

# **The Fatality Free Friday Road Safety Campaign: A strategy for mobilising community ownership to improve road safety**

White, R.

Australian Road Safety Foundation

## **Abstract**

Fatality Free Friday has continued to cement its position as Australia's only national community based road safety program. The campaign commenced in 2007 as part of the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week and utilises a Community Mobilization Strategy to encourage public and corporate participation. The 2013 campaign was the most successful to date in terms of community awareness and engagement. Fatality Free Friday is an annual national campaign that has successfully engaged community action with numerous road safety stakeholders. The campaign provides a focal point to help engage community activity whilst also providing a central and consistent theme for individual road safety activities. The primary goal of the campaign is to ensure that there are no road crash fatalities around Australia on a specific target day in May each year. It is a call to action that serves as a platform for a targeted and ongoing approach to road safety nationally. In addition to signing the Fatality Free Friday Pledge, participants can also choose to host their own events and campaigns locally. Doing this has allowed schools, councils, local road safety coordinators, government organisations and corporate groups to increase their focus on road safety and link in with a national event. This has created a number of opportunities for people to actively participate in reducing road trauma and helped facilitate greater community ownership at the local, state and national levels. Road safety is a complex issue but we believe that if drivers consciously think about road safety and safe driving for just one Friday in the year, that day's toll - statistically about 5.3 deaths - could be reduced to zero. Just one 'Fatality Free Friday'. Ultimately, it is our aim to use this approach to improve road safety awareness not only on one specific day, but every day of the year. Over the longer term, the aim of the campaign is to facilitate a cultural change in road user behaviour and establish a new paradigm in road safety. One that sees the road users themselves as a vital part of the solution. This type of approach has been successfully used in other fields. Examples of these programs include environmental and community campaigns. There is strong evidence to suggest that these campaigns have been highly effective in not only raising community awareness on a specific issue but are also successful in actively facilitating public action to assist in addressing the issue. Whilst there has been some research into community based campaigns, little research is available on the full scope of this kind of campaign in terms of road safety. However, based on the studies that are available and the growing body of evidence from previous campaigns, Fatality Free Friday has demonstrated to be a highly effective road safety program and worthy of further research.

## **What is Fatality Free Friday?**

Fatality Free Friday is based on a Community Mobilization Strategy to increase public awareness and action on the issue of road safety. The inaugural Fatality Free Friday was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 and coincided with the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week. The initiative was established in Queensland and was expanded into a national event.

Fatality Free Friday provides a unique opportunity to raise community awareness on road trauma.

The overall strategy for the campaign is built around the concept of actively seeking to engage public awareness on road safety and to encourage a level of community ownership on the issue. This approach uses a number of specific events and media avenues to assist in building awareness and encouraging active participation.

It aims to develop a cumulative level of awareness on the issue with the aim of positively altering road user behaviour. Fatality Free Friday differs from conventional road safety campaigns by emphasising these key areas:

- An individual can make a difference
- Personal responsibility and accountability
- Positive reinforcement via community action
- Community Ownership
- Collective involvement with other stake holders

This type of approach has been successfully used in other fields. Examples of these programs include environmental campaigns such as Earth Hour and Clean Up Australia Day as well as Public Health Campaigns such as Red Nose Day and the Think Pink Program. Whilst there has been some research into community based campaigns, little research is available on the full scope of this kind campaign in terms of road safety.

However, there is strong evidence to suggest that other campaigns have not only been highly successful in raising community awareness on a specific issue but are also effective in actively facilitating public action to assist in addressing the issue.

## Methods

The Fatality Free Friday program is designed as a public information campaign that engages greater community mobilization on road safety. It employs a diverse range of activities to promote its goals and objectives whilst increasing public action on road trauma.

From its inception in 2007, Fatality Free Friday utilised a communication campaign as its primary marketing strategy.

The Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto (1991) stated that communication campaigns are goal oriented attempts to inform, persuade or motivate behaviour change to a well defined and large audience.

The activities involve media, interpersonal support and community events. It also stated that programs of this nature contain four basic elements.

1. Campaigns are goal-oriented.
2. Aimed at a large audience
3. Occur during a given time period.
4. Involve an organized set of communication activities.

The Fatality Free Friday campaign uses these strategies to engage community ownership on the road safety issue. Australians are urged to ‘take the pledge’ of Fatality Free Friday – it’s a promise to ‘drive to stay alive’. ***The aim is to see a zero road toll for 24 hours.***

## ***The Structure of a Public Information Campaign***

In a 2003 report on community mobilization and public awareness campaigns, the Oregon State University Family Policy Program provided the following overview on the key elements of a successful public campaign:

***A public information campaign is a strategic, comprehensive, and inclusive initiative undertaken to raise awareness, enhance knowledge, and increase commitment to specific, positive action.***

- A **strategic** campaign is intentional - guided by clear desired outcomes.
- A **comprehensive** campaign aligns many activities in order to achieve a desired outcome.
- An **inclusive** campaign addresses multiple audiences – parents, neighbours, and employers – across diverse sectors and populations in a community.

*Effective public information campaigns combine three strategic activities to achieve community outcomes.*

*First, widespread media increases community awareness*

*Second, educational events and resources enhance knowledge among targeted community members.*

*Third, referral and linking services provide action opportunities to people who are committed to act on the issue.*

Fatality Free Friday incorporates all of these strategic activities as part of its ongoing operations.

### ***Strategic Media Activities***

The Fatality Free Friday promotional strategy was based on enlisting the support of various media agencies and networks to promote the campaign whilst at the same developing the Fatality Free Friday concept as a newsworthy story in its own right.

This approach targeted print, web, radio and television at the local, state and national levels.

The media strategy for Fatality Free Friday was fourfold:

1. Provide media relations assistance to sponsors, supporters and event organiser in the form of creating a media release for them to disseminate and adapt as required.
2. Assist these organisations with media contacts and distribution.
3. Highlight the key difference in the Fatality Free Friday concept – a positive, proactive campaign that encourages personal responsibility and participation.
4. Attract and foster media attention via newsworthy events leading up to the target day.

News and press releases were also supported by radio community service announcements. These aired both state wide and nationally. Media coverage for the 2013 campaign has the highest level achieved to date.

### ***Educational Events and Resources***

Fatality Free Friday used a number of social marketing strategies to help facilitate community awareness and action. The primary information portal for the campaign is the Fatality Free Friday web site. The web site is the hub of the program and provides universal access to the pledges as well as the opportunity to add extra comment in addition to media information. As a result Fatality Free Friday instantly topped Google's loose-string search and was linked to by private web sites and blogs, news sites and Government and community web sites.

The campaign also featured a more holistic approach to the event branding. All Fatality Free Friday promotional items featured a consistent branding message. A number of additional promotional resources were also produced for the 2013 campaign and were used to promote the program to the community, government and corporate sectors. These resources included posters that were distributed to a number of corporate and community outlets, flyers, wrist bands and key rings. Each of these featured Fatality Free Friday branding.

The 2013 campaign incorporated the traditional “Empty Shoes” messaging however it also saw development of a new activation program integrating a fleet of “inflatable” Fatality Free Friday Pledge vehicles. The pledge car fleet visited core locations national over 24 regional locations in Queensland as well as locations in Sydney and Melbourne.

This year’s campaign also included an expanded series of pledge signing events at the local level. These events were conducted by various schools, councils, regional road safety groups, local, state and federal government agencies and corporate sponsors.

There were also major media events conducted in the lead up to the 31<sup>st</sup> of May as well as on Fatality Free Friday itself.

In order to connect with and influence target audiences, the FFF team developed a multi-platform campaign which leveraged existing assets and activities, directly engaged target audiences and worked to create awareness in the lead up to the day.

A strategic approach was underpinned by three core pillars:

1. Connect: to target specific groups via the relevant media and alert drivers to Fatality Free Friday and call to action
2. Inform: to educate drivers on their role in improving road safety and create awareness of pledging activity
3. Influence: to inspire drivers to take ownership and responsibility for road safety and motivate real behaviour behind the wheel

Activities on the day included a pledge signing drive, the inflatable car fleet, Media opportunities, interviews with key stake holders, media call and road safety displays.

Supporters included corporate partners Caltex, Suncorp Insurance, Monroe Shock Absorbers, Queensland State Government and Queensland Rail.

### ***Referral Linking and Community Action Opportunities***

The third foundation for the event was to look at opportunities to source support from government, the corporate sector, community groups and the public in general.

Obtaining this support would help to compliment the media activities and facilitate a sense of community ownership. This was an essential ingredient to the overall impact of the event and its long term sustainability. Clearly a national community action campaign requires a significant level of resourcing and the broader support of other community based organisations to help promote the campaign around the country.

Fatality Free Friday is based on a targeted strategic plan. Communities which structure their road safety activities round a strategic plan are therefore more likely to be successful in reducing road trauma than communities which do not have such a plan to direct their efforts (Cairney 2001).

In all previous campaigns specific support was sought from government. The Queensland State Government and the New South Wales State Government were the key state authorities to support the program. This principle support assisted in obtaining additional cross promotion and awareness activities with other state departments such as police, transport departments and other emergency services.

The campaign was also supported by the Federal Government.

Local councils from around the country were also key partners in the campaign. Each council used Fatality Free Friday as a vehicle to help promote local road safety programs. It is our view that these relationships with local government are vital to the overall structure of the event and will need to be expanded on as the program develops in the coming years.

The corporate sector was also a significant partner group. In addition to our major sponsors, corporate organisations were encouraged to become actively involved in the program via the FFF Alliance program. This initiative provided a number of membership levels which provided a range of benefits and access to Fatality Free Friday resources.

Finally, the event also served as a central campaign that smaller community based programs could align themselves with in order to increase local awareness. These programs included road safety programs from various local councils and schools.

## **Results**

Fatality Free Friday has expanded significantly each year since its inception in 2007. The campaign has established itself as Australia's only national community based road safety program.

It has proven to be highly effective in laying the groundwork for creating effective volunteer networks, crafting more inclusive communities at the local and state levels, building positive community environments, and linking formal systems to community concerns and action as a precursor to enhancing community Road Safety.

The campaign also provides a number of opportunities for additional research and evaluation on the effectiveness of this style of community road safety at the national, state and local levels.

Henderson (1991) suggested that road safety mass media campaigns can achieve, and have achieved, the following:

- Increased awareness of a problem or a behaviour;
- Raise in the level of information about a topic or issue;
- Help in the formation of beliefs, especially where beliefs are not held formally;
- The establishment of a topic as more salient;
- Sensitisation of the audience to other forms of communication.

The results from the four previous Fatality Free Friday campaigns have demonstrated that the event provides a strong framework for the ongoing delivery of a road safety philosophy that enhances community ownership on the issue. Cairney (2002) highlighted that ownership depends on the community believing not only that the solutions are within its power, but that it has a responsibility to implement these solutions.

Fatality Free Friday served as a vehicle to enhance the community ownership and action in reducing road trauma.

The event proved to be highly effective in establishing partnerships with local government authorities, corporate organisations and associated community networks to achieve a greater focus on road safety outcomes at a local community level.

The event also provides a structured theme for road safety campaigns beyond the main target day itself.

### ***Fatality Free Friday – consumer and corporate engagement 2013***

Throughout the months of April and May, FFF and partner activations through traditional and social media, displays and collateral placement saw the campaign and messaging achieve a reach to over 10.9 million people nationally.

- Visual consumer impressions through traditional and social media to over 8.6 million Australians
- Over 377 pieces of coverage (including print, radio and TV)
- A reach of over 250,000 people nationally via social media
- Over 2 million consumer impressions via our partnership brand exposure in key locations
- Over 40,000 people came through activation events in 2013
- More than Over 50,000 pledges have been signed

These results were achieved through a number of operational channels. These included:

- FFF Fleet Pledge Activations
- Partner Events
- Regional Tours
- Railway Partnership/s (collateral and displays)
- Corporate Functions
- Queensland Motorways
- Traditional Media
- Social Media

The results to date are significant and provide a good foundation for future awareness programs.

Fatality Free Friday continues to achieved its primary aims in terms of increased public awareness and the event was successful in engaging more people to look at what individuals could do to improve road safety in the community.

These results have provided a very good platform to build on in 2014 and beyond. It also highlights that this is a long term project.

### **Future Objectives and Challenges**

Reducing the number of road deaths will ultimately remain the core philosophy of the program. However, the overall effectiveness of the campaign in increasing community action and awareness would be worthy of future research and evaluation.

In an Austroads Report on Community Road Safety Cairney (2002) and Cairney, Douglas & Frier (2006) stated that while the objective of community road safety is always the reduction of road trauma, are also a number of subsidiary objectives as well. These include:

- Creating an informed community
- Creating informed activism
- Mobilising local resources to road safety ends
- Promoting effective action
- Integrating activities
- Raising awareness
- Influencing key stakeholders

Previous Fatality Free Friday campaigns have been highly successful in achieving these objectives. This is certainly worthy of ongoing evaluation.

Cairney highlights however that specific evaluation of Community Road Safety programs in terms of crash reductions is very difficult due to a number of methodological challenges. A potential way to overcome these issues would be to use a multi-level evaluation model. This would look at process evaluation for all activities and outcome evaluations in terms of knowledge and behavioural change.

Future evaluations could focus on the awareness of the campaign and its message in the community, the overall market reach, how well the event is structured and the level of community buy-in and additional strategic partnerships.

### ***2014 Fatality Free Friday Campaign***

The 2014 events will be staged nationally during the month of May. Fatality Free Friday will host its key activation events on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

May 2014 will see the integration of a public relations program to generate awareness of the 2014 Fatality Free Friday Campaign and ultimately implore drivers to...take responsibility and ownership of road safety.

Fatality Free Friday launch events will be held in the first week of May 2014, however regional activations highlighting the core message will run from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

### **Conclusions**

Fatality Free Friday provides a unique opportunity to provide a central road safety target that compliments other road safety countermeasures. It provides a proactive means of engaging the community and individuals to take ownership on the road safety issue. Many road safety strategies are based on deterrence and whilst this is certainly part of an overall approach to altering road user behaviour, it shouldn't be seen to be the only part.

Fatality Free Friday has demonstrated that there are significant opportunities to mobilise community ownership to improve road safety by creating a new road safety culture.

It also helps to identify that each road user can play a role in reducing road trauma.

### **References**

1. Cairney, P.T. 2001 *Community Road Safety – Organisational and Methodological Challenges*
2. Cairney, P.T. 2002 *Community Road Safety in Australia and New Zealand* ARRB Transport Austroads Report
3. Cairney, P., Douglas, G. & Frier, G. 2006 *Safer Roads through Community Partnerships – Recent Experience in Tasmania*.
4. Delaney, A. Lough, B. Whelan, M & Cameron, M. 2004. *A Review of Mass Media Campaigns in Road Safety*. Monash University Accident Research Centre
5. Henderson, M. 1991. *Education, Publicity and Training in Road Safety: A Literature Review*. Monash University Accident Research Centre Report No. 22
6. The Health Communication Unit. 1999 - *Overview of Health Communication Campaigns*. The Centre for Health Promotion University of Toronto
7. Australian Road Safety Foundation 2013 Fatality Free Friday Event Report