

"GO 40 FOR ME" – School Zone Speed Reduction in Western Sydney

**Kerrie Doherty¹ (Presenter); Alison Mortimer² (Presenter);
David Briant³ (Presenter); Rachel Palermo⁴ (Presenter)**
¹Camden Council; ²Fairfield City Council; ³Holroyd City Council;
⁴Liverpool City Council

Biography

Kerrie Doherty, Alison Mortimer, David Briant, Rachel Palermo all tried out for Circus Oz and failed to make it so became Road Safety Officers in western Sydney. Educational qualifications of the Road Safety Officers participating in this project range from the psychologists, marketers -both social and industry, educators and musicians to those who trained as health professionals. Vocational experience similarly varies from those who have been involved in the design and delivery of school based curriculum and resources for NSW schools to company directors and project managers for the private sector. Road safety specific experience amongst those who delivered this project varies in time from over a decade to those who offer a fresh approach tackling the perennial road safety behavioural issues. This team of Road Safety Officers representing diverse populations designed, delivered and localised a program, which was embraced by their local communities.

Abstract

The NSW Government aims to halve the road toll by 2010. Managing speed is a central part of this strategy (Road Safety 2010). The establishment of 40km/h zones outside most NSW schools and lower speed limits in other areas of high pedestrian usage is a major plank of the speed management plan of the Roads and Traffic Authority.

The establishment of 40km/h zones is only effective when driver compliance is gained. This project illustrates an effective and simple 40km/h school zone speed reduction project undertaken and involving all western Sydney areas. The project illustrates a practitioner model, which is easily replicated, sustainable, acceptable to the public and highly visible. The project was first undertaken in 2002 and has been fully evaluated in terms of a process evaluation, distributed resources and a telephone survey response to the project.

I believe that the paper will be of interest as a practical use of research that indicates that small decreases in speed result in large savings of pedestrian life. Also the project effectively involves large populations of people in an organised and highly visible project delivery.

1. BODY TEXT

GO 40 FOR ME was developed as a seventh phase of the SPEED YOU LOSE road safety project undertaken across western Sydney since 1995. The previous phase of

"Speed You Lose" had divided local government areas into "neighbourhood precincts" with schools identified as the heart of these precincts. The recognition of schools as the heart of communities had strengthened the reach of the "Speed You Lose" project and also identified that some school zones existed on multi-lane roads where education to slow down was crucial.

"Go 40 for Me" responded to data that outlined speeding as a major contributor to the NSW road toll. A total of 577 people were killed on NSW roads in 1999. Of these 245 died as a result of a speeding driver, therefore speed was a factor in 42% of road fatalities in 1999. The twelve local government areas with the highest incidence of fatal and serious injury crashes relating to excessive speed as stated in the RTA Sydney Operations Directorate – Road Safety and Social Index Profile included: Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury, Penrith and Liverpool – seven of the top ten included Council areas targeted by this project. The Western Sydney Region of Councils (WSROC) also states that more than 25% of the NSW state population live in the area targeted by this project.

"Go 40 for Me" targeted excessive speed on local roads, where the use of Council operated speed monitors was permitted. In the targeted area the most common age groups for both male and female pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries were 0-16 years and over 60 years. "Go 40 for Me" focused on highlighting the concentrations of pedestrian traffic divided into "neighbourhood precincts" in order to make sense of the need for drivers to slow down in zones where the most pedestrian traffic was centred.

Twenty five percent of the total Sydney Operations Directorate (Road Safety and Social Index Profile) is attending some form of education mostly at primary level. "Go 40 for Me" placed its intention to reduce the speed firmly in local precincts with the schools as the heart of the neighbourhood, as the most likely to achieve best results in terms of a speeding countermeasure. The premise was that if we can train drivers to understand the local driving environment and the need for slowing down in residential and high pedestrian traffic areas then it is conceivable that their heightened awareness of prevailing local conditions may be translated to other local roads.

This campaign linked twelve local government areas and created the resources for each to target local speeding issues with local stakeholders including the Police, Traffic Engineers and school communities. The project also used radio as a method for reaching across the areas participating in this project and underscoring the activity that each participating Road Safety Officer mounted. The radio station selected for this project was WS FM (Western Sydney FM) whose target demographic matched the target audience for "Go 40 for Me".

2. TARGET GROUP

- Local communities divided into precincts with local schools at the heart.
- All vehicle controllers in the targeted area.
- Vulnerable road users – pedestrians in local government area (LGA) identified sites.

3. INTENDED PROJECT OUTCOMES

- To reduce death and injury caused by speeding in identified locations in each LGA.
- To consolidate the message introduced in Speed You Lose 6, and to introduce the message – "Go 40 for Me".
- To raise compliance of reduced speed limits on local roads, targeting school zones as a priority.
- To generate community ownership and action, which actively supports the project.

4. PROJECT STRATEGIES

"Go 40 for Me" (Speed You Lose 7) was a cooperative project of the WSROC group of Road Safety Officers in association with Campbelltown Council and Strathfield & Burwood Councils. The project utilised past learning experiences from Speed You Lose phases 1-6 which included a commissioned survey of the project. "Go 40 for Me" also borrowed heavily from the design and strategies that underpin the success of 'Red Nose Day'. "Go 40 for Me" took speed reduction to the local community and asked the community to ask of themselves to slow down in school zones. Prior to the project there had been in western Sydney an acceptance of the need to slow to 40km/h in school zones but little community compliance. Pre project speed counts had demonstrated that in 40km/h zones most people had slowed to 60km/h. Pre surveys of community attitude had showed that the idea that a driver had to personally slow to 40km/h was not considered reasonable.

The activities of this project were as follows:

- "Go 40 for Me" project banners placed prominently in each local government area. (Banners continue to evaluate strongly in survey responses as an effective means of communication to drivers).
- Each Road Safety Officer targeted school zones where excessive speeding was considered a major problem and targeted the school with an education and enforcement roster. Each Road Safety Officer worked with local Police to organise a roster of enforcement supported by the use of the roadside speed monitors. For example in the Fairfield local government area three school zones were targeted over 6 weeks. Each school had police enforcement on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at school zone times and the speed monitor was in place each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon in school zone times. Three schools were targeted and had two weeks of this high profile Police and Road Safety Officer presence. Speed counts were undertaken at each targeted site both before and after the intervention.
- Each participating Council received 500 cor flute signs containing the project message with pre-punched holes and ties enabling easy attachment to school fences. It was indicated to Road Safety Officers by School Road Safety School Education Consultant that school participation should be made as easy as possible.
- Newsletter inserts and information was provided to schools for the support of this project over the six weeks of its roll out.
- Schools were encouraged to provide photographs of their efforts to their local Road Safety Officer. An incentive of \$500 was offered to each school as a means to gain evaluative results by having schools provide documentary evidence to the Road Safety Officer of their participation.
- Radio station WS FM was commissioned to run supporting radio advertisements and live reads by radio personalities, Hans and Kayley. This station was chosen for its

mesh with the demographic that was targeted. The advertisements were run, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays over the life of the project (6weeks) and were supported by live reads on a Tuesday and Wednesday. This was considered by WS FM to be high saturation advertising.

- The project complemented the Roads and Traffic Authority 40km/h school zone radio advertisement campaign.
- Local editorial and local promotions of this project were undertaken in each local government area. The Councils of Baulkham Hills, Campbelltown and Hawkesbury had project funds allocated (\$400 each) for paid advertisement in local newspapers. This was in lieu of project banners, which they did not require.
- Targeted Police enforcement of 40km/h zones has been a highlight of this project, which has coordinated Roads and Traffic Authority, Police and local government resources.
- "Speed You Lose" stickers were reprinted and distributed as part of the message of this project.
- "Speed You Lose" links were included on the banners and remains a message contained on the Courtesy Speed Check units.

5. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

This project effectively saturated western Sydney with the message "Go 40 For Me". The radio advertising was effective as an umbrella to the project, pulling it together across the western Sydney local government areas. This project has highlighted local Police enforcement increasing its visibility and linking it to a project message in local government areas across western Sydney. Police coordination had been central to the success of this program. Radio and print media advertisements have covered western Sydney and drivers not linked to school communities have been exposed to these messages. The cor flute signs on school fences across western Sydney have been extremely successful and have raised the profile of this project in a highly visible and coordinated manner.

The school response and ownership of this program has been a central success of this program. Over a year on from the initial project roll out, schools across western Sydney still continue to display the project message boards and to use the project educational materials in their school newsletters and as part of school based road safety education. The decoration of the message boards by the schools has created an ownership and continued delivery of the project by the participating schools.

6. PROJECT EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

This project has been effectively implemented and has seen a coordinated approach to the problem of speeding in school zones. The project effectively organised engineering, enforcement and educational messages reaching into local communities. It is anticipated that this message will have had a flow on effect on speed in local roads although the resources have not been available to measure this outcome.

A reduction in speeds has been recorded due to the Police enforcement and use of the Courtesy Speed Check radar in school zones. For example in the Fairfield area Police fined an average of 8 motorists at each targeted site yet as the project progressed, enforcement results decreased. Traffic counts at the sites reveal that the traffic slowed in

response to enforcement, the speed check radar and the project messages. A telephone survey of Fairfield local government area residents, undertaken at the time (300 respondents) indicated an 86% respondent recall of the project message.

Banners at high visibility locations have been exposed to nearly one million vehicles across western Sydney. Local newspaper editorial has been an effective tool and most local government areas have had at least two articles with photos covering this project. The media advertising linked to community action at school sites was effective in encouraging the community to participate as their work was recognised on the airwaves by a popular western Sydney radio station.

There were 5,500 cor flute signs distributed to schools for display across western Sydney. The decoration and personalising of these signs has been a key component of the success of this project. Over a year on, these signs are still in use across western Sydney.

Perhaps the most important success of this program has been to provide community education, which has been embraced by local communities about the need to slow down to 40km/h in school zones for the benefit of child pedestrians. The project has been extended by some of the participating local government areas in 2003, although most areas that initially rolled out the project continue to display the project message despite not having the resources to extend the project in the following year.

Anecdotal local evidence and comment suggests that this project has smoothed the implementation of 40km/h speed cameras by the Roads and Traffic Authority in NSW. As one resident said "speed cameras in school zones, that's part of "Go 40 for Me", isn't it!

Acknowledgments

Milan Letunica, Auburn Council
Angela Vernicos & Jeremy Woods, Baulkham Hills Council
Joe Pereira & David Tynan, Blacktown City Council
Glen Sherlock, Blue Mountains Council
Rebecca Whitford & Jeanine Parsons, Campbelltown Council
Janet Hogge, Hawkesbury Council
Myfanwy Lawrence, Strathfield/Canada Bay Council
Cathy Edwards & Sharon Maddox, Penrith Council.

Keywords

Effective, sustainable, visible, owned, replicable.