

# The ones left behind speak out



The six men and women from the Sunshine Coast had never met before, but they found themselves in the same grim category of 'the ones left behind' when they came together recently to share their heart-wrenching personal stories about road trauma.

Acting Inspector Peter Flanders, North Coast Region Traffic Co-ordinator, had contacted each of the six locals to take part in the region's innovative traffic safety campaign.

"I asked them if they would be part of a traffic campaign aimed at sending a message to all road users and hopefully saving lives," Acting Inspector Flanders said.

"Despite their own devastating losses, they all agreed."

The participants spoke candidly of the tragedies that had changed their lives, and their words were used in a series of radio announcements to send a powerful and personal message to the public.

The following story is one man's

account of an incident where he played an important role.

Sippy Downs man Warren Lowe (*pictured*) held severely injured woman Debbie in his arms for an hour while emergency services worked to lift a car from her crushed body.

Warren nursed Debbie's head and held her hand while he calmly chatted about family and daily life.

Nine months on he still plays the 'what if' game, reliving the moments as vividly as if they were yesterday.

"I saw the whole bloody thing," Warren said.

"It had just started to sprinkle with rain and I was following a woman in a Landcruiser around the exit off the Sunshine Coast Motorway at the Buderim-Mooloolaba exit.

"The driver started to spin out of control, but she caught it then went the other way. She ended up hitting a car that was already on the embankment."

Warren said the driver of the car

on the embankment was standing about three metres away talking on her mobile phone.

"She was doing the right thing. When the Landcruiser hit her car, it bounced back up the embankment and knocked the woman on the phone down and the car came back down on her."

Warren immediately pulled up and raced over and tried to lift the car off the woman.

"People were yelling at me not to lift the car but I thought the woman would have a better chance being free."

While he did his best to comfort Debbie her phone started to ring. They found it in the bushes. Her sister was on the other end, shocked at the news.

He didn't know it at the time, but Debbie had suffered fatal injuries, including two smashed knees, a smashed hip, eight broken ribs, and internal bleeding.

"I just kept on talking to her and told her when we got out of here we would go for a drink."

In that short time Warren got to know a lot about Debbie and her family, forming a bond he would never forget.

"They took her to the hospital in the ambulance but no one called me to tell me what happened. I found out she had died when I heard it on the radio about 5am the next morning. That was really hard to take in. I thought I had done the right thing."

Warren went to the funeral and spoke to the family, retelling Debbie's last moments.

"It was really good that I went to the funeral as I was able to find some closure. I still went to counselling as it was a hard thing to get over. I'm not as big or tough as I thought I was."

Warren said in this case the cause of the crash wasn't speed or bad driving.

"It was just a combination of rain and oil on the road. People need to drive to the conditions."

*By Michelle Fleming,  
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