



# a healthy partnership



“... driver safety was critically important...”

Blue Care’s nurses and carers drive more than 30 million kilometres a year and RACQ’s Driver Education team is coaching them on how to stay safe.

STORY JENNY O’REILLY

**DI TONG TRAVELS** some shocking roads in her daily life as community care team leader for Blue Care in Chinchilla and Miles.

Ms Tong is one of 10,000 Blue Care staff and volunteers who provide community health and residential aged care services to 12,500 people in Queensland and northern New South Wales.

The first house call by a ‘Blue Nurse’ – so named because of the colour of the uniform – was in 1953, when Sister Olive Crombie travelled by tram to tend to a patient.

Nowadays, tram trips have been replaced by a fleet of more than 1450 cars – with the nurses and carers driving a combined total of more than 30 million kilometres a year.

Stephen Muggleton, Blue Care’s executive director, said driver safety was critically important for the organisation.

He said Blue Care decided to turn to another Queensland organisation, the RACQ, to deliver driver safety training.

“We have an absolute obligation as a large employer to do everything we can to make sure all our nurses and carers have the best possible support and training to minimise the risk of injury,” Mr Muggleton said.

Blue Care Fleet Manager Mark Stephens said the program, which was made possible with a grant from the Community Benefit Fund, had been very successful.

“We have not had a serious accident, where the damage has been over \$10,000, in the past calendar year,” Mr Stephens said.

“Previously we have had between 10 to 15 a year. In addition, we have seen a marked decline in traffic infringements, as staff become more focused on their

responsibilities on the road.”

For Di Tong, the training reinforced the importance of being aware of everyone and everything around her while on the road.

“I have grown up on country roads, and still travel on unsealed and narrow roads not only during my work hours, but for family life as well, and it is extremely important to drive according to the road conditions,” she said.

RACQ Driver Education executive manager Scott Lewin said this, and other corporate driver education programs, could be of great benefit to commercial operations ranging from small businesses to corporate fleets.

“It gives their staff the opportunity to update driving skills and knowledge, to help keep them safe on our roads,” Mr Lewin said.

<http://www.racq.com.au/drivered>

PHOTOS, ABOVE: BLUE CARE’S TINA JENNINGS AND CLIENT BILL DYER. TOP RIGHT: RACQ DRIVER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE MANAGER SCOTT LEWIN WITH BLUE CARE FLEET MANAGER MARK STEPHENS.

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