

Road safety education: Improving outcomes through community collaboration

Louise Cosgrove^a,

^a*Kids and Traffic*, Macquarie University

Abstract

Transport-related injuries are a leading cause of death in children under 14 in Australia. The NSW Road Safety Plan 2021 commits to ongoing road safety education from early childhood through schooling. An enduring partnership with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) enables *Kids and Traffic* to work with early childhood organisations to support children, families and communities to improve safety outcomes. An online resource, *Safe Journeys Safe Communities*, showcases *Kids and Traffic* community-focused road safety collaborations. *Kids and Traffic* resources and professional learning workshops inspire early childhood organisations to address local road safety issues to reduce road trauma.

Background

In Australia, more children under 14 die from transport related injuries than from any other cause (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017). The *Kids and Traffic* Program partners with early childhood organisations and other stakeholders to improve safety outcomes for children, families and communities with the aim of moving Towards Zero road trauma.

Kids and Traffic is part of an enduring shared governance partnership with Transport for NSW, NSW Department of Education, Association of Independent Schools NSW and Catholic Schools NSW.

Road safety education is integral to a Safe System. *Kids and Traffic* promotes TfNSW endorsed Key Road Safety Messages which engage children in road safety learning while emphasising adult responsibility for holding children's hands to protect them as pedestrians, using appropriate child car seats correctly and ensuring children wear correctly fitted helmets when riding.

Collaborations

The *Kids and Traffic* Program is evidence-informed and founded on a philosophy of joint consultation, engagement and evaluation. The Program assists organisations to identify local road safety issues and to collaboratively develop effective community-specific strategies and solutions. Through a suite of professional learning workshops, resources and tailored consultations, the Program supports grassroots action at a local level.

The Program aims for universal coverage of all NSW early childhood education services while specifically supporting vulnerable road users. These include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse children and families as well as those from rural and remote and lower socio-economic communities.

The Program empowers early childhood educators to champion road safety and drive change in their communities. Genuine, respectful relationships between *Kids and Traffic* consultants, early childhood educators, children, families and communities increase shared capacity to respond creatively to community road safety needs. Authentic relationships are integral to connected, meaningful, locally-focused road safety education.

Featured on the *Kids and Traffic* website, *Safe Journeys Safe Communities* documents examples of road safety collaborations with early childhood organisations. *Safe Journeys Safe Communities* showcases high quality road safety education strategies. These are also explored via *Kids and Traffic* professional learning workshops and educational resources to inform educators and inspire them to act.

Core principles that underpin *Safe Journeys Safe Communities* include: respecting each other's experience, knowledge and context; learning from each other to create shared understandings and meaning; supporting each other to keep children safe; nurturing relationships and processes that continue beyond any project and fostering outcomes that honour process as much as product.

Conclusion

Kids and Traffic facilitates local solutions to community-identified road safety issues in ways that strengthen educator capacity and increase positive outcomes for children and families. Project strategies and resources inspire adaptation and use by early childhood educators across diverse settings. *Kids and Traffic* collaborative projects address risk, foster resilience, are highly sustainable and readily adaptable for use in all Australian education and care contexts.

References

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2017). *Deaths web report*. Retrieved February, 13, 2018. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths-in-australia/contents/leading-causes-of-death>
- Transport for NSW. (2018). *Road Safety Plan 2021*. Retrieved February 8, 2018. <http://towardszero.nsw.gov.au/roadsafetyplan>