulldogs through suspension.

Ricketson was charged with a grade three offence by the NRL match review committee yesterday after an incident with North Queensland's Nathan Fien in Sunday's preliminary final.

He faces a possible three match ban if found guilty.

The Roosters are expected to contest the charge at a judiciary hearing tomorrow night.

In further bad news for the Roosters, Queensland State of Origin forward Chris Flannery — Ricketson's likely replacement if he's banned — is also in doubt because of injury.

The Bulldogs, however, continue to have their own problems with injured captain Steve Price to make a final decision on whether he can overcome a torn medial ligament in his left knee to play in the final.

Also yesterday, Tim Mander was named as the final referee.

Full report: See Sport



P A P-PLATE driver dies in NSW every six days

P SEVENTEEN of them will crash today

P Every P-plate on this page is from a FATAL or serious injury crash

By STAVRO SOFIOS and LILLIAN SALEH

THE full extent of the national tragedy in which hundreds of young people are needlessly dying on NSW roads every year is revealed for the first time today.

Our state is facing a crisis that is destroying families every week because of inadequate road safety training and rules to cover P-plate drivers.

Each week, we lose at least one more young person in a crash that should have never occurred.

Each day, countless more P-plate drivers — our most inexperienced motorists — are in accidents: 6266 P-plate drivers were in such accidents last year.

However, there is an answer: *The Daily Telegraph*, in conjunction with road safety experts, launches today a campaign to save our P-plate drivers and cut the toll.

Continued Page 4

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Sports Stars

YOUR AWARD WINNING JUNIOR SPORT LIFTOUT INSIDE

P One P-plater dies in NSW every six days

P Two in three deaths among 17 to 20 year olds

Campaign to stop the carnage

From Page 1

The cry for help echoing through our community is also led today by the devastated families who have lost loved ones and had their lives irreversibly changed forever.

"Our kids are paying a terrible price and we have to do something about it," said Warren Abbott, whose 17-year-old son died in a crash two months ago. As a society we have to try to do something to stop them from dying.

An investigation by *The Daily Telegraph* has revealed P-plater drivers are twice as likely as other drivers to be in a road accident.

This is why road experts working with *The Daily Telegraph* have proposed the following recommendations to cut the toll:

■ **RESTRICTING** P-platers to carrying only one passenger — at least during their first six months on the road.

Where the scheme has been implemented overseas, road deaths have been cut by up to 38 per cent — that would have been 18 lives last year.

Researcher Teresa Senseerrick from Melbourne's Monash University has investigated the scheme.

"The first six months is the highest risk for young drivers because the transition from L to P is a poor one, they just don't have enough experience," she said.

"Having more than one passenger, especially of their peers, just adds a lot of pressure."

■ **INTRODUCING** driver training to schools.

StaySafe Committee chairman Paul Gibson said it was imperative. "There's nothing more important than teaching our children skills that may one day save their lives. It is far more important than algebra or geography," he said.

Forward-thinking high schools like Ballina, Crookwell and Gunnedah High already offer driver training courses they fund themselves.

■ **CAPPING** the horsepower of cars P-platers can drive.

"Why are manufacturers allowed to produce cars which reach speeds of 250km/h when the maximum legal road speed is 110km/h," Mr Gibson said.

The experts spoken to by *The Daily Telegraph* did not approve of a curfew.



Killed... Jessica Tanner, 18, died in a crash in January

Driving home the message

THE PROPOSALS

- Restrict P-platers to carrying one passenger, at least for first six months. Supported by Dr Stephanie Blows, Injury Prevention and Trauma Care Centre, University of Sydney. Estimated to cut death toll by 38 per cent, or 18 lives, in NSW each year
- Driver training in schools. Supported by Liberal Party which made a manifesto pledge to introduce it by 2007
- Has both NRMA and Australian Automobile Association backing
- Capping the power of P-platers' cars. Backed by StaySafe

WON'T WORK

- Curfew on P-platers driving between sundown and dawn
- Credited with a 30 per cent cut in deaths in New Zealand, Canada and parts of US Road Traffic Authority feasibility study due
- NSW Government opposed, arguing it unfairly discriminates against young drivers

In *Daily Telegraph* tomorrow:
The truth about P-platers by the young drivers themselves

Dreams denied, hopes dashed

By SAMANTHA WILLIAMS

PINNED to the fridge in Tim Hopkinson's home is a note listing his hopes and dreams.

The desires jotted on the wish list are simple — but the 20-year-old will never achieve them after dying in a horrific car crash in Port Macquarie on the weekend.

A fireball engulfed Mr Hopkinson's car after he lost control while speeding and hit a tree on the weekend.

He is the latest in a long list of P-plate drivers to lose their lives on NSW roads in the early hours of Saturday morning.

After coming home from a party on Friday night, he took his car out for a spin.

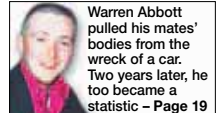
"He loved fast cars, he was a typical 20-year-old," his stepfather Fred Smith told *The Daily Telegraph*.

"He was supposed to play for the Port Macquarie Panthers soccer club this year, but he lost his licence after he was caught speeding twice."

"Next thing we knew the police came to our door telling us what had happened."

He said he had tried to be a role model and warned his stepson not to drive fast.

"It happened in my time and it still happens today, a young person losing their life to speeding," he said.



Warren Abbott pulled his mates' bodies from the wreck of a car. Two years later, he too became a statistic — Page 19

EDITORIAL: Page 18

"Young people just don't understand the mechanics of a car when they get behind a wheel."

"They need to be educated in school, what it means to drive before they get a car, something needs to be done."

Despite his youth, Mr Hopkinson already had two driving bans against his name and had lost his licence — but that did nothing to sate his love of speed.

In addition to the wish list, he had also penned a line-drawing of perfect car — a hotbed-drawing Honda hatchback.

Tim celebrated his 20th birthday three weeks ago.

"I bought him a carton of beer and gave him money towards afterwards he was going to buy," his mother Carol said.

"I didn't believe what I was hearing when the police came, then I saw Tim's car was gone and I knew what had happened."

"I just couldn't go and identify his body, it was all too much."

17 P-platers crash in NSW every day

P Allowing P-platers only one passenger would save 18



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are in car accidents **P** 14 per cent of young drivers have had an accident in the past year



What Tim needs to save for by not going out spending all his \$\$\$

1. A new white bumper low profile stereo
2. A new camera phone with a camera
3. New camera bag bumper stickers

Another tragedy . . . Tim Hopkinson, left, died when his car left the road and hit a tree on Saturday morning and, inset, the wish-list he left on his fridge.

Compulsory training to cut toll

By LUKE McILVEEN

AT least 7000 new P-plate drivers will be forced to complete intensive driver training courses under a Federal Government plan to cut teenage road deaths.

The trial will see school-age drivers in NSW chosen at random to participate in one-day safety courses to sharpen their road sense and avoid dangerous driving situations.

The *Daily Telegraph* understands the groundbreaking scheme will begin before the end of the year, following the Australian Transport Council meeting between the Commonwealth and states in November.

Researchers will closely monitor the road behaviour of the trial group for between 12 and 18 months. If the results are positive all P-plate drivers, provisional licence holders, will be subject to the same training.

NSW is the most likely venue for the trial, with the State Government believed to have already pledged support for the plan.

A horror school holiday weekend on the roads — in which 18 people lost their lives — has only confirmed the need for young drivers to be better trained.

The trial will be the first and comes after Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson vowed to introduce compulsory driver training for P-plates around the country by 2007.

"We are planning for this to be wide-ranging and in place nationally in the next three years," a spokesman for Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson has thrown his weight behind the plan because of his father's insistence he complete a defensive driving course as a young man.

The growing number of novice drivers killing themselves and others has revived calls for a night curfew for P-plate drivers, an option the Federal Government has not ruled out.

The \$3 million cost of the trial will be met by the federal and state governments, with the automotive industry also expected to contribute.

RTA 'not interested' in initiative

HIS road safety seminars attract 12,000 parents and teenagers a year, but they have failed to impress the Roads and Traffic Authority.

South Coast father Frank Bottomley has spent the past five years helping teenagers identify when they are about to become statistics.

He started the "Stop the 4 O'Clock Knock" campaign after his teenage stepson was in a car accident in 1999 in a bid to "save other parents" from police calling early in the morning with horrific news.

Mr Bottomley said the RTA refused to even consider the program for official funding.

The RTA said it supported a "large number" of road safety initiatives but would not comment on Stop the 4 O'Clock Knock.

Police car's video to spot speedsters

POLICE cars in NSW will be fitted with video cameras to spy on speedsters for the first time from next month.

Three-hundred-and-forty highway patrol cars are now being refitted with the new \$8.6 million video technology.

The new cars will be phased into use over the next six months.

Data from the cameras will be used in evidence in court and will also film the aftermath of drivers who are stopped in case they become violent.

"You can't stop all drivers from doing the wrong thing but the cameras will educate people that their chances of being caught are now greater," Traffic Services commander John Hartley said.

The camera will keep rolling when officers get out of their police car and speak to a driver.

Tim had aspirations to manage his own bar.

"He had an infectious smile that would light up any room and a happy-go-lucky attitude to life," his mother said.

"He had written a letter, which he pinned to the fridge — a list of all the things he wanted to buy in the next couple of months.

"He had even started a fitness regime he had been planning to start for some time."

Tim was speeding at 3.30am when his sedan ploughed into the tree and burst into flames.

Other drivers tried to help but there efforts were in vain.

The family of Jessica Tanner, 18, who died after she fell asleep at the wheel, supports the call for help.

Earlier this year, Jessica's mother Debbie Tanner said she wanted to see as many precautions as possible to stop teenage drivers losing their lives.

Tell us your P-plate stories or ideas on how to fix the problem dailytelegraph.com.au

lives a year **P** One in four P-platers confess to breaking the speed limit "most or all of the time"

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