



## ACTIVITY TEN:

## What Transperth is doing to help you

Transperth is concerned with the number of risk-taking behaviours on buses, trains and at stations. In an effort to help children and young people understand the implications of their risk-taking behaviours Transperth has been working with Jonathan Beninca. He learnt his lesson the hard way – that risk-taking behaviours can have serious consequences. Jonathan is a regular visitor to schools in Western Australia, talking to students about his experience and helping them understand the consequences of their actions. This activity has been designed to help students understand how the consequences of Jonathan’s actions have impacted on his life and the lives of those around him.

### Student Outcomes

#### Health and Physical Education

**Strand:** Concepts for a Healthy Lifestyle

CHL 4 The student understands how factors influence personal behaviours and how to appraise their own and others health, safety and physical activity practices.

### Purpose

This activity will provide an opportunity for the student to:

- Examine students’ responses to aggression and their justification for using violence as a means to solve their problems
- Discuss other options available to resolve differences
- Explain the positive and negative impacts that peer influence has on risk-taking behaviour.

### Preparation

Photocopy *Resource Seven*:

- 7-i Meet Jonathan
- 7-ii A Personal Letter from Jonathan
- 7-iii I Found out the Hard Way!
- 7-iv Trespassing Could Cost You More Than a \$200 Fine
- 7-v A Risk-Taker’s Retrospective

### Procedure

1. Read *Resource Seven 7-i Meet Jonathan* to the students.
2. Have a discussion with the students about the predicament Jonathan found himself in.
3. Ask the following questions:
  - Was Jonathan’s behaviour risk-taking or was it just bad luck?
  - How could this incident have been avoided?
  - How do you think Jonathan’s family and siblings related to this chain of events?
  - Was Jonathan a regular train user?
  - What was going through Jonathan’s mind when he decided to walk down the track?
  - How do you think his friends would feel?
  - What is mateship?
  - How has this incident affected Jonathan’s life?
  - Imagine all the things Jonathan would have to re-learn. List them all eg.
    - Learn to write again
    - Learn to drive an automatic vehicle
4. Read *Resource 7-ii A Personal Letter from Jonathan*. Review the student’s answers to the questions in Question 3.
5. Review *Resources 7-iii I Found Out the Hard Way, 7-iv Trespassing Could Cost You More Than a \$200 Fine and 7-v A Risk-Taker’s Retrospective*.
  - How has Jonathan used his experience to help others?
  - Are there other people in the community who have had horrific accidents and used their experiences to help educate the community about the dangers of risk-taking behaviour?



## Fact File

Statistics show clearly that boys and men are more at risk of the following:

- Injury as a result of an accident, sport or risky behaviour
- Offences involving criminal activity
- Being killed as a pedestrian, in motor accidents or at work.

For more information visit: [www.teachingexpertise.com](http://www.teachingexpertise.com)

## From the Kids

*“Jonathan came to our school last year. I actually met the guy. I couldn’t believe that he had thrown a rock that hit a stationary train and that it bounced back and hit him in the head. And then he got run over by the train. I catch the train all the time and it really made me realise that some of the things I had been doing were pretty stupid.” – George (16)*

## Variation

- Boys are more likely to take risks that result in major injury. Many people believe this risk-taking is part of a boys’ need to become a man – a rite of passage. Explore this idea in the classroom and research ‘rites of passage’ from other cultural groups.
- Often mateship is cited as a great Australian value. Research contemporary and historical examples of mateship e.g. Beaconsfield Mine Collapse, WW1 Gallipoli – Anzac Day Memorials.
- Research people who use their high profile or celebrity status to promote safety messages or other causes:

### The McGrath Foundation

[www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au](http://www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au)

### UNICEF Australia Goodwill Ambassador – Prof. Fiona Stanley

[www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au)

### The David Wirrpanda Foundation

[www.dwfoundation.com.au](http://www.dwfoundation.com.au)



### Meet Jonathan

After a night out drinking with his mates when he was 19, Jonathan went to a train station.

Realising he had missed the last train he started walking home along the tracks and stopped to throw rocks at a stationary train.

One of the rocks rebounded, hitting him in the head and knocking him unconscious.

His next recollection was waking up in hospital on life support minus his right arm and lower leg, and middle and index finger on his left hand.

The dangerous short cut changed his life forever. Jonathan has since dedicated himself to ensuring his story has a powerful effect on children and young people.

“My aim is to prevent similar accidents and to teach students about real mateship, which means never putting one another’s safety in jeopardy,” Jonathan said.

“I never tell students what to do. I just provide them with the facts of how their whole life will change if they are involved in an accident that results in a serious injury.

“I encourage them to make their own positive choices and to understand that injuries like mine impact your life every day socially, financially, physically and emotionally.

“I also talk to them about the impact that injuries and deaths have on train drivers and staff involved in the aftermath of an accident like this, which is something that most of them just don’t consider,” he said.





## A Personal Letter from Jonathan Beninca

I don't remember what day it is. I wake and gasp for air and it's hard to breathe. There's a lady at the end of my bed. She is watching me closely. My eyes close and I drift off to sleep.

I wake again, gasping and trying to breathe, the lady is still at the end of my bed, she is telling me to 'breathe with the machine'. I gasp even harder than before, trying to take a single breath.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. I look to my left. I notice a face. I look deep into her eyes, they are puffed red and tears are slowly fighting their way through. I think to myself: *"Mum, what's wrong?"*

I eventually relax. As I do, I start letting the machine control my breathing actions. I try to speak, though all that comes out is a deep husky sound.

I try to say: "What happened to me?"

Eventually my Mum understands. She replies, "You were hit by a train."

*"Wow, hit by a train and I'm still alive!"* I thought.

I can hardly move my body. *"What's going on here?"* I ask myself. Looking down I notice only one lump where my two feet should be.

I pass out again and then I wake several times, each time I see a different family member, tears swelling in their eyes, just staring at me.

Next time I wake in a room, a room very different from the one before. The lady standing at the foot of my bed is no longer there. It is a small room and there are no other people in it.

Then I hear in the distance a group of people talking, their voices become louder and louder. I turn to my right and these people are in my room, dressed in white and some dressed in blue.

"Jonathan, you've been run over by a train," a voice says. "We've had to amputate your right arm and right leg, also a couple of fingers, though we are not sure how many at this stage."

Not understanding the situation, I just agree, I am so tired I can hardly speak. Then, held high in front of me was an x-ray, an x-ray of an arm. *"At least I've got all my fingers"* I think to myself.

I fall asleep again. When I wake I am being moved to a silver metal bed. It is so cold and hard and all these people are around me wearing masks. I close my eyes as hard as I can, hoping that it is all a dream.

I don't know if it is hours or days later when I wake again, Mum is sitting to my right, her head slumped. "Mum," I say. "What's wrong? Where am I?"

"Don't you remember Jonathan? You were hit by a train. The doctor's have had to amputate your arm and leg," she says.

What felt like days pass. Everyone remarked how well I had handled such a traumatic situation. That was when a nurse came into my room. "We have to remove your bandages today and give your wounds a clean," she said.





I knew that I was missing my arm and leg. It still felt like they were there though. What I did not know was which fingers had been amputated as well.

When the nurse undid my bandages I finally saw what was left. My hand was so ugly, my middle and index fingers were missing. My hand did not look like any hand I had seen before. My ring finger was squashed nearly flat and it was a deep black colour. The doctor's told me that they had tried their best to save my ring finger so I could have a normal life.

When the nurse left, I asked if she could close my curtains. Then I cried. It was so uncontrollable and nothing could stop it. I cried every night for one and a half years. It was the only way I could get to sleep.

My accident happened on 16 January 1999.

I realised bit-by-bit, as the days passed, who had been affected by my actions that night. I read the Police report. I read how the Train Driver had saved my life by releasing the emergency brakes just before he ran over me. I read about how the guard ran down the tracks after the Train Driver told him, "I think I just ran over a person." The guard witnessed my amputated limbs lying on the tracks and my body convulsing.

I read how a young Police Officer, who was only a couple of years older than myself, had sat on the tracks, next to me, his hand on my body, talking to me, trying to keep me awake.

I read how all these people were affected. I read how all these people saved my life! I don't know how to say sorry. I don't know how to fix what I did. It's been over seven years since my accident and in the last five and a half years I have not cried one tear. I have accepted responsibility for my actions.

I have three children now, one girl who is three years old, a boy who is one and a half years old and a newborn baby girl. They are my life, my world. If they put me through a situation like I put my mother through and what I put everyone else through, I really would not know how to cope.

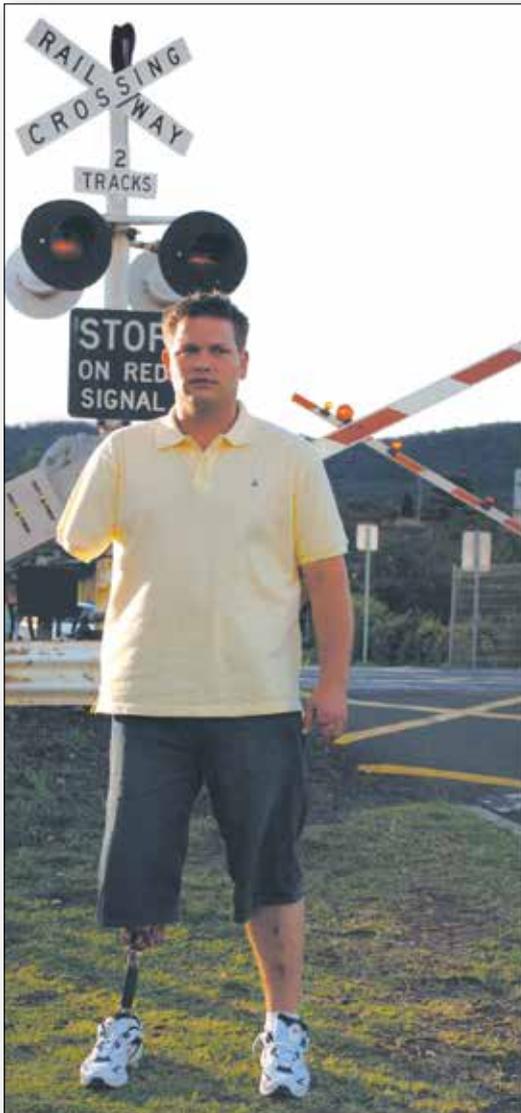
I need to move on now. Every morning I wake I'm reminded of the mistake I made and every night I go to sleep I'm reminded yet again. I made plenty of mistakes as a young person - this mistake will be with me and will haunt me all the days of my life until I die.

Make the right choices in your life. Don't make a mistake that will last forever.

Sincerely

Jonathan

Jonathan Beninca

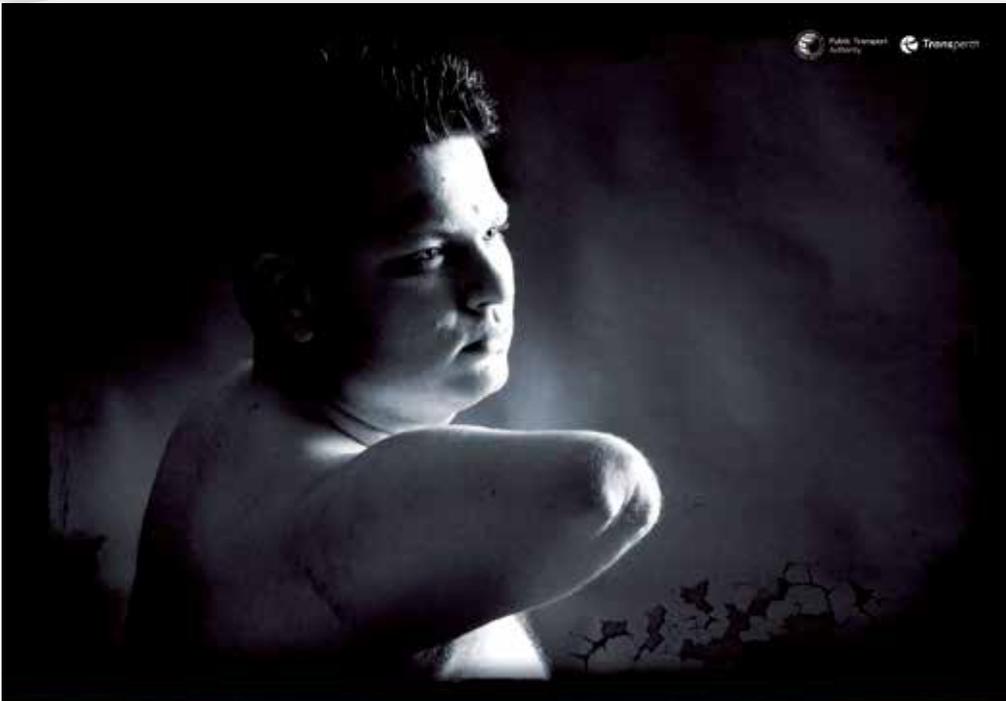


I found  
out the  
hard way  
what a  
train can do.

Jonathan – hit by a train

To cross the tracks, always use  
the pedestrian railway crossing  
– stay on the path.

[www.levelcrossings.nsw.gov.au](http://www.levelcrossings.nsw.gov.au)

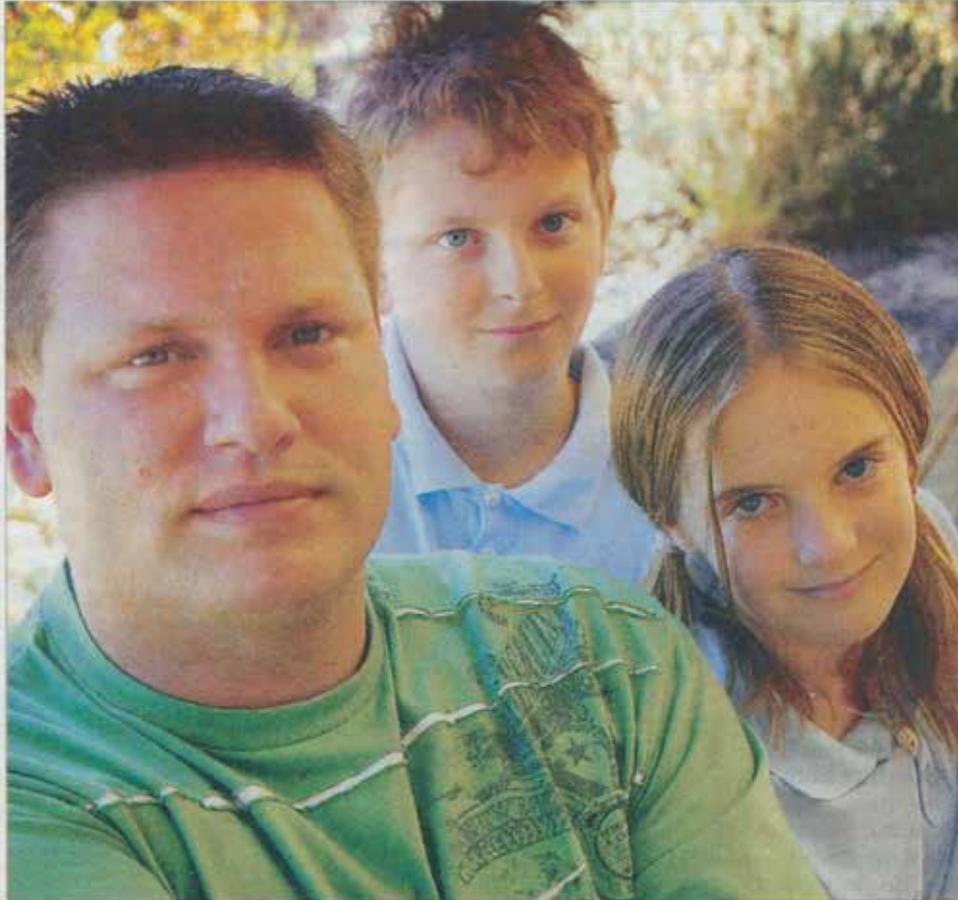


**TRESPASSING COULD  
COST YOU MORE  
THAN A \$200 FINE.**



**STAY OFF THE TRACKS**

There's no good reason for you to be on the tracks. The penalty is \$200 or your life.



**Double amputee Jonathan Beninca talks to students Kirsty Whittle and Jason Ratta.** *Picture: Sean Middleton*

d242908

## A risk-taker's retrospective

UNFORTUNATELY, Jonathon Beninca knows all too well the consequences of taking a dangerous risk.

Eight years ago after a night out drinking with his friends Mr Beninca missed his late train home and started walking along the train tracks.

He threw rocks at a stationary train but one rebounded, hit him in the head and knocked him unconscious.

Mr Beninca was run over by a train – he lost an arm, a leg and several fingers.

Last week Mr Beninca visited East

Beechboro Primary School's year 6 and 7 students as part the Public Transport Authority's rail safety education campaign in suburbs surrounding the Midland line.

"No one ever thinks its going to happen to them," he told the students.

"I will still be paying the consequences for it (the incident) when I'm 57, for something I did back when I was 19."

Now a father of two children, Mr Beninca has spent the past two years educating young people about the consequences of dangerous risk taking.

*Courtesy: Eastern Suburbs Reporter, Tuesday, April 10, 2007*