

A new model for developing and delivering community road safety programs in Victoria

Wishart, S
VicRoads

Abstract

Introduction: VicRoads in partnership with government agencies, organisations and community members have developed a new model for the development and delivery of community road safety programs in Victoria, namely the Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program (the Program).

The Program uses a two tiered structure comprising of a Victorian Community Road Safety Alliance (the Alliance) and a network of registered Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups.

The Alliance comprises community members from across Victoria as well as representatives of government departments and statutory bodies that have an interest either directly or indirectly in road safety. Importantly, the composition of the Alliance will help ensure that decisions made by the Alliance reflect community interests and are consistent with Statewide priorities.

Following an expression of interest process, 48 local community groups have been registered as Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups with responsibility for developing and implementing effective community road safety programs which address local priorities. The program enables a broader and diverse range of participation and community engagement.

Methods: Extensive stakeholder and community engagement was undertaken to inform the development of the new model along with a series of literature review to identify best practice principles and approaches for community road safety.

Results: The paper will outline the process for the development of the new model, status of implementation, challenges and opportunities as well as a framework for evaluating the Program.

Conclusions: The new Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program seeks to increase the engagement and breadth of involvement of the Victorian community in addressing road safety issues.

Keywords

Community road safety programs, engagement, stakeholders, best practice

Body of Paper

Introduction

The Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program (VCRSPP) was introduced in 2011 after a process of extensive review and consultation into VicRoads existing community road safety programs.

VicRoads previously supported community road safety programs through its RoadSafe Community Road Safety Council and Saferoads Local Government Program. With the introduction of the new Victorian Road Safety Strategy in 2008, VicRoads undertook an extensive review of its community road safety programs to ensure it was best placed to support the effective delivery of programs at the local level. It also sought to increase the breadth of engagement and involvement of local communities in road safety.

Four pieces of research have been conducted to inform the review. These included:

- Literature Review of Community Programs: to identify existing best practice in relation to community based programs across government departments within Australia and other countries with similar demographics to Victoria;
- Literature Review of Community Road Safety Programs: to identify existing community road safety program potential models across other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas;
- Saferoads Partner Consultations: to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current model and suggested improvements;
- Stakeholder and Community Consultations: to engage local road safety stakeholders in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the current program along with suggested improvements.

A Community Road Safety Program Review Reference Group, comprising State and local government organisations together with RoadSafe representation, was established to provide advice and direction on the review for the future development and delivery of VicRoads community road safety programs.

The Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program model seeks to increase the engagement and participation of local communities in road safety and emphasises 'partnerships' as a mechanism to develop and deliver more efficient and effective community road safety programs.

The VCRSPP incorporates a two tiered structure comprising a Victorian Community Road Safety Alliance and Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups:

Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program Model



The role of the Alliance is to:

- Advise VicRoads on the VCRSPP
- Facilitate a cohesive, coordinated and multi-organisational effort at a statewide level
- Provide leadership, advice and guidance on community road safety initiatives
- Guide the capacity of community road safety groups to contribute to reducing road trauma within local communities.

The role of Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups is to contribute to the long term road safety goal of reducing death and serious injury on Victorian roads. Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups are intended to be active partnerships between a range of local stakeholders including:

- Key road user groups
- Local councils
- Community segments such as young people, seniors, people from CALD backgrounds, people with disabilities
- State Government agencies, such as Victoria Police
- Local community organisations, groups or businesses
- Members of the local community.

Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups include existing Roadsafe Community Road Safety Councils, local government, collaborative partnerships and other interested community groups whose core business may not be road safety.

The VCRSPP provides an avenue for registered Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups to apply for funding to implement effective community road safety programs and activities.

A *Statement of Requirements* outlined the process that groups had to meet in order to become registered with the VCRSPP. From 55 expressions of interest from community groups, after detailed assessment by the Alliance, a total of 48 community groups were registered (39 as local groups and nine as statewide groups).

Once registered, groups were invited to apply for program funding by completing the *VCRSPP Program Funding Guidelines and Application Form*. Thirty-seven of the 48 registered groups applied for program funding for 2011-2012.

VicRoads has responsibility for co-ordination of the VCRSPP through its Road Safety and Network Access (RS & NA) division. This involves a range of tasks associated with program administration including:

- Program management including the registration and program funding processes
- Development and maintenance of supporting documentation and resources to assist in building the capacity of groups (eg information repository on VicRoads website)
- Provision of secretarial and administrative support to the Alliance including setting up meetings and preparing papers, keeping minutes etc
- Provision of policy and program advice relating to the VCRSPP and community road safety programs
- Supporting and reviewing regional delivery of the VCRSPP
- Evaluation of the outcomes achieved by the program overall.

At a regional level, VicRoads has responsibility for supporting the delivery of the Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership through a range of tasks which include:

- To liaise with and influence external stakeholders to facilitate the establishment and delivery of the Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program model within the region through management of effective partnerships
- To provide sound advice to local community groups in order to target key issues, and allow them to develop, deliver and evaluate best practice programs and engage local communities in road safety by providing support and advice.
- To influence the scope of delivery of the Victorian Community Road Safety program across the region to ensure coverage and the needs of the community are being met.
- To identify regional road safety opportunities, develop relationships with other organisations to involve them in community road safety programs to enable an integrated approach to program delivery where the objectives of the agencies align.

Potential benefits of the new model

This new approach to the development and delivery of community based road safety, is based on research into best practice in both community based programs and road safety programs, in particular in comparable jurisdictions. It is informed by consultation with key stakeholders

and has been refined further through the Community Road Safety Programs Review Reference Group.

It provides the opportunity to improve collaboration with other government community based programs, such as neighbourhood renewal and active travel and to improve alignment with whole of government initiatives.

It provides an opportunity to increase collaboration with the community and other partners in addressing road safety. It builds on the experience of community road safety programs to date and provides greater flexibility in the distribution of funds to greatest need.

It also provides an opportunity to revitalise and re-energise local CRSCs and other community groups in support of the Victorian Government strategic directions.

It increases the potential for improved road safety outcomes – performance based delivery and community engagement at both a state and local level.

Challenges

There have been many challenges with the development and implementation of the new Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program. Some of the challenges included:

- Massive change from previous delivery model to new model
- Extensive range of stakeholders with different needs and expectations
- Communication – consistent and timely and provided by a variety of means

Evaluation of the program

At this relatively early stage in implementation of the VCRSPP, VicRoads considers it timely to assess aspects of the program model and process to promote consistency with best practice principles. At a later stage, a more complete evaluation of VCRSPP achievements will be undertaken to identify the contribution the program has made to assist the Victorian Government in achieving its road safety strategic directions.

It is noted that the VCRSPP is a new program model and that it is very different to the previous one for VicRoads community road safety programs. It is also important to note that full implementation has yet to be achieved. This is therefore a formative review seeking to capture information that might be used to further enhance program 'roll out' and ensure effective function.

The review is expected to assess the VCRSPP *Expression of Interest* and *Program Funding Application* processes to answer the following questions:

To what extent has each of these processes:

- Increased the engagement and opportunity for local communities and stakeholders to become involved in effectively addressing road safety needs and issues.
- Improved collaboration with other government community based programs, where objectives are aligned.

To what extent has each of these processes been consistent with the following VCRSPP principles:

- Transparent and streamlined funding and contract processes.
- Strong and independent community sector that maximises community participation.
- Effective communication and liaison between VicRoads, the Alliance, the community sector and local government.
- Growing the knowledge and skills of the partners, including, the Alliance, the community sector, local government and VicRoads staff.

In answering these questions the review considered the roles played by the Victorian Community Road Safety Alliance, VicRoads Road Safety and Network Access Division, the VicRoads Regions and registered Local and Statewide Community Road Safety Groups.

The VCRSPP is off to a good start and some significant achievements have been recorded:

- Participation by a broader range of community groups
- Engaged and motivated community groups to participate in the Victorian Community Road Safety Partnership Program
- Rejuvenated community road safety groups
- Face to face meetings with all 37 registered groups to provide feedback on their program funding applications

Further efforts are required now to consolidate change; priorities for VicRoads and the Alliance include:

- Recognise and applaud the significant steps taken by many groups and use some of the more successful as models for others
- Streamline demands on registered groups, wherever possible making it easier for them to focus most of their efforts on effective program implementation
- Maintain engagement and communication with registered groups and repeat the message, and provide opportunities for input and discussion - the active, regular sharing of ideas and information, and ongoing engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and partners, is the lifeblood of engagement and an imperative in developing ownership of the VCRSPP (including amongst VicRoads Regional Services)
- Clarify expectations in relation to the development of community partnerships and the nature and level of support that will be provided by VicRoads Regional Services
- Develop/refine tools to build further capacity amongst registered groups.

Conclusion

To conclude, the review suggests a range of options for consideration amongst stakeholders that may lead to better practice in relation to:

- Engagement with local communities and/or groups
- Efficient program registration and funding application processes
- Support and sustainability of registered groups.

For more information

Visit:

<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/SafetyAndRules/AboutRoadSafety/StrategyAndPrograms/CommunityRoadSafetyPrograms.htm>