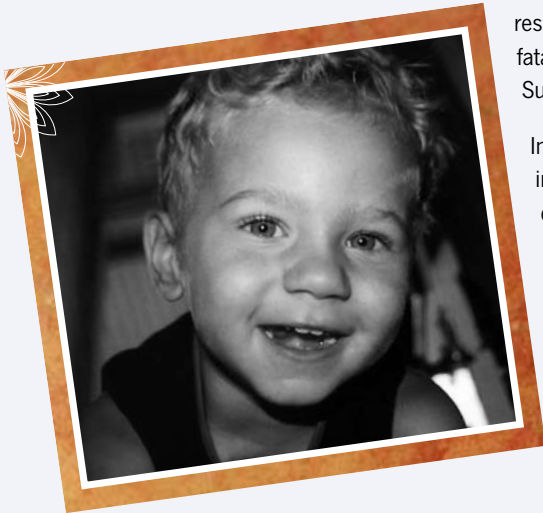


Finding positives in the negative



response to a series of fatal car crashes on the Sunshine Coast.

Instead of drumming in road rules or delivering stern lectures, the workshops focus on the choices and decisions you make as a driver and the possible consequences of those decisions.

I'm a police officer. I thought I was invincible. I was wrong.

At 12.30pm, on Saturday, February 28, 2004, I was driving along the Logan Motorway, Brisbane, with my two sons, Jet and Bailey, in the back seat. It was hot, and we were on our way to my parent's house for a swim. At the same time on the opposite side of the motorway, a driver lapsed into an epileptic fit behind the wheel, and the car careened across the median strip towards us. Jet, 22 months, was killed. Seven-year-old Bailey was left a paraplegic. I suffered serious abdominal injuries and was in hospital for several months.

I thought these things only happened to other people.

My physical injuries have mostly healed, but trying to find ways to hold onto the positive memories of Jet while facing a future without him is an on-going challenge. I've searched for some sort of meaning to this seemingly random event. I haven't found it yet, but I keep going.

In December 2006 Inspector Tony Lewis and Senior Sergeant Pete Flanders of Maroochydore Police asked me to participate in a Driver Safety Workshop. The workshops were being conducted in partnership with the Maroochydore RSL Sub Branch and RSL Club in

We all know how dangerous it is to speed, drink drive, or drive while talking or texting on your mobile phone, but so many people still do these things without a second thought.

The presenters are people who have been directly affected by road trauma and they try to change attitudes by telling the audience how it has affected them.

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People seem to be listening. In fact the workshops have been so successful on the Sunshine Coast they are now running at Cleveland and Ipswich, with Logan, Townsville and Warwick to start soon.

At the workshops I speak very candidly about my own car crash, losing Jet, and the impact mine and Bailey's injuries have had on our lives.

I ask the audience if through a poor choice, could they sleep at night knowing they had killed an innocent child, their mate or someone's mother or father? Could they carry that guilt for the rest of their lives?

The tragedy inflicted on my family could have been avoided if only the driver of the car that collided with us had made different choices.

As a direct result of our crash new legislation was introduced to ensure people suffering from a medical condition that affects their ability to drive must now report that condition to both their doctors and Queensland Transport.

Since the legislation was introduced in March 2006, over 65,000 people have registered.

The message is clear: if you suffer from a medical condition that is either stable or unstable you need to acknowledge and take responsibility for that condition.

As a tribute to Jet, I wrote to Police Minister Judy Spence and then Transport Minister Paul Lucas to ask if the new legislation could be renamed Jet's Law, and I am honoured to say the Queensland Government has agreed.

It will be the first time in Queensland history a law has ever been named after someone. My son's memory will be maintained in official records for all time, and in future when anyone researches this law, they will learn about Jet.

Jet's Law is about road safety and saving lives. It is about protecting those who refuse to protect themselves.

It is about protecting innocent people who through some twist of fate find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. In the passing of Jet's Law, I am finally able to find some positive in such a tragic event.

By Senior Constable Anita Rowland, Operational Performance Review Unit

