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Innovative new national rail safety education initiative launched

The rail industry has today launched an Australian first rail safety education initiative called 'Be on the Safe Side', bringing the important message of rail safety into Australian high school classrooms.

TrackSAFE Chairman, Bob Herbert AM, launched the initiative this morning at Melbourne's Flinders Street Station, joined by 60 Year 7 students from St Margaret's School, Berwick, Victoria, who all trialled Be on the Safe Side. As the highlight of the event the students demonstrated their new rail safety knowledge and skills to official guests.

"After two and a half years of research, development and collaboration with rail industry, road safety, education and police partners, I am delighted to witness Be on the Safe Side in action here today, with these clever young students demonstrating to us the right thing to do near trains and tracks," said Mr Herbert.

"There is an obvious need to address the statistics, with an estimated 35 accidental deaths and 42 pedestrians seriously injured in train collisions every year. 35 percent of people seriously injured are young people.

"There are also thousands of near hits and trespass incidents each year, which involve young individuals train surfing, illegally crossing tracks and spraying graffiti on trains. These incredibly dangerous activities too often end in tragedy.

"These incidents are preventable. What we have been missing in Australia to date is consistent, curriculum-based rail safety education from a young age," continued Mr Herbert.

"Schools in both urban and rural areas constantly ask the rail industry to provide rail safety education resources and support for their students. They also tell us they struggle to fit 'extra' programs into an already full curriculum. Be on the Safe Side addresses both of these needs, providing a robust set of strengths-based learning experiences within the Australian Curriculum Learning Areas of English, Health & Physical Education and The Arts.

"Teachers don't have to make extra time to fit them in; they are designed to embed into existing teaching programs, by teachers, for teachers. Better yet, they are available online and are free of charge.

"Be on the Safe Side will empower students from Years 7 to 10, helping them to take ownership of their decisions; deal effectively with peer pressure and bullying; and improve their own and others' safety when they are near trains.

"I hope that today generates a strong interest from high schools across the nation, to bring quality and deep learning to young people in the knowledge and skills required to stay safe around trains, tracks and level crossings.

"Be on the Safe Side will not only enable students to learn crucial life skills, but can also save lives," Mr Herbert concluded.

The Be on the Safe Side high school resources can be found, along with the primary school resources launched last year, at www.tracksafeeducation.com.au. Students can access resources including a multimedia library and write a pledge to be safe around trains at www.beonthesafeside.com.au.

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