

RoadWise Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme

TITLE

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SUMMARY

The issue of road safety affects every Western Australian. We are at risk every time we get in a car, walk down the street, or go for a bike ride. The risk for children is even greater. Road-related trauma is the greatest cause of injury and fatality for children 12 years and under. Since 1996, more than 1,600 Western Australian school children have been injured in traffic crashes in the hours immediately prior to and immediately after school. Of these casualties, 7 were fatal and 242 required hospital treatment. These statistics highlight the importance of involving schools in road safety.

In 1994 RoadWise developed the Safe Routes to Schools program to assist local communities address their own local road safety issues through local actions and strategies. To date, over 300 Western Australian primary schools have adopted this program to create safer road environments and encourage safer road users in and around their school communities.

The Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme was designed to encourage and assist schools to continue with the Safe Routes to Schools program once the initial objectives have been achieved. The objective of the program is to maintain participation in road safety activities as well as to encourage innovation and creativity in road safety initiatives. The scheme aims to encourage school communities to continue working to keep our children safe on our roads.

The Accreditation Scheme rewards schools for their participation in the Safe Routes to School program, as well as promoting access to the road safety services and programs offered by other agencies such as the WA Road Safety in Schools Project, WA Police Road Safety Section, Spinal Injury Prevention Program and Kidsafe. The scheme not only provides information on these other sources of road safety information but, importantly, it provides funding for schools to enrich these existing programs and also develop new and exciting ways for road safety promotion and education.

Grants of up to \$400 are made available to schools on the basis of their participation in these great programs. Schools maintaining a minimum accreditation rating are eligible for an annual grant ranging from \$50 to \$400 (+ GST). The rating, and hence the size of the grant, is determined by the number, extent and type of road safety activities undertaken by the school in a calendar year. At the end of Term 3, the Safe Routes to School Committee completes and submits an accreditation form listing the road safety activities completed or commenced that year, and activities confirmed for Term 4. The submission also includes copies of supporting documentation as well as copies of any publicity.

Most importantly, the accreditation scheme provides recognition and rewards to those school communities that are actively creating safer roads and safer road users. It encourages schools to think beyond the painting of blue footprints, supports their road safety commitment, and encourages innovation and continuity by providing financial support.

RoadWise Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme

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.

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.

The Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme directly meets two of the Road Safety Council Objectives that are essential in ensuring that any road safety project undertaken, is consistent and in line with the State strategy and other road safety programs. The Accreditation Scheme also meets the ultimate objective of assisting to reduce road trauma in Western Australia.

The objectives that are met within the Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme are:

1. ***Increased community ownership and participation in road safety:*** The Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme is fundamentally a community development program and as such is dependent on community ownership and participation for its success. To receive accreditation the school community, assisted by RoadWise and other road safety stakeholders, is responsible for the implementation of road safety initiatives
2. ***Safer road users:*** The Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme encourages ongoing participation in road safety activities. These activities contribute directly to the objective of safer road users by increasing awareness and knowledge of road safety issues with both the student and parent populations.

RoadWise Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme

Background

The Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme was developed to encourage school communities to address road safety in the community as a dynamic and continuing process, rather than as an activity that can be followed, completed and crossed off the agenda.

The original Safe Routes to Schools program is a comprehensive community development program that aims to:

- ?? Identify and improve all identified road safety issues relating to individual primary school environments.
- ?? Involve Local Government and the total school communities in developing and providing engineering and environmental road safety interventions.
- ?? Involve school communities, especially students in the implementation of strategies and actions to reduce road crash risk and to develop appropriate resources.

In many cases, schools determine their Safe Routes and paint blue footprints, but there is no organised effort to continue promoting the road safety message, nor is there a commitment to solving the “big picture” issues such as the volume and movement of traffic. In addition, schools and Parents & Citizens/Friends Association must allocate limited funding and determine priority programs to support, within an environment with a multitude of demands made on time and finances. Unfortunately, road safety can be marginalised or neglected unless there is an incentive to continue, or there is a particularly dedicated teacher or parent who takes responsibility for school-wide safety issues. The support of the school principal is also an important factor in determining the extent of the school’s commitment.

In the late 1990s, a number of schools throughout the metropolitan area were developing some particularly successful and innovative road safety initiatives in their school communities. These schools were becoming the benchmark for excellence in the Safe Routes to Schools Program. However, there was no recognition for these outstanding achievements or any incentive for continued involvement.

In addition, through her involvement in various P & C activities, Dr Susan Ho (Chair, Safe Routes to School Committee, West Leeming Primary School) had observed the difficulties that some school communities face in maintaining the momentum of the Safe Routes to School Program. She submitted a detailed proposal for an Accreditation Scheme, which RoadWise proceeded to research and develop and expand these ideas to address these issues.

Road safety issues are continually changing – the accreditation process encourages and rewards school communities for their *continued* involvement in road safety initiatives offered by various organisations, and also fosters *innovation* and *creativity* in the development of new activities.

A pilot of the Safe Routes to Schools Accreditation Scheme was trialled in 2000. It is hoped that the scheme will provide an incentive for schools who have completed the initial Safe Routes to School Program objectives to develop further initiatives to address road safety issues in the local school environment. The Accreditation Scheme supports the need to continually reassess safety issues. It provides a process through which road safety in the school community is continually reviewed and renewed.

The Accreditation Scheme actively promotes the participation in programs offered by various agencies involved in road safety. Through this process it is hoped that schools will utilise the wide range of programs existing in the community, as well as developing their own innovative road safety initiatives.

Initiatives developed by the schools who have achieved accreditation status will be shared with other schools who are involved in the Safe Routes to School program. They will also be used to publicise the Safe Routes to School Program to encourage schools not in the program to join and enjoy the benefits of an active and ongoing commitment to road safety in the school community.

Consultation Strategies

RoadWise, together with Dr Susan Ho from West Leeming Primary School, invited various stakeholders including:

- ?? TravelSmart
- ?? Department of Transport/Bike West

RoadWise Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme

- ?? Police Road Safety Section
- ?? City of Wanneroo
- ?? City of Joondalup
- ?? City of Melville
- ?? City of Stirling
- ?? Spinal Injuries Prevention Project
- ?? WA School Road Safety Project
- ?? West Leeming Primary School

These stakeholders assisted in the development of the accreditation process that would in itself support each agency in the delivery of their road safety initiatives, as well as supporting the schools in addressing their road safety concerns and issues.

Stakeholders provided input into:

- ?? What items/services should be included in the accreditation process
- ?? Ability of agencies to provide services/assistance required for schools to meet criteria
- ?? Memorandum of Understanding for participating agencies
- ?? Management of accreditation system (how to ensure the criteria have been met by schools)
- ?? Methods of advice and information dissemination to schools regarding the Accreditation Scheme

The Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme represents a substantial departure from traditional and existing approaches in the following important aspects:

- ?? While supporting an existing and highly successful community development road safety program, the Accreditation Scheme offers a process through which road safety issues are continually reviewed and reassessed. The accreditation grant provides not only recognition for continuing road safety activities but also an incentive to develop new and innovative initiatives.
- ?? The Accreditation Scheme simultaneously supports various agencies in the delivery of their road safety initiatives and schools in addressing their road safety concerns and issues.
- ?? The Accreditation Scheme provides a benchmarking process through which schools can be recognised for excellence in the development and implementation of road safety initiatives.

Communication Strategies

Specific one-page pamphlets were produced to outline the Safe Routes to School Program and the Accreditation Scheme. To attract the attention of potential applicants, these were illustrated using working examples, and were designed to present the essential information without being too verbose. An Accreditation Kit was developed that included these pamphlets as well as the paperwork necessary for the accreditation process

The launch of the Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme took place at West Leeming Primary School on 12th May 2000. It was officiated by Katie Mair, Mayor of Melville, who is a staunch supporter of school safety activities in the City of Melville. The launch was well attended, with a large representation from various agencies with an interest in road safety, parents from the local community, and representatives from other school P & C Committees. The launch attracted much media attention

This event involved the presentation of the first Accreditation Kit to school councillors from West Leeming Primary School. Kits were then sent to all schools in Western Australia.

The Safe Routes Accreditation Scheme was also tabled and discussed at RoadWise Committees throughout the State.

Following the successful implementation of the pilot scheme, a mail-out to all schools was undertaken at the start of Term 2, inviting submissions for 2001.

As part of ongoing publicity, the scheme is promoted by RoadWise officers and at various P & C functions.

All schools in Western Australia can access the Safe Routes Accreditation Scheme. The first step is to adopt the Safe Routes to Schools program, if this has not already been done. RoadWise Officers will assist schools in implementing this program. In the second year of the school's involvement in this program, the school can apply

RoadWise Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme

for accreditation. Provided a minimum level of activities have been undertaken in the first year, and the Safe Routes have been maintained, a grant will be issued to support further road safety activities.

Where programs similar to Safe Routes to School exist in other States, there is no reason why the Accreditation Scheme cannot be adopted and adapted as a mechanism to bring about the same aims of continuity and innovation in road safety at schools.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All applications for accreditation are kept by RoadWise, as a permanent record and to allow random auditing of schools' applications.

The success of the Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme is evident by the level of innovation and creativity demonstrated by the participating schools.

Applecross Primary School provided each of their students with a Road Safety Booklet that outlined safe routes to school including a map of these safe routes, drop off and pick up zones, safety houses and tips for bike safety. They also conduct a "Think Spot" at fortnightly assemblies where students wear a blue footprint costume when they share their road safety tips.

Rostrata Primary School developed four free standing signs to assist parents to make decisions as they drop off and pick up their children. They also held Blue Day 2000 which involved all students dressing in blue, encouraging children to walk or cycle to school, foot jokes and foot facts displayed in the library as well as the judging of the big blue foot competition.

Connolly Primary School provided a human bus on Monday 26th June 2000 and completed road safety contracts which demonstrated the students awareness of and commitment to road safety.

West Leeming Primary developed safety sashes to improve visibility on school excursions and ran a competition to name the RoadWise owl – Hoo B Ware.

These innovative road safety initiatives are testament to the success of the program in achieving its objective of encouraging innovation and creativity in road safety initiatives.

The objective of the Safe Routes to School Accreditation Scheme, to encourage ongoing participation in road safety, has been achieved as is evidenced by the seven schools who achieved accreditation status in the year 2000. It is hoped that the number of schools achieving accreditation will increase to 20 or more in 2001.