



30 Lives, 30 Reasons

Sgt Michele Smith
 South Australia Police
 email: michele.smith@police.sa.gov.au

“When people moan and complain about getting caught for speeding I tell them there is a reason behind everything we, as police, do.

30 of those reasons are in this room with you now.

So if you choose to speed, or you drink/drug drive, or don't wear your seatbelt or do anything stupid on our roads – we will use any and all means at our disposal to catch you.

And we will.

Because we are sick of going to stupid crashes. And we are tired of picking up the pieces and we hate zipping people into body bags. And most of all we dread knocking on the door to deliver such terrible news.

Here are 30 reasons.

Unfortunately we know of hundreds more.”

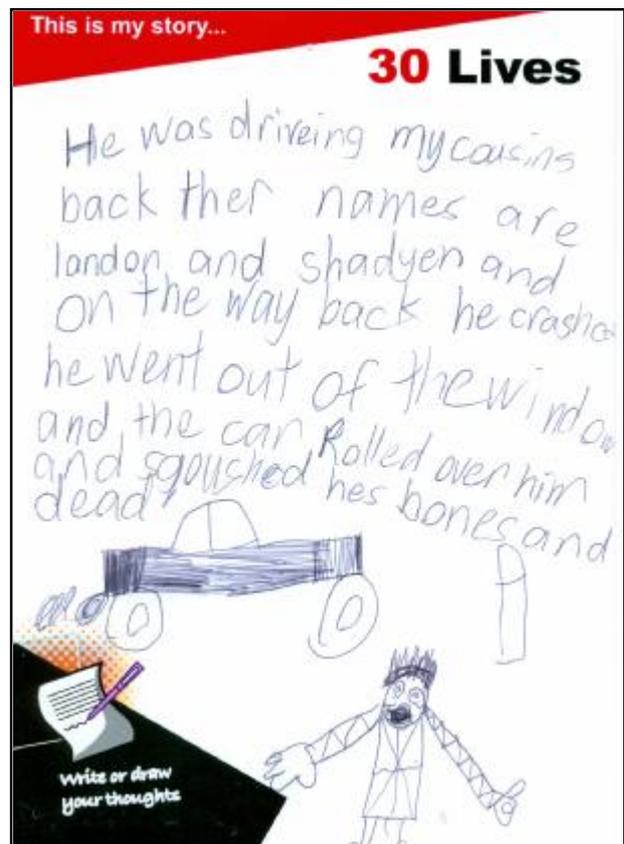
Law Enforcement is a legitimate road safety strategy, there is no doubt about that. But it works better when we work with our communities towards common goals and people understand and support the reasons behind what we do.

‘30 Lives, 30 Reasons’ is the story of a road safety exhibition which toured the Mid North region of South Australia during Oct/Nov 2007 to high media and public acclaim.

The exhibition was centred around remembering the local people we had lost on local roads. It was not about blame, or fault, it was about remembering the holes in our communities, the pain that doesn't go away and acknowledging these people as real people who mattered, not as faceless, nameless statistics.

Not just a statistic, in the country, not just someone who has been an idiot on the road. They are someone who has been an idiot who we know. Or they weren't an idiot at all – just in the wrong place at the very wrong time. They are our sons friends dad, our husbands old footy coach, our local A&E nurses daughter, a friends mum and dad, an old school mate or someone we used to say hello to down the street. There is no six degrees of separation in these instances, in the country it shrinks to about 3 degrees or even less.

And for our volunteer emergency services workers it is very often someone very close to them.



The families and friends of these people were approached to provide their stories of the time and following the accidents. They also provided photographs and personal items.

The exhibition was set up to evoke a typical rural family environment and featured lounge and kitchen areas. These areas encouraged visitors to access the interactive components of the display and also to take the time to reflect on their own experiences.

For many it gave permission to grieve, talk and be honest about how road trauma has the ability to impact on every area of their lives.



Quilts are a very powerful visual medium which make great display pieces and a standout feature of this exhibition was a large handmade Quilt of Remembrance.

The design of the quilt includes the 30 black road markers to represent the people who formed part of the display. Several of the women (mainly mothers) who were involved in giving their stories for this project also took up the offer to embroider “their persons” name on the black marker. They were provided with the marker, thread and the design and they returned their completed marker.

The women who did this found it a very difficult and emotional to do, but all also said it was so important to them and very beneficial to their healing process.

The red represents the many people who were seriously injured in the road crashes throughout the Mid North during the same time period and the dead gum tree is very representative of the Mid North region and signifies both the current drought and the fact that many of the accidents within our region involve a single vehicle colliding with a gum tree. Across the bottom left hand corner is a triangle with a map of the Mid North region stitched out.

Part of the display was the random placement of 30 black road markers to represent all of the 30 Lives. Each of these markers had attached to the rear a road statistic relating to death or serious injury. Some of the posts were also adorned with memorabilia typical of that found on public markers. At each location fresh roses were also sourced and a single rose placed at the foot of each post.

Although the posts did not have names on them, they were grouped due to the number of people killed in each accident. So the single markers denoted one death in one accident, and the group you see here, of four, represented four young people who all died as a result of a single vehicle accident in 2004.

Visitors to the exhibition had to navigate their way around these markers to view the displays – for many this was the most confronting part of viewing the exhibition.

The exhibition ran for 4 weeks, toured 7 Mid North locations and was viewed by over 2,000 people. It has received extensive media coverage and overwhelming positive community feedback.

30 Lives was one of 15 law enforcement supporting activities undertaken by police over a 15 month period. The presentation outlines the other activities as well as discussing the exhibition in more detail.



“My 18 year old daughter sat in the car after seeing this and just shook. She said I had tricked her into going and seeing it, but she now drives very carefully and has lost her ‘invincibility’. Thankyou.”

Email feedback from local mother 2 weeks later