



MEDIA RELEASE

(Sunday) 2 July 2006

YOUNG DRIVERS ADRIFT AS TRAINING SCHOOL BANNED

A COMPANY which has trained 25,000 young Australians in defensive driving has been banned from teaching the competitive sport of drift-racing at the Queensland Government's Mount Cotton training facility, near Brisbane.

Safe Drive Training (Australia) Pty Ltd was advised of the ban after operating its drift school at the Queensland Transport Mount Cotton Training Centre for the past six months and investing \$75,000 in two specially-equipped cars, development of an educational program, staff training, sales material and other items.

Safe Drive Managing Director Joel Neilsen said a letter from Mount Cotton on 23 June stated the drift school did not match the centre's position on safe driving practices and could no longer operate.

Drift-racing, in which drivers slide their cars around a closed course, is one of the world's fastest-growing forms of motorsport. A round of the Australian Drift Racing Championship was staged at Queensland Raceway, near Ipswich, last weekend.

Drifting originated in Japan and has been made popular by movies such as the recently-released "The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift", which depicts illegal street-racing but not the sport of drift-racing.

Queensland Police Minister Judy Spence has urged cinema patrons not to try street-racing themselves.

Mr Neilsen said the ban on his draft-racing school was imposed despite the centre hosting motorsport tarmac-rally events and other speed-related activities. The ban means future drift sessions booked at the centre's skid pan have been cancelled and any fees paid in advance by students will have to be returned, although other courses run by Safe Drive Training are expected to continue.

Mr Neilsen said the decision was a costly blow to his business and he was investigating the possibility of legal action to recover money invested in establishing the Physics in Motion Drift School and lost income.

"Safe Drive Training established Physics in Motion Drift School to provide a safe and positive outlet for the growing number of young people wanting to learn how to drift," he said.

"We started operations after a two-year development program and only after many meetings to answer the centre's questions about our intentions and training practices. "We've trained 100 drivers so far and, as well as being able to drift on a safe controlled track, every one of them is now also a better, more skilled driver on the road.

"It is the only drift school in Australia which provides its own vehicles and, far from encouraging dangerous behaviour, it teaches drivers to be safe and only to test their skills in a controlled track environment. The maximum speed they reach is about 40 kmh.

"Young drivers who want to learn to drift their cars are being discriminated against in their chosen form of driving sport.

"This move will not stop the interest in drifting, but now drivers have nowhere to go or no-one qualified to teach them and unfortunately may now attempt to teach themselves on public roads."

Mr Neilsen said the Mount Cotton Training Centre ban would accelerate plans to establish his own driver-training centre in South-east Queensland, with facilities for a wide range of courses and related activities.

Safe Drive Training has been providing driver education throughout Australia and Asia for 11 years, especially for young people. It has put 25,000 high school students behind the wheel in its Safe Drive Test Drive Program and its Physics in Motion science course for year 10 and 11 students was Highly Commended in the 2005 Queensland Road Safety Awards.

Further media information & interviews:

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