



Young life saved by timely intervention

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Nicole Tolhurst would probably be dead if Rod Baltovich had not been passing through the Palmyra intersection in which she had a serious car accident 13 months ago.

Ms Tolhurst's car was sent flying into a brick wall when it collided with another vehicle.

By the time Mr Baltovich, who watched in horror as the accident happened, ran to the crumpled wreck of Ms Tolhurst's Kia Mentor, the Melville woman was unconscious and slumped over her steering wheel and her face was turning a shade of blue.

Luckily, Mr Baltovich, 47, had recently completed a first-aid training refresher course. Despite being panicked and scared by the situation, he knew immediately that he needed to lift the 24-year-old's head to clear her airway if she was to have any chance of breathing.

"When I looked in the car it was sight I will never forget," Mr Baltovich said. "When I looked into the driver's side window she was a foot away from the (brick wall), the car was mangled and she was leaning forward with her head on the steering wheel and I thought she was dead. I was very scared."

Unable to reach Ms Tolhurst because her door was crushed, the Willagee man yelled to another bystander to call an ambulance while he ran to the passenger door.

When he reached her, he lifted her head back to a normal position. She

started moaning in pain almost immediately.

"I tilted her head back, opening up her airway. She moaned and made a noise and I just thought, 'Thank goodness for that.'

"The colour returned back into her face while I just sat there and kept her head up and mouth open."

St John Ambulance believes up to 25 fatalities on WA roads each year could be avoided if all motorists had the first-aid knowledge that equipped Mr Baltovich with the confidence to help Ms Tolhurst.

The organisation is urging the State Government to introduce mandatory first-aid training for all new drivers.

Mr Baltovich said he had undertaken a first-aid refresher course through work just six months before the accident. "It got us both through the day," he said.

Ms Tolhurst still has no memory of anything leading up to the accident or immediately after.

"I am very lucky to have survived. I was incredibly lucky given what happened to me and my car to come out of it with a few scratches." She walked out of hospital that day.

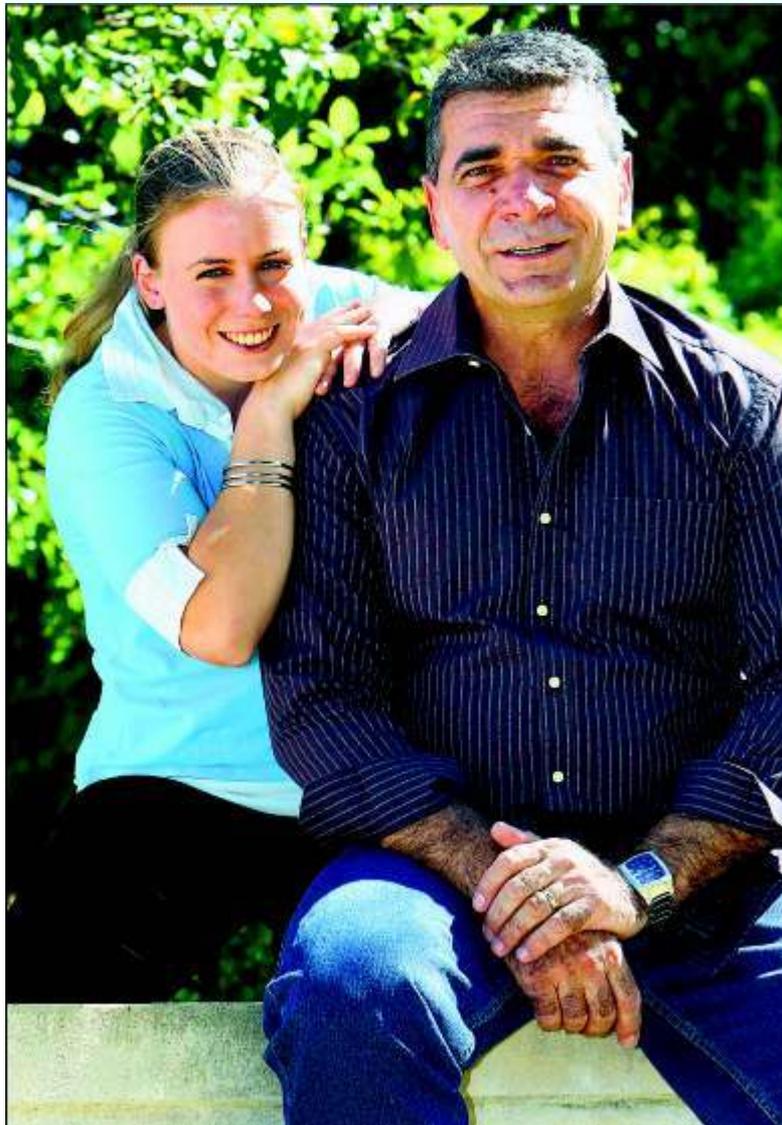
Ms Tolhurst and her family have kept in touch with her rescuer, thankful he was in the right place at the right time.

"What do you say to a person who saved your life?" she said. "Thank you is not enough."



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Contact: Nicole Tolhurst with rescuer Rod Baltovich. Picture: Mogens Johansen