Crash & Stop Road Safety Project

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to document the rationale behind a program that provides drivers with the information required to exchange details after a collision. The program aims to reduce the incidence of driver leave scene collisions in the Bankstown Local Government Area. The Bankstown Local Government Area leads New South Wales in numbers of accidents where drivers fail to stop and exchange details after a collision.

To address this problem, Bankstown City Council has developed the "Crash and Stop Road Safety Project" with the assistance of the Traffic Services Branch of the Local Area Command at Bankstown Police Station. The project has produced an information card resource designed to be effective in reducing the incidents of driver leave scene collisions.

During the past three years, Bankstown City Council and the Local Police have worked closely together to coordinate Road Safety projects for the Bankstown Local Government Area. This has involved a range of issues being targeted such as speeding, alcohol, seatbelts and helmet wearing.

BACKGROUND

Bankstown City covers an area of nearly 77 square kilometres and is located 15 kilometres south west of the Sydney Central Business District. There are approximately 653 km of roads in the Bankstown City area. Council is responsible for maintaining and managing traffic on 600 km of this roadway. Bankstown City Council has several roads with large traffic volume (up to 55,000 movements on a daily basis).

Bankstown's population was 164,841 at the 2001 census. A large (35.3%) proportion of the population of Bankstown City was born overseas with 31.3% of residents being born in Non-English Speaking countries. Road safety has always been a priority for Bankstown City Council. A strong partnership exists within the Local Government Area (Council) and the Local Area Command (Police).

RATIONALE

Historically the Bankstown Local Area Command and Local Government area has been over represented in motor vehicle collisions. Although over the past few years there has been a decline in overall numbers, the rate of driver left scene has remained static.

In 2002 the economic cost of road crashes to the Bankstown community was estimated to be $71,599,000. This figure is derived from a variety of factors associated with road crashes including costs related to hospitalisation and long term medical care, legal expenses, work place disruption, vehicle repairs, travel delays, insurance and accident investigation costs. Of this amount, driver left scene collisions account for $28 million. Clearly this is unacceptable and needed to be addressed at local levels.

Figure 1 (below) demonstrates the total number of traffic collisions and driver left scene collisions. While it is encouraging that the total number of collisions is showing evidence of decreasing, it is of concern that the number of driver left scene collisions still account for nearly thirty percent (30%) of the total number of collisions in the Bankstown Police Command.

Figure 1:Major Traffic Collisions /driver left scene % 2001-2003

Month	2001	2002	2003
January	204 / 71 = 34%	171 / 57 = 33%	174 / 63 = 36%
February	193 / 64 = 33%	221 / 70 = 31%	201 / 73 = 36%
March	235 / 67 = 28%	208 / 64 = 30%	244 / 70 = 28%
April	196 / 79 = 40%	182 / 63 = 34%	204 / 56 = 27%
May	245 / 77 = 31%	200 / 74 = 37%	251 / 53 = 21%
June	232 / 74 = 31%	190 / 55 = 28%	197 / 42 = 21%
July	224 / 67 = 29%	184 / 59 = 32%	209 / 64 = 30%
August	244 / 64 = 26%	220 / 70 = 31%	187 / 56 = 29%
September	201 / 64 = 31%	227 / 79 = 34%	185 / 57 = 30%
October	220 / 66 = 30%	213 / 65 = 30%	204 / 55 = 26%
November	219 / 70 = 31%	223 / 76 = 34%	210 / 56 = 26%
December	195 / 62 = 31%	206 / 58 = 28%	185 / 53 = 28%
Total	2608 / 795 = 30%	2445 / 790 = 32%	2451 / 698 = 28%
Average	217 / 66	203 / 65	204 / 58

THE PROJECT

The "Crash and Stop Road Safety Project" was developed to raise driver/community awareness about what motor vehicle controllers do in the event of a collision. Program benefits include a reduction in the time local traffic Police spend in time consuming investigations.

Program organisers, Jenny Murray (Bankstown City Council Road Safety Officer), and Garry Thomas (Traffic Sergeant, Bankstown Local Area Command) worked to gather and collate pertinent information to provide a clear picture of the problem at hand. This included statistics obtained from COPS (Computer Operational Policing System), along with community-based surveys in which residents were asked about key road safety concerns and were prompted to offer possible solutions to overcome specific road safety problems.

Survey results suggested a distinct lack of motorist knowledge regarding driver responsibilities after a collision. It was the general feeling that we should consider producing a resource with all the information needed by motorists. A decision was made to produce an information card similar to cards produced by hire car companies. However, our card would contain the legislative and procedural requirements of motorists involved in crashes.

We set about to design a card that was easily read, provided the relevant information and would be effective in reducing the incidence of driver leave scene collisions, with both Council and Police logos appearing on the card to give a local community feel and to ensure credibility.

Figure 2: Draft of the Crash and Stop card.
Approval from the NSW Police Public Affairs Branch was sought to use the Police logo. Endorsement was gained and 50,000 copies of the Crash and Stop cards were produced.

Figure 2: Crash & Stop card
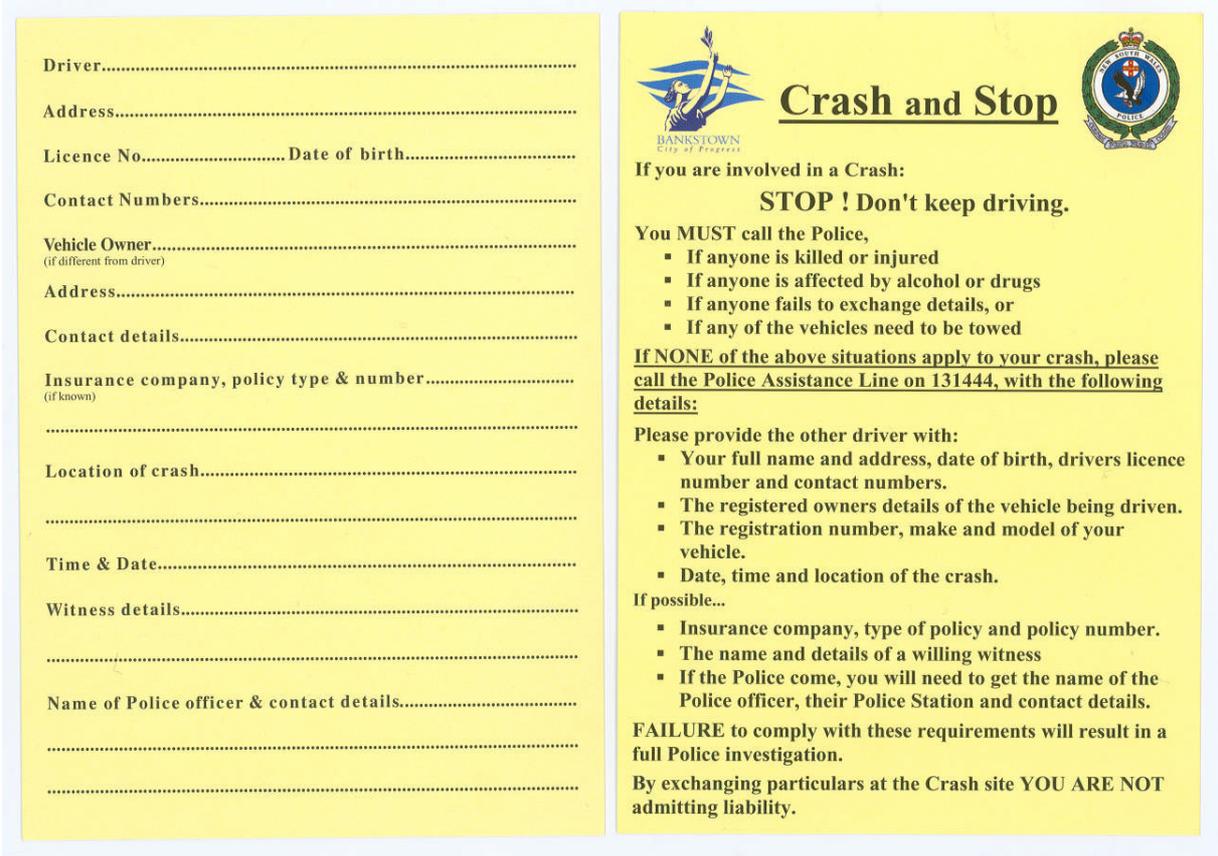
In addition to the Crash and Stop card, it was decided to extend the project by producing a road safety information pack to be distributed with the cards at selected locations, such as smash repair workshops.

The information pack consisted of a car litterbag with RTA (Road and Traffic Authority) brochures on a variety of road safety topics including speeding, 40k school zones, drink driving, child restraints, and roundabouts.
To gauge driver interest/reaction to the Crash and Stop initiative we included an evaluation questionnaire (with a return freepost envelope), and a letter of support from both the General

Manager of Bankstown City Council and the Commander of the Bankstown Local Area Command that outlined the basis for the project.

The Crash and Stop project was launched in February 2005 at the longest trading smash repair workshop (operating for around 51 years in the Bankstown local government area). Two thousand road safety information packs and 5,000 crash & stop cards were distributed through smash repair workshops in the first phase of the project.

Since that time, a further 40,000 crash & stop cards have been distributed to each of our three local Police stations, car sales yards, service stations, shopping centres, driving schools, local community and sporting groups, large industry employers and at Council seminars and community workshops.
Excellent media coverage was gained with the Crash and Stop project being the cover story for the March edition of the Motor Traders Association journal (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Launch of Crash and Stop project from L to R Sgt Garry Thomas, Jenny Murray, Richard Colley General Manager Bankstown City Council, Councillor Helen Westwood Mayor of Bankstown City, Sal Salano proprietor A. Solano & Sons Smash Repairs.
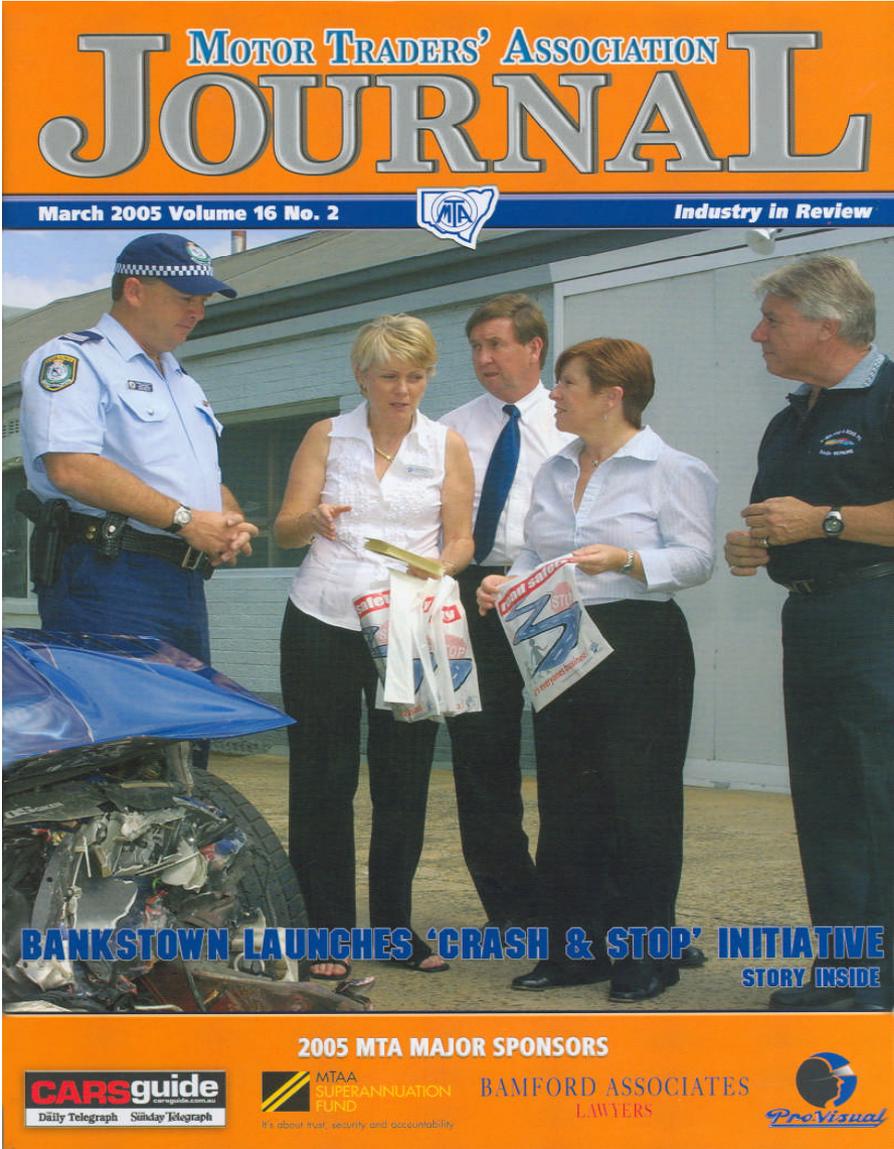
CONCLUSION

The positive feedback we have received from the community for the Crash and Stop project to date has been tremendous. Residents have been very receptive to the idea of local Police working with the local council on local road safety issues.

Eleven per cent (over 200) of the two thousand evaluation questionaries that were enclosed in the road safety info packs was returned. The information gathered provided significant feedback, as well as generating some great comments. These included "the accident cards are brilliant"!" and "please send more for other family members cars". These comments have given us a mandate to move the program forward in the future.

The resources for this project provided a cost effective strategy with a large reach and a low per unit cost. This allows for program sustainability in future year, dependent of course on a continued reduction in motor vehicle leave scene type crashes in the Bankstown Local Area Command and the Bankstown City Local Government Area.

REFERENCES

Bankstown City Council (2003) The City of Bankstown-Local Profile Strategy & Policy Unit)

COPS (Computer Operational Policing System) statistical statement (2001- 2003)