

Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project

Title

Rest and Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project

Author(s)

Grant J, Parsons J, Pettet T

Organisation

RoadWise – the Local Government Road Safety Strategy and Community Road Safety program for Western Australia

The Western Australian Municipal Association

15 Altona Street

West Perth WA 6005

Tel: (08) 9213 2054

Fax: (08) 9321 8378

Email: roadwise@wama.wa.gov.au

Summary

Driver fatigue is a major factor in road crashes, significantly contributing to road trauma in Western Australia. It is estimated that one third of fatal rural-based road crashes involves driver fatigue.

On Monday 29th November 1999, the Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project was launched at Meekatharra by Commander Daryl Balchin APM.

Driver fatigue was identified by Police and the local communities as a vital issue for road safety in the Murchison. The Great Northern Highway is a key road train route for the transportation industry and the road environment is considered to be conducive to driver fatigue, due to the long distances travelled.

This is a community-based project incorporating education, encouragement and enforcement strategies developed by the Cue RoadWise Committee and the Meekatharra District Police, and supported by the Mount Magnet RoadWise Committee.

The objectives of the Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project, are to raise motorist's awareness of the risk factors, warning signs, and preventive behaviours associated with driver fatigue, by providing educational literature and promotional materials to those travelling in the area.

Ongoing implementation of the project is aimed at reducing fatigue related road crashes in the Murchison district on the Great Northern Highway (national route 95) encompassing the towns of Mount Magnet, Cue and Meekatharra.

Preliminary evaluation results suggest that the strategies implemented in Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project have been successful in terms of community participation, in raising awareness of driver fatigue and encouraging motorists to adopt fatigue preventive behaviours.

ROAD SAFETY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA – THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The management and co-ordination of road safety in Western Australia is undertaken through a strategic structure combining direction from A Ministerial Council for Road Safety. The Ministerial Council is Chaired by the Minister responsible for road safety and includes representation from the Ministers for Health, Education, Local Government and Planning.

The direction for road safety policy and strategy as well as the co-ordination and development of community education road safety programs is overseen by the Road Safety Council of WA. This group consists of executive management personnel from the WA Police Service, Health, Education, Insurance Commission of WA, Planning, Main Roads WA, as well as an elected representative for Local Government and the Royal Automobile Club of WA representing road users of the State. The Road Safety Council is a unique structure in that it has an independent Chairperson, that is not aligned to any state government department or road safety stakeholder group, resulting in balanced resolutions and recommendations.

The Road Safety Council is supported by the Road Safety Council Officer Support Group which is made up of senior management level officers of each of the agencies or stakeholders represented on the Council. This group provides the knowledge, research and expertise on issues that require noting, action or advice from the Road Safety Council.

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The activities of the various agencies that support the State Road Safety Structure are further co-ordinated, administered and monitored by the Office of Road Safety. This is a dedicated service to make certain that activities and resources of the individual agencies are not duplicated and that they are meeting the targets set by the Road Safety Council.

In 2000 the Road Safety Council adopted a State Road Safety Strategy to further the work of the strategic frameworks adopted in WA. The State Road Safety Strategy also incorporates the objectives of the National Road Safety Strategy.

In conjunction with this, the Road Safety Council had also developed Regional Road Safety Strategies to deal with the range of road safety issues that, due to the vastness of the State of WA can greatly vary from community to community.

To ensure that the Route 95 project is consistent and in line with the State Road Safety Strategy RoadWise made certain that this project met the following Road Safety Council objectives:

1) *Increased community ownership and participation in road safety:* The Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project has been effective in generating community support, involvement and ownership of road safety in the Murchison. With numerous local individuals and groups involved in the development and ongoing implementation of the project.

1) *Better road safety coordination:* Better road safety coordination has occurred at the local level through the collaborative efforts of local and regional agencies combined with community involvement during the various phases of the project.

2) *Safer road users:* The primary objectives of this project are aimed at promoting safer road user behaviour. A combination of educational, encouragement and enforcement strategies are implemented to improve motorists understanding of driver fatigue and encourage fatigue management practices.

NB This project also addresses a number of the strategies and actions listed in the Mid West Gascoyne Regional Road Safety Strategy.

BACKGROUND TO THE ROUTE 95 PROJECT

In 1998 when the Cue RoadWise Committee was formed, driver fatigue was identified during a strategic planning meeting as being the most significant local road safety issue. The Cue Police were particularly concerned by the high incidence of road train crashes linked to driver fatigue on the Great Northern Highway. Sergeant Jim Grant had initiated nighttime highway patrols targeting heavy haulage operators late in 1997, in an effort to address the issue, and was seeking assistance from RoadWise to develop a comprehensive fatigue management campaign.

In consultation with the Local Government authorities and Police in Meekatharra, Cue and Mount Magnet, driver fatigue emerged as the prime road safety concern for the entire district. Later this was confirmed and reinforced by the Mount Magnet RoadWise Committee, which was established in early 1999.

Road crash data along with local knowledge revealed the following factors, in support of the development of the Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project:

- ?? Fatigue is a major contributing factor in road trauma in Western Australia. It is estimated that fatigue is a contributing factor in one third of road crashes in WA, however this figure is likely to be an underestimate according to some researchers and many people working in the field of road safety.
- ?? Driver fatigue is more commonly a factor on country roads.
- ?? The road environment of Great Northern Highway is considered to be conducive to driver fatigue, particularly the long distances traveled, e.g. typical destinations - Perth to Meekatharra 452kms, Perth to Newman 1096kms, and Perth to Port Hedland 1638kms.
- ?? An estimated 3,000 self-drive tourists visit the Murchison during the months of June to September each year. Attractions include wildflowers, historical buildings and remains from the early mining days, prospecting and experiencing the outback. Many tourists are unfamiliar with the road environment and driving conditions which contribute to fatigue.

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- ?? In the two-year period January 1997 to December 1998, 72 road crashes were reported in the Murchison District (Kumarina to Paynes Find) on the Great Northern Highway, resulting in 1 fatality and 8 serious injuries. Nearly 25% of those crashes involved a road train or truck.
- ?? Great Northern Highway is a key road train route for the transport industry. Being the most direct route for road freight destined for the northern regions of the state. An average of 900 road trains per week, travel through the Murchison district carting road freight and servicing the mining and pastoral industries in the Murchison, Pilbara and Kimberley.
- ?? It is believed that up to 35% of rural truck crashes involve driver fatigue.

The Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project was therefore developed on the basis that a combination of educational, encouragement and enforcement strategies along with community involvement be used to increase awareness of the risk factors for driver fatigue and provide advice on how to prevent or manage driver fatigue, ultimately contributing to a reduction in fatigue-related crashes. Thus, the following aim and objectives were formulated and target groups identified:

AIM: To contribute to a reduction in the incidence of fatigue-related road crashes on the Great Northern Highway (national route 95) in the Murchison district.

OBJECTIVES:

- ?? Raise awareness of fatigue as a contributory factor in road crashes.
- ?? Improve knowledge of the risk factors, signs and symptoms of driver fatigue.
- ?? Increase knowledge of fatigue management strategies.
- ?? Encourage fatigue preventive behaviour. Increase community participation in road safety.
- ?? Encourage truck drivers and transport companies to adopt and to embrace the Code of Practice Fatigue Management for commercial vehicle drivers.

TARGET GROUPS:

- ?? Visiting motorists traveling Route 95 in the Murchison District.
- ?? The communities of Mount Magnet, Cue and Meekatharra.
- ?? Heavy vehicle drivers and transport companies operating within the Murchison District on Route 95.

METHODOLOGY

Consultative process

The Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project is very much a collaborative effort with a community-based approach. A range of individuals and groups, government and non-government, have been involved in the project.

Initially the concept for the project was formulated by RoadWise staff and Sgt Jim Grant (Officer in Charge Cue Police), in consultation with the Cue RoadWise Committee. The title, logo and implementation plan were developed and funding was sought.

Main Roads WA were contacted for approval of the use of the route 95 logo. The Mid West regional office (through Mr Ian Hamilton, Customer Service Manager and Mr Peter Herbert) has provided ongoing support for the project and assisted in local promotion of the project.

The project was then presented and input invited, from Inspector Gary O'Meara (Meekatharra Police District Officer) and Sergeant John Yates (OIC Meekatharra Police Station) becoming involved in the planning and implementation of the project, not only through the ongoing coordination of Operation NightOwl but also in the production of the video and encouraging community participation in the project.

The Shire of Meekatharra (through Mr Mike Howieson CEO), along with local police officers were also integral in gaining the support of local businesses and community members in distributing Rest & Arrive packs) and in the production of the video and promoting the project locally.

The project also gained support from the Mount Magnet RoadWise Committee, when it was established, enabling the project to be implemented in all three Murchison towns situated on Route 95. Mr Peter Webster (CEO Shire of Mount Magnet), Sgt Ron Pace (OIC Mount Magnet Police Station) and other members of the committee have been involved in promoting the project locally, distributing packs, recruiting local businesses to further support the project and video production.

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Various road safety agencies were consulted, providing driver fatigue resources for inclusion in the Rest & Arrive packs: Police Road Safety section (“how to avoid fatigue” brochures), Federal Office of Road Safety (fatigue booklet), and Main Roads WA (driver fatigue information sheet).

Advice and assistance was provided by Mr Lance Poore (Transport), in relation to the Code of Practice Fatigue Management for Commercial Vehicle Drivers and in the development of the Operation NightOwl brochure. Transport’s Regional Coordinator Mr Tony McCann has provided ongoing support and promotion for the project.

Transport Inspectors have also been involved in assisting with Operation NightOwl road blocks, providing their expertise in heavy haulage, collecting evaluation data for the Code of Practice and aiding the production of the video.

The Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project has involved inter-agency cooperation, community support and participation. All Police, Shires and RoadWise Committees were consulted and involved in reviewing the strategies and implementation methods, production of promotional items (video, litter bags, bumper sticker, brochure), launching the project in November 1999 and in identifying and recruiting the many local businesses which are involved in an ongoing basis displaying posters, video and distributing Rest & Arrive packs to motorists.

INNOVATION

The Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project was developed in response to a locally identified road safety issue, and it represents a departure from traditional approaches in a number of areas:

1. The project targets motorists traveling one specific highway and district (three towns situated on that highway within a similar environment). Giving the project a very unique identity enhancing community ownership and participation.
2. A combination of educational, encouragement and enforcement strategies have been used to allow the project to reach different target groups and to achieve a widespread impact at the community level.
3. As well as incorporating a range of strategies to raise awareness of driver fatigue and fatigue management advice, the project also forms links to a number of important existing fatigue programs – the Driver Reviver and Coffee Stop program, supports the Road Safety Council’s statewide mass media “don’t drive tired” campaign, promotes the use of road side rest areas and the Code of Practice for commercial drivers.
4. It is therefore a comprehensive community-based approach to preventing fatigue related road crashes.

An overview of the strategies and methods implemented in the Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project follows:

EDUCATION

Rest & Arrive packs have been developed comprising a number of new resources produced for this project as well as existing literature aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of fatigue. The packs consist of a litter bag containing fatigue booklet, brochure, information sheet, bumper sticker and evaluation survey which have been distributed to motorists traveling through the Murchison via a number of roadhouses, hotel/motels, tourist centers, and government offices.

A **video** (filmed entirely on location in the Murchison – local relevance) has recently been produced to promote the project and to provide information to motorists about the risk factors, warning signs and methods of preventing or managing driver fatigue. The video has been designed to improve knowledge of fatigue and encourage viewers to follow the advice provided on avoiding driver fatigue. The video will be screened at many of the locations already distributing Rest & Arrive packs. Tourists, local motorists and heavy haulage operators will have the opportunity to see this video when stopping at any number of these locations.

ENFORCEMENT

Operation NightOwl has been adopted by local enforcement agencies as a pro-active approach to driver fatigue. Roadblocks are set up on Great Northern Highway targeting heavy haulage operators, conducted on a random basis (to avoid predictability) at night when the threat of fatigue is greater.

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The main aim of these roadblocks is to educate truck drivers about fatigue, encourage compliance with the Code of Practice Fatigue Management for Commercial Vehicle Drivers, and to allow (or enforce) the drivers to have a break from driving. All officers involved are briefed prior to emphasise their role in these operations.

The Operation NightOwl **brochure** was designed and produced to inform truck drivers of the aim of these operations. The brochure is given to truck drivers along with a Rest & Arrive pack and a mug of coffee supplied in a Route 95 travel mug (an incentive to read the fatigue literature).

ENCOURAGEMENT

Community participation and ownership has been encouraged and achieved because of the local relevance of the project. Community participation has enabled the project to be self- sustaining and the focal messages of the project perpetuated.

Route 95 travel mugs were produced for this project as incentives. The mugs are provided to truck drivers at Operation NightOwl filled with coffee to encourage these drivers to have a break from driving and foster a positive attitude towards fatigue management. The mugs are also awarded as a prize to other motorists who complete and return the evaluation survey contained in the Rest & Arrive pack.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

All of the educational and promotional materials have been designed to meet the objectives of the Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project and the distribution of these is aimed at communicating fatigue prevention messages to the specified target groups.

The Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project logo along with the Rest & Arrive slogan were designed for two major purposes: to highlight local relevance and generate community support and participation, and to provide a clear and simple message to the target audience (to avoid and relieve fatigue and rest so that you arrive safely when traveling through the Murchison). The logo and slogan have been used on all promotional items – litterbags, bumper stickers, brochures, posters and video.

The design of the poster and bumper stickers reflect the red earth and long straight roads common to the area, while the Route 95 logo clearly identifies the highway in question. When the bumper stickers are attached to vehicles they become a moving advertisement promoting the message to other motorists.

Information about the risk factors, signs and symptoms of driver fatigue coupled with fatigue management strategies is communicated to motorists via the literature contained within the rest & arrive packs as well as on the posters displayed at participating outlets.

The Operation NightOwl brochure communicates the aims of the operation and promotes the Fatigue Management Code of Practice through delivery at roadblocks to drivers in the transport industry.

The Route 95 video has been produced to further communicate the hazards of driver fatigue and promote methods of avoiding fatigue. It is anticipated that a large number of resident and visiting motorists, and heavy haulage operators will be exposed to the messages in the video when it is screened at a number of roadhouses, tourist centers and other businesses and offices in Paynes Find, Mount Magnet, Cue and Meekatharra.

The video has also been used in presentations (e.g. RoadWise Conference and Transport's Fatigue Seminar) aimed at promoting the project to road safety stakeholders and communities in other areas of the state.

The Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project was officially launched in November 1999 by Commander Daryl Balchin of the Central Police Region. The launch was attended by many local road safety stakeholders and community members involved in the planning and implementation of the project. The program included speakers from RoadWise and Meekatharra Police District

TRANSFERRAL OF IDEAS THROUGHOUT THE STATE

Media releases were distributed to all regional media outlets to announce the launch of the Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project. The project was further promoted to the RoadWise network statewide via newsletter.

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While many of the resources developed are explicitly designed for the Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project, the concept, strategies and methods implemented are generic and could easily be applied to fatigue projects elsewhere or be adopted to address other locally relevant road safety issues.

The benefits in attaching an identity to a project such as this, is in generating community support, involvement and ownership. This is likely to have a positive impact on local attitudes, that in turn can influence behaviour. When community members are openly supportive and involved in a road safety project such as this, then it is likely to affect the attitude of other people in that community.

The video produced for this project is likely to be useful in raising awareness of driver fatigue in many other areas of the state where similar conditions occur, i.e. mix of vehicles (caravans, road trains), where large vehicles are common for road freight transport, and where there are vast traveling distances. The advice given in the video on avoiding driver fatigue would be appropriate for motorists traveling in rural and remote areas.

Many of the ideas behind this project are transferable and could be used by other groups. When Route 95 presentations have been delivered at conferences or seminars it has generated interest from other regions. Police from the Goldfields Region are considering implementing a similar project on highways in that area.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION – THE PROOF OF THE PROJECT

A number of evaluation methods have been introduced to assess the process and impact of this project. Anecdotal and observational evidence has enabled ongoing monitoring of some aspects of the project, along with recording the number of resources distributed and the level community participation in terms of distribution points. The following is a summary.

An evaluation instrument was developed for the project and is included in the Rest & Arrive pack. Route 95 travel mugs are offered as an incentive to increase response rate and are sent to those people completing and returning the survey. A follow-up letter is sent with the mug to reinforce the fatigue message.

Preliminary evaluation results suggest that the strategies implemented in Rest & Arrive Route 95 Murchison Fatigue Management Project have been effective in terms of community participation, in raising awareness of driver fatigue and encouraging motorists to adopt fatigue preventive behaviours. Monitoring and evaluation will be continued with the ongoing implementation of this project.

CONTACTS

For further information regarding the Route 95 Rest and Arrive Fatigue Management Project please contact RoadWise (08) 9213 2066