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Aussie kids training to be safe near trains

As part of National Children's Week, the TrackSAFE Foundation has today officially launched an Australian first, national education initiative for primary school students to learn about train and track safety.

The initiative, titled 'Be on the Safe Side', provides teachers with learning resources to conduct engaging student-centred lessons within various Australian Curriculum Learning Areas (e.g. English) with a train and track safety theme.

Launching the initiative at West Ryde Public School, NSW was TrackSAFE Board Director and CEO of the Australasian Railway Association, Bryan Nye, who was excited to see the program come to fruition after a year and a half of research, development and collaboration with rail industry, road safety and education sector partners.

"Be on the Safe Side is based on substantial evidence that students learn and retain safety messages best when they are positive and integrated as part of their normal curriculum. This is an Australian first and will set the bar for rail safety education internationally," said Mr Nye.

"At the most crucial developmental period in their lives as active and responsible citizens of our society, children have not been able to access quality resources to learn vital safety skills around train tracks, which should be as common as learning to cross the road or learning to swim.

"Be on the Safe Side provides consistency in rail safety education throughout Australia, and empowers students to improve their own and others' safety when they are near trains and train tracks.

"Rather than 'talking down' to students or highlighting unsafe actions, the 'Be on the Safe Side' learning resources emphasise students' strengths by allowing them to discover and solve train and track safety problems relevant to their local community," said Mr Nye.

Australia has the sixth largest rail network in the world with 44,000 km of track, 23,500 level crossings and an estimated 250,000 Australian school students using the rail network to commute to school, largely unsupervised, each day.

Students regularly take risks near platform edges and on level crossings, not demonstrating the behaviours necessary to keep themselves safe around trains and tracks. In addition, a disproportionate number of young people trespass daily on train tracks to apply graffiti or vandalise property, deliberately risking their own and others' lives, with the attitude that the potential lifelong consequences of their actions 'won't happen to them'.

"Across Australia each year there are on average 166 collisions per annum between trains and people or vehicles, including 35 collisions causing fatality; plus thousands of near collisions and many more which go unreported," Mr Nye continued.

"Be on the Safe Side will help prevent incidents in the long term, ensuring the safety of our children around trains," said Mr Nye.

Be on the Safe Side learning resources are available online free of charge to all primary schools across Australia and will be available to high schools in 2014. Visit the 'Be on the Safe Side' sites - for teachers and parents visit www.tracksafeeducation.com.au and for students visit www.beonthesafeside.com.au.

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