Building policing legitimacy and strengthening community relationships: On the road towards zero with IM_PACT

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Abstract

The IM-PACT initiative between the Queensland Police Service and University of Queensland offers a resource efficient problem-solving model founded on three principles: (I) Identification of the problem; (M)essage development; and message delivery (PACT). PACT prompts police to explain the (P) Purpose of an engagement, (A) Acknowledge good habits, convey a (C) Crime message and (T) Thank people for their involvement. With minimal impact on resources, PACT-related Random Breath Testing (RBT) affords opportunity to share responsibility for road safety and crime prevention by both police and the community. This presentation provides the audience with an RBT experience incorporating the PACT message.

Background

During 2015-16, the Ipswich Police District in Queensland experienced a concerning spike in road fatalities (Queensland Police Service, 2016). Whilst traffic enforcement and Random Breath Testing (RBT) helped reduce this trauma, the continued challenges to concurrently meet other community safety objectives placed a consistently high demand on police resources. The PACT message-delivery model works on the premise that the lawful mechanism to intercept drivers for RBT presents prime opportunities for police to constructively engage with citizens with potentially multiple benefits. The three million annual RBT interactions by the QPS (Queensland Police Service, 2016) present substantial prospects. A transformed comprehension was promoted to realise the greater benefits of RBT amongst police by using the procedurally-just message-delivery process of PACT (Mazerolle, Bennett, Antrobus, Eggins, & Martin, 2015). The simple PACT acronym guides police in their interactions with the public during RBT, prompting purposeful communication regarding road safety and crime prevention.

Implementation of the IM-PACT model

In partnership with the University of Queensland (UQ), a 6-month trial of the IM-PACT model, concluding in April 2018, involved 94 operations across the Ipswich District. Using randomised conditions, 9302 RBTs were conducted in 45-minute blocks, consisting of controlled (traditional) deliveries and experimental (PACT) deliveries. The typical PACT delivery commenced with a professional introduction and explanation of the purpose of the interception (that police are conducting RBT to help keep the roads safe). This engagement was followed by an acknowledgement of a good habit such as the wearing of seatbelts. Following the breath testing, the chosen crime message was delivered. This trial's crime message targeted the prevalence of stealing from motor vehicles and provided succinct crime prevention advice. The engagement concluded with simply thanking the driver for their involvement in the RBT. Whilst PACT encounters were on average 39 seconds longer than traditional RBT encounters, drivers' surveys found positive public perceptions and outcomes (Peel, Green, & Bennett, 2019).

Research potential of the IM-PACT model

In December 2018, the IM-PACT team submitted a funding proposal to the Australian Research Council to deliver the rigorous evaluation needed to make an evidence-based decision regarding the efficacy of IM-PACT. Through analysis, the outcomes of IM-PACT trials and data interpretation are expected to provide evidence that can significantly improve the smart deployment of RBT to achieve multiple benefits regarding community safety.

Conclusion

Supporting the vision of zero deaths and serious injuries on Queensland roads (Queensland Government, 2015), the QPS makes substantial investment each year through RBT. Through its effectiveness and minimal impact on resources, the IM-PACT problem-solving model appears to be a sustainable business concept to enhance RBT encounters. The procedurally-just encounters associated with the IM-PACT model assist in building police legitimacy and strengthening community relationships to assist police in resourcefully achieving broader social benefits regarding crime and road safety (Bennett, Peel, & Green, 2019). It is envisaged that the QPS and law enforcement agencies globally will benefit from embedding the IM-PACT problem-solving model and PACT message delivery process into everyday policing practices such as RBT.

References

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