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## **Preparing for 2006: Changes to Open Load Space Legislation**

**By Louise Russell-Weisz**

### **Abstract**

This project used Aboriginal and Regional media outlets across the Kimberley to target Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal men aged 17-39 years, with the aim of increasing their knowledge about the final phase of the open load space legislation in Western Australia. Mass media was chosen as the most cost effective way to attempt to change the target groups attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in relation to riding in the open load space of trucks and utilities.

Garrow (1997) found in his study that from 1990 – 1994 passengers travelling in the open load space of utility trucks comprised 18 percent of fatalities. He also found that Aboriginal people comprised 86.7% of the Kimberley open load space fatalities and 64% of the total motor vehicle crash fatalities in the Kimberley from 1990 – 97, for whom race was known.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004, rollover protection devices will no longer be approved and from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006, riding in the open load space will be prohibited. It was thought that education about these changes is essential to ensure that the Aboriginal community are fully informed about the need to take on the responsibility of changing the types of vehicles they purchase leading up to January 2006.

This project involves the production of a 30 sec television commercial and a 30- second radio advertisement that targets Aboriginal people living in the Kimberley and other regional areas of Western Australia. The television and radio advertisements were produced and filmed by a local Aboriginal media organisation, and featured a local Aboriginal identity as a role model and other local Aboriginal talent. All commercials are being broadcast during radio shows popular with young Aboriginal men in particular. All advertisements will run for six months on a week on week off basis from July 2004.

Preliminary surveys of the target group revealed high advertisement recall amongst those participating in the surveys with 85% indicating that they could recall seeing or hearing an advertisement aimed particularly at Aboriginal people in the last couple of months. Message recall was also very high with 80% of participants being able to correctly recall what the advertisement was about (open load space laws and getting ready for the upcoming final phase in the legislation). There was a moderately high percentage (63%) of survey participants who reported having known about the final

phase of the open load space legislation (which will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006). Fifty three percent of participants reported that they or their community presently use a vehicle with a rollover protection device to transport passengers. All indicated that they intended to change the type of vehicle they use to transport passengers before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

## **Introduction**

This project uses Aboriginal and Regional media outlets across the Kimberley to target Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal men aged 17-39 years, with the aim of increasing their knowledge about the new open load space legislation in Western Australia as well as attempt to change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in relation to riding in the open load space of trucks and utilities.

As this project will run until January 2006, this paper will report on the preliminary results (first three months).

## **Rationale**

Transport injuries are ranked the second highest cause of injury death (behind self inflicted injuries) and third highest cause of hospitalisation in a recent review of injury epidemiology in Western Australia. This review also found that between 1995 and 2000, the risk of transport injury death was 2.8 times higher for males, 3.8 times higher for Aboriginal people, and 2.2 times higher for rural residents than for females, non-Aboriginal people and people living in the metropolitan area respectively. (Gillan et al, 2003)

The State Road Safety Strategy identifies increasing restraint use as one of its main eight strategy initiatives for Western Australia. The Strategy states: "Passengers travelling in the rear of utilities suffer almost twice the degree of serious injury as car passengers." (State Road Safety Strategy, 2003, p.17)

## **Open Load Space Legislation and crash history**

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 regulations came into effect that made it illegal to carry people in the open load space of vehicles in Western Australia without an approved rollover protection device. On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004, rollover protection devices are longer being approved by the Department of Transport and from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006, riding in the open load space will be prohibited all together. Education about these changes is essential to ensure that the Aboriginal community are fully informed about the need to take on the responsibility of changing the types of vehicles they purchase in the future.

Garrow (1997) found in his study that from 1990 – 1994 passengers travelling in the open load space of utility trucks comprised 18 percent of fatalities. He also found that Aboriginal people comprised 86.7% of the Kimberley open load space fatalities and 64% of the total motor vehicle crash fatalities in the Kimberley from 1990 – 97, for whom race was known. (Garrow, 1999)

## **Road Crashes Involving Aboriginal People**

In Western Australia between 1988 and 1997 research has found that there has been a general increase in the number of serious crashes involving Aboriginal persons. This research found that the majority of Aboriginal crash fatalities were male and over 60% of Aboriginal crash fatalities were aged 21 to 39 years. It was also found that passengers were the most common Aboriginal fatality followed by pedestrians. (Data Analysis Australia, 2000).

Cercarelli and Knuiman (2002) found in their research that while hospitalisations from road injury for non-Aboriginal people have been decreasing by 6.7% per three year period since 1971, the rates of hospitalisation for Aboriginal people have been increasing by 2.6% per three year period. They also found that the increasing trend was more pronounced in males, those aged 0 – 14 years and over 45 years, and for those living in rural areas. For Aboriginal people aged 0 – 14 years there was an overall increasing trend with the rate increasing by approximately 8.1% per three year period compared with an overall decreasing trend of 3.2% for the same aged group over the same time period for non-Aboriginal people.

Cercarelli and Knuiman (2002) also found in their research that the two most common road user types for Aboriginal people that are hospitalised because of a road crash are passengers and pedestrians. Results showed that Aboriginal people had a higher proportion of passengers hospitalised compared with non-Aboriginal people (22.9% compared with 15.6%) between 1971 and 1997 in Western Australia. These findings reflect a non-compliance with seatbelt type legislation, over crowding and riding in the open load space.

### **Kimberley crash statistics involving non-use of a seatbelt**

Of all driver and passenger fatalities in the Kimberley, between 1990 and 1999, 63% were not wearing seatbelts. (Data Analysis Australia for Department of Transport, 2000). Restraint use in the Kimberley Population Health Region is poor, with 34% of vehicle occupants who were seriously injured known not to be wearing a seatbelt. This compares to 11% for all of Western Australia and 19% for rural regions. Sixty-seven percent of serious casualties who did not wear a seatbelt were male, and 45% were aged between 15 and 29 years. (Legge, Gavin & Cercarelli, 2002)

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the project were :

**Objective1:** To use Aboriginal media in the Kimberley to communicate culturally appropriate road safety messages about the dangers of riding in the open load space and the open load space legislation changes.

**Objective 2:** Seventy percent of the target group surveyed in the Kimberley will self-report knowing about the open load space legislation changes that will come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

**Objective 3:** Sixty percent of the target group surveyed in the Kimberley will self-report that they will replace their vehicles with roll over protection devices with passenger carrying vehicles before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

## **Method**

Mass media was seen as the most cost effective strategy to get this particular road safety message out to Aboriginal Communities in both remote and rural locations in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Therefore, a 30 sec television commercial and a 30- second radio advertisement targeting Aboriginal people were produced. All commercials are being broadcast during television and radio shows popular with young Aboriginal men in particular. The commercials were broadcast on local and regional media outlets across the Kimberley and in Regional Western Australia from July to October 2004. The commercials will be broadcast again for the six months (July 2005 – January 2006) leading up to the date the final phase of the WA Open Load Space legislation becomes effective – 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

### **Use of Mass media**

**a) Television:** The television commercial was produced and filmed by Goolarri Media, a local Aboriginal media organisation in Broome, and featured a local Aboriginal identity and local Aboriginal people. The television and radio commercials are being aired on a local Aboriginal Television station (Goolarri TV 35), a regional and remote Aboriginal Community television network (BRACS – Broadcasting in Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme) and on a regional commercial television (GWN TV) station for 3 months from July 2004 to October 2004. The advertisements will also go to air for the six months leading up to date the legislation will come into effect. Scripts were determined through a consultation process with staff from Goolarri Media Enterprises and the Broome Aboriginal Media Association. Advertisements are being broadcast for a total of six months on a week on week off basis.

**b) Radio:** A 30 second culturally relevant and language appropriate radio advertisement, about the dangers of riding in the open load space and the changes in the relating legislation, was also recorded and produced by Goolarri Media. The radio advertisement used the same local Aboriginal identity as the television commercial as a role model. The dialogue/script for the radio advertisement is the same as the script for the television commercial. Advertisements are also being broadcast for a total of six months on a week on week off basis on Goolarri Radio and a remote Aboriginal community radio station (PAKAM Network – Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media Network).

## Results

Preliminary (self report) post intervention surveys of the target group were conducted by employees of Goolarri Media at a rock concert 3 months after the television and radio advertisements went to air. Surveys consisted of 10 questions, which asked for responses on advertisement and message recall as well as self reported behavioural and attitudinal changes and target group demographics.

A total of 20 surveys were conducted via face-to-face interview. Seventy nine percent of those surveyed were male and 21% were female. Ninety five percent regarded themselves as Aboriginal and 5% did not. Eighty percent were aged between 18 and 35 years and 16% between 36 and 45 years and 4% under 17 years of age. Survey participants were from a variety of Aboriginal Communities across the Kimberley. Thirty two percent were from Broome, 16% Beagle Bay, 16% Bidyadanga, 10.5% One Arm Point, 10.5% Jigalong, 5% Looma and 5% from Warmun.

### Survey results:

#### Advertisement and message recall:

- Eighty five percent of those participating in the survey had seen or heard an advertisement about road safety that was particularly targeted at Aboriginal people.
- Of those 80% correctly stated that the advertisement was about the legislation regarding open load space travel and the upcoming changes to the legislation. Twenty percent incorrectly stated that the advertisement was about wearing seatbelts.
- When asked what radio or television station they heard or saw the advertisements on, 50% stated Goolarri TV, 40% stated GWN TV, 35% stated Goolarri Radio, 40% stated The PAKAM Network and 35% stated BRACS, all of these correct (participants could answer more than once). Ten percent incorrectly identified another regional television station that was not used.
- Of those who correctly stated that the advertisement they has seen or heard was about the open load space legislation, 100% could correctly recall the message they got. For example: Riding in the back of utes and getting ready for the new law change.

#### Current knowledge of open load space legislation:

- Participants were asked if they knew that the final phase of the open load space legislation came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006. Sixty three percent stated that they knew about the next phase of the open load space legislation and 37% either stated 'no' or that they 'did not know'.

#### Self-reported behaviour and attitudinal changes:

- Participants were asked if either they themselves or the Community in which they lived used a motorcar with a rollover protection device to carry passengers. Fifty three percent responded 'yes', 42% 'no' and 5% 'didn't know'.

- Of those whose Community used a motorcar with a rollover protection device to transport passengers, 100% self reported that after seeing or hearing the advertisements they would change the type of vehicle before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

## **Discussion**

It must be remembered that these results are only preliminary (3 months after the advertisements went to air) and further surveys of the target group will be carried out further down the track to get a more accurate picture of message recall and behaviour change.

The preliminary results however, showed high advertisement recall amongst those completing the surveys with 85% indicating that they could recall seeing or hearing an advertisement aimed particularly at Aboriginal people in the last couple of months. Message recall was also very high with 80% of participants being able to correctly recall what the advertisement was about (open load space laws and getting ready for the upcoming final phase in the legislation). Advertisements were aired on Goolarri TV, GWN TV, Goolarri Radio, The PAKAM Network and BRACS. All but 10% of responses were able to identify correctly the television or radio station that the advertisements were aired on.

There was a moderately high percentage (63%) of survey participants who reported having known about the final phase of the open load space legislation. Which will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006. Whether this was because of the advertisements aired on Kimberley television and radio stations it is difficult to determine since a further question about where they found out about the legislation was not asked.

Fifty three percent of participants reported that they or their community presently use a vehicle with a rollover protection device to transport passengers. When asked if after hearing the advertisements they intended to change the type of vehicle they use to transport passengers to a vehicle without a rollover protection device, all indicated that they would.

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