

Towards Early Intervention in Road Safety Education - A Collaborative Approach between Road Safety Organisations and Family Support Services

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Biography

Maureen Owen is the Road Safety Education and Research Consultant with the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program (ECRSEP). This position involves two main functions: a research and evaluation role and the delivery of professional development workshops around road safety education. A current project is to investigate ways in which ECRSEP can extend its road safety program to families who may not access children's services on a regular basis in road safety education.

Maureen Owen's major research interest is injury prevention among child pedestrians. The research focus for her Doctorate involved the investigation of family and community processes that are associated with children's unsupervised access to the traffic environment and the experiences of families in economically disadvantaged communities.

Abstract

Early intervention is an increasingly important area of government policy at both a State and Federal Government level, but has not previously been addressed within the road safety arena. The main purpose of early intervention is to put into place initiatives that will help avoid adverse outcomes in later life. From a road safety perspective, this means finding effective ways to address road user attitudes and behaviours during childhood that will help reduce the likelihood of injury outcomes in both the short term for children and in the longer term for young adults.

This paper will present traffic injury data for child road users within the context of a range of social, environmental and road behaviour risk characteristics that are associated with traffic related injury. While substantial gains have been made in injury reduction over the past decade it will be argued that those at elevated risk of injury remain difficult to reach through current approaches to road safety education and that for these groups the rate of injury will plateau rather than fall.

The process of designing a road safety education program that addresses risk factors for road user groups experiencing elevated rates of injury will be outlined. Interview data from families, road safety representatives and family support staff informed the design of the program and will be reported on.

The paper will then go on to describe the collaborative implementation of this program that is occurring at an individual community level. It will be argued that by including an early intervention approach among NSW road safety education initiatives, many families can be accessed who would not otherwise have the opportunity to update the way they approach road safety education in their parenting.