

You don't have to be speeding to be driving too fast on country roads. NSW/ACT 'drive to conditions' awareness campaign.

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Abstract

This NSW/ACT cross border education campaign focuses on motorist's behaviour and their awareness of conditions on country roads. Campaign messages (delivered via social media, radio and corporate advocates) address appropriate speed selection; highlight potential hazards; and urge motorists to slow down and drive to conditions. Combining three road safety elements -Education, Enforcement and Engineering, the campaign brings road safety stakeholders together from a variety of sectors including Councils, NSW and ACT Government, Police, philanthropic and corporate organisations. After a 2014/15 pilot run in the Yass Valley, a 2016 campaign has been run across a total of nine local government areas.

Background

First developed and delivered as a pilot within Yass Valley the campaign has now been delivered across nine Councils by Road Safety Officers (RSOs) employed via the NSW Local Government Road Safety Program. The campaign was funded by the NRMA ACT Road Safety Trust. Participating Councils include: Yass Valley, Queanbeyan, Palerang, Goulburn Mulwaree, Eurobodalla, Snowy River, Tumut, Gundagai and Tumbarumba. The 2016 campaign was timed to run over the Easter break and NSW/ACT April school holidays.

Supporting Research

The ARRB Group report *Updating crashes involving ACT vehicles and controllers in NSW: 2006 to 2010* highlighted that crashes involving ACT motorists on rural roads featured more heavily in statistics than expected. Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) crash data (2010 to 2014) shows that 13.5% of crashes in participating LGA's are ACT licenced motorists, this is as high as 28% in Palerang and 22% in Queanbeyan. This RMS data also shows that NSW motorists crashing on NSW country roads are most prevalent, particularly motorists crashing in LGA's other than where they reside.

Up to 50% of these country road crashes are 'off road' type crashes suggesting motorists may be selecting inappropriate speeds while driving on lower standard roads and may be unfamiliar with more varied road environments.

The *NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012 -21* states that 'while only one third of the NSW population resides in areas, two thirds of all fatalities occur there'. In summary, a campaign that reached both NSW and ACT motorists was needed.

The ACT NRMA Road Safety Trust also funded an ARRB Group research project in 2014/15, investigating *ACT drivers' and riders' perceived risk of driving or riding in NSW*. Results of this study also informed the methodology of and message content included in the Country Roads campaign.

Working Together

One of the highlights of the campaign has been the stakeholder engagement achieved and collaborative work between Councils, NSW and ACT Police and both private and Government road safety stakeholders.

This collaboration greatly increased the reach and impact of the campaign well beyond the means of its advertising budget. Maintaining regional delivery, through the established RSO network meant that local issues were highlighted and intelligence was shared between Councils and local Police, facilitating informed and targeted enforcement.

Both ACT and NSW Police supported the campaign offering enforcement and social media support. Police increased their presence on country roads with all 11 NSW Southern Region Local Area Commands briefed about the campaign via their Superintendent Commander.

Education

The scheduled Facebook campaign received 1.5 million views via a dedicated campaign Facebook page. Messages were simple, directly relevant to country road conditions and offered both cautionary and advisory content. Posts were shared by the NSW Traffic and Highway Patrol command and the ACT Policing Facebook pages. The 2500 page likes achieved included Council Facebook pages, Police Local Area Commands, Fire and Rescue, Rural Fire Brigades, car dealerships, training organisations, driving schools, sporting groups and transport companies as well as individuals.

Over 2600 scheduled radio announcements (asking motorists to slow down on country roads) were aired across 12 ACT and regional radio stations spanning a large geographical area incorporating; Queanbeyan, Yass and Bungedore, Southern and South Western regional NSW (Goulburn, Upper Lachlan, Snowy, Tumbarrumba and reaching Wagga Wagga), and the NSW South Coast (Braidwood, Bateman's Bay, Ulladulla and beyond Eden).

The campaign post card, branded car air freshener and posters (with five primary safety messages) were distributed via 11 NRMA branches, through regional tourist information centres, libraries, Driver Reviver and Council offices. Variable Message Signs and bridge banners were also used on key roads during the Easter break and April School holidays – with 'drive to conditions' messaging.

Engineering

The campaign also worked to increase focus on road safety engineering on country roads. The campaign promoted intelligence sharing between Police and Council and prompted community comment. This has resulted in the reporting of hazards, identification of hot spots and prioritisation of road safety checks by Councils. Examples of road safety engineering highlighted or completed as a result of the campaign include: road side clearing (enhancement of clear zones); increased guide post frequency; installation of additional curve advisory signage; installation of advance warning signage for rural bus stops, placement of warning signage re wildlife, initiation of speed zone reviews and line marking (maintenance and installation).

References

- ARRB Group Ltd (2015). ACT drivers' and riders' perceived risk of driving or riding in NSW. Vermont South, VIC: Makwasha, T.
- ARRB Group Ltd (2013). Updating crashes involving ACT vehicles and controllers in NSW: 2006 to 2010. Vermont South VIC. Pyta, V.