

Best practice versus ‘in practice’: Insights into Improving Australian Industry Road Safety Management

Amanda Warmerdam^a, Sharon Newnam^a, Dianne Sheppard^a, Mark Griffin^b, Mark Stevenson^c

^aMonash University Accident Research Centre; ^bUniversity of Western Australia; ^cUniversity of Melbourne

Abstract

In Australia, more than 30% of the traffic volume can be attributed to work-related vehicles (Haworth et al., 2000). Despite increasing attention in the scientific literature, it is uncertain how well this knowledge has been translated into industry practice. The aim of this research was to map current practice in workplace road safety against an established best practice (ie., benchmarking) framework. Overall, the results suggested there were opportunities for a greater level of maturity in the implementation of workplace road safety practices in the areas of journey management, road safety management, safer vehicles, safer road users and post-crash response.

Background

Despite development of the ISO 39001 to provide guidelines for organisations to manage risk on the road, no evidence-based benchmarking tool has been established in Australia. The lack of an evidence-based foundation means that the term “best practice” is often used with little understanding of the practices that constitute effectiveness or fulfilment of a best practice criteria. The National Road Safety Partnership Program (NRSPP); an initiative that constitutes a network of organisations and academics working together to develop a positive road safety culture recently developed a national fleet benchmarking tool based on the WHO Five Pillars of Road Safety (Carslake & Van Dam, 2014).

Method

A total of 83 organisations were recruited through the Worksafe Victoria for this research study. The majority of organisations were Victorian-based, with national recruitment involving organisations in metropolitan Sydney, New South Wales. The organisations ranged in organisational size, from microbusiness (N=1, 1%), small (N=2, 2.5%), medium (N=19, 23%) large (N=8, 10%) to enterprise (N=53, 64%) employees. A senior manager representative with Occupational Health and Safety and/or fleet management knowledge was approached to participate in a one-on-one interview. Semi-structured interview questions aimed to elicit information on current organisational practices, as well as policy and procedures around work-related driving within the organisation.

Results and Conclusions

The data from the coded transcripts were mapped onto the framework. Of the key themes that were identified in the research, the practical implications and recommendations are of great significance. Recommendations focus on the need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the management of workplace road safety as well as the increased use of technology in managing safe driver behaviour. The results of this study are unique in that it offers, for the first time, a snapshot of Australian workplace road safety management across organisational size and industry types, as well as, identifying gaps and limitations in current organisational approaches to reducing death and injury in this critical safety domain. Some practical implications and recommendations are provided.

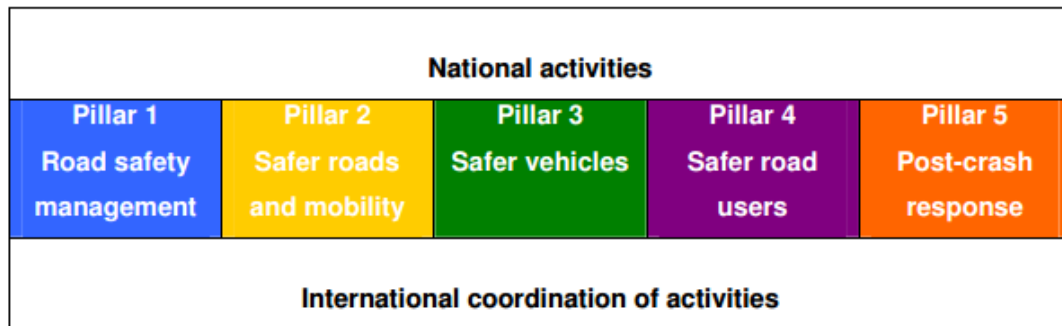


Figure 1. The Five Pillars that form the basis of the Benchmarking Framework (WHO, 2013).

References

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