

Coffee Stop Interview

Tenterden Top-Up Coffee Stop



FIRST YEAR PROVES REWARDING AND HELPS PREVENT FATIGUE RELATED CRASHES



In early 2016, Deanne and Murphy Wills from the Tenterden Top-Up (pictured left) were looking for ways their Albany Highway business could encourage drivers to stop and take a break, helping to prevent fatigue related crashes in the region.

A year on and they are a fully-fledged Coffee Stop program participants, providing free coffee or tea to drivers as well as a great place to stop and take a break from driving.

WALGA's RoadWise Road Safety Advisor for the Great Southern region, Erin Miller, caught up with Deanne to find out more about their first year as a Coffee Stop location.

How did you find out about the Coffee Stop program?

Over east (where we are from) the Driver Reviver Program is really popular, but I'd never seen it as a service station. The Driver Reviver operations are there through the holidays and we used them a lot, so after opening here at Tenterden and seeing so many people come in and they're just tired, we thought "I wonder if they do anything like that here in WA?" and that started it.

Was it difficult to get going in the beginning?

No, not at all. Once we contacted you (WALGA's RoadWise) and got the paperwork, it was very easy. Then it was just a matter of being friendly and serving coffee really, so it wasn't difficult at all.

I think if you have a bit of empathy for people, it's just easy.

So you've had lots of positive experiences?

Yeah! Some people are a little bit hesitant, embarrassed I suppose, to ask, "Uh, could I have a free coffee?", but you just come back really positive, "Yeah, of course you can!", and then they're fine and you get chatting about where they're going and different things.

We had one family where the Dad came in with the daughter trailing behind and she was filming me, which naturally you feel a bit uncomfortable about. He asked for a free coffee and I said, "Yeah sure!", and as I walked over to get the coffee, the daughter walked along the cabinet with me. So I asked, "Oh, are you filming me?", and the Dad said "It's okay, she's just never seen it before, that you can actually stop somewhere and get a free coffee!"

Do you get any return customers? People who come back for their free coffee at different times?

We have had a few and we've had people come back and say they got a free coffee last time and then they'll buy something else. So that's been positive, we think that's really nice.

There's been the odd person that tries it on, but for the most part were really happy with it. It makes us feel really happy when we see people stop because they see we're a Coffee Stop participant, especially when they come in and they've just had an awful experience on the road.

To have those people come in and just be able to take a break for a bit, it's really nice. The young ones stop too; it's not just an older age group taking advantage of the service. A lot of younger ones are taking a break, which is good to see.

From a business perspective, has it affected you at all?

Well I think any sort of contact with the public in a business, you know getting people to stop at your business, and they notice that you're there, so that's a positive thing. And often they'll come in for their coffee and then on their return trip, they'll stop in for something to eat because they've taken the time to have a look around and see what we've got and sit and have a chat.

I couldn't imagine anyone saying it's a negative thing at all. Even though you know, we supply the biscuits and the cups and you've given us the cups from time to time, but even if that wasn't the case, it's really nice to just see people stopping, especially in the high peak holiday periods.

People get so stressed out about reaching their destination and then the traffic is bad or it's too hot, or the kids are playing up or whatever it is. I just think, take a little break and get back into the groove. I find it very enjoyable.

So it's very rewarding and you enjoy providing the service?



Pictured above: The local St John Ambulance crew stop in for a break and a chat with Deanne Wills at Tenterden Top Up.

Yeah, we do! You know, having a chat with people and getting to know them is great.

We've actually developed some nice friendships just from that! More people should do it. You know, especially in Western Australia where there's such long distances between towns that people probably don't stop, they just forget. I'd encourage others on the Albany Highway to do it.

We're putting tables outside and have cleared a whole area; we're going to put in some plants to make it somewhere that people want to stop. That came about after the 2016 Great Southern Road Safety Conference- for places like ourselves to look appealing so people do want to stop, whether they have the free coffee or not. It's more about getting drivers to slow down a bit and take a break.

And you've joined the Cranbrook RoadWise Committee as well. Have you done that sort of thing before?

I've been P&C president for a number of years and I was tuck shop coordinator for a number of years too, but this is my first involvement with a road safety committee.

I like working with the public and getting involved in the community. I guess joining the RoadWise Committee is really an extension of our business here.

We do hear stories about the problems on our roads and you drive around a bit yourself and see things. You know there's a group of people who are interested in the safety of others and that little things can be done; at the end of the day more people should get involved. It's like anything.

They're a nice bunch of people and they're doing something really positive.

We've had the school bus stop here upgraded - that came about through the RoadWise Committee. The bus stop wasn't particularly safe, so you know you recognise a situation, take it to the Committee, they evaluate it, make recommendations and in this case, it's done.

Now the bus stop is so much safer for the kids; they're not getting off in the middle of the road anymore. There's a nice long area where the bus can pull in, and the kids can hop off safely on the correct side of the road. Things will only change if you put your hand up or speak up.

I think people should be aware that it's not just people from the Shire who can raise road safety issues. Local people get around a lot more and see things and they shouldn't be afraid to get involved.

VISIT THE TENTERDEN TOP UP TEAM

If you're heading down south, remember to pop in and say hello to Deanne, Murphy and the Tenterden Top Up team on Albany Highway, Tenterden (11km south of Cranbrook).

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE COFFEE STOP PROGRAM

To find out where Coffee Stop participants are located on your next trip, or to apply for your business to become a Coffee Stop, go to <http://www.roadwise.asn.au/coffee-stop.aspx> or contact your local [Road Safety Advisor](#).