

The challenges of coordinating a multi-agency safe systems approach in Local Government Road Safety

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Abstract

Local Governments (LG) face challenges in managing road safety. The biggest is the coordination of numerous stakeholders from multi-agencies, each with their own perspectives and organizational constraints. In GMC the responsibility falls with the Road Safety Officer (RSO). Inhibiting factors for road safety at LG level include: lack of immediate funding stream, strict adherence to engineering guidelines, lack of resources, unrealistic expectation of stakeholders, the “blame” factor and invested interests. This paper will show how the key to a successful safe systems outcome is the RSO’s ability to negotiate an evidence-based solution agreed by all stakeholders.

Background

NSW Local Governments can partner with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and Centre for Road Safety (CRS) in the Local Government Road Safety Program (LGRSP). This program was developed to enable Councils to promote state-wide road safety initiatives at a local level and to develop localized road safety programs. GMC has participated in the LGRSP for 17 years which enables them to employ a full-time RSO. GMC manages a road network of 1250km, which covers 250km urban road and 1000km rural roads. Daily, Council receives notification of road safety issues. Beyond the LGRSP responsibilities, GMC requires the RSO to investigate, review and prioritize Council’s response. Issues are often reported as solution-based requests. Coordinating a multi-agency response is often required where the contributions from local stakeholders are managed by the RSO. It is the RSO’s task to identify the road safety concern and apply evidence-based best practice solutions championing safe systems.

Case Study: Local School Crossing

Concerns for pedestrian safety were brought to Councils attention about a school crossing on busy arterial road (6729ADT). Frequent driver non-compliance at the school crossing resulted in reported near misses. Council received these reports from multiple stakeholders who each suggested a different solution.

Proposed Stakeholder Cause:

1. Parents felt speeding and Council’s perceived lack of actions were the contributing factors (“blame” factor)
2. School staff felt poor visibility of the crossing
3. RMS suggested incorrect placement of 40km/h flashing lights
4. Engineers identified road infrastructure deficiencies
5. Police believed it was the whole community’s human behavior

Proposed Stakeholder Solution:

1. Parents requested the installation of speed humps
2. School Staff suggested enhanced visibility of the crossing
3. RMS recommended extension of the school zone featuring relocation of the 40k flashing lights
4. Engineers recommended extension of the kerb blisters
5. Police conducted enforcement issuing of a high number of infringements this strategy could not be deployed consistently due to resourcing. Police requested the RSO conduct an education campaign with the extended community

RSO Coordinating Safe-System Solutions

After collecting evidence, observing the crossing and coordinating the stakeholder contributions the RSO managed the implementation of the following safe system solutions:

Road and roadsides

1. Crossing's visibility enhanced with yellow pedestrian fencing, line markings and new flags.
2. Council lodged funding with RMS for infrastructure treatments

Speed

1. Data collection confirmed 85th speed percentile 40km/h or under
2. Flashing 40k school signs relocated to provide motorist with additional warning

People

1. Localized educational campaign developed and implemented by RSO reaching target audience via social media and radio advertising. Campaign included information on road rules for school crossing and expected road user behavior

Where to from here

- Ongoing monitoring of the crossing.
- GMC awaiting funding for infrastructure extensions.
- Reported near misses have reduced but still occur.
- Local Stakeholder knowledge of safe systems enhanced
- RSO coordinates ongoing contact.

This is just one of the multiple problems the RSO encounters daily over and beyond Council's planned Road Safety Delivery Program.

References

NSW Government, Transport for NSW, Local Government Road Safety Guidelines, 2014-2017 (<http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/buisness->