

Contributed Articles

Road safety on the world stage

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One of the most significant developments of the second half of the last century, in that it impacted the world's population in many ways, was the growth of a global approach to political, social, industrial and commercial initiatives. This was seen most obviously in the formation of the United Nations and its various sub-organisations from 1945 onwards. One of the major sub-organisations was the World Health Organization, formed in 1948, which began running many different health-related projects, particularly to assist developing countries.

It is interesting that the idea of taking a global approach to road safety, and recognising that it is a major health issue in all nations, took much longer to gel, but it is undoubtedly with us now. On 3 March 2010 the United Nations General Assembly agreed that 2011-2020 would be the global Decade of Action for Road Safety. Another manifestation of the growing global approach to road safety was the 'First global ministerial conference on road safety' held in Moscow in November 2009. Our ACRS President Lauchlan McIntosh attended this conference and reported on it in the February 2010 *ACRS Journal* [1]. But these activities were by no means the first stirrings of action at the global level.

The World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) held its first World Health Day with a road safety focus in 2004, under the theme 'Road safety is no accident' [2]. The WHO website states that 'World Health Day 2004 tried to advocate a "systems approach" to road safety, which takes into consideration the key aspects of the system: the road user, the vehicle and the infrastructure'. That is very significant, as the Safe System approach has now caught on as the way to go in improving road safety.

The International Transport Forum

International activity in road safety was often preceded by international cooperation in general transport issues. An example of this was the formation of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) in 1953. The ECMT decided to broaden its membership in 2006 and to rename itself the International Transport Forum (ITF), with links to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The ITF brings together Ministers of Transport annually from the member countries (currently 51) to discuss general transport issues. In 2008 the ITF published a report, *Towards Zero: Ambitious road safety targets and the Safe System approach*. The report was the culmination of three years' work by international experts [3].

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

Another international organisation that has shown a growing interest in road safety at the global level is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organisation. Founded in Canberra in 1989 with 12 member countries, it now has 21 members.

At the 5th APEC Transportation Ministerial Meeting in March 2007, a joint statement was issued on transport safety, which included a number of sections on road safety [4]. Section 42 summarised the global road safety problem: 'We recognise that an estimated 1.2 million people are killed in road crashes worldwide each year; as many as 50 million are injured, and that 85 per cent of the casualties occur in low and middle income economies; a large proportion of these road traffic fatalities and injuries worldwide occur in APEC economies; and without further action, these figures could increase by 65 per cent over the next twenty years, increasing the social and economic burden across APEC with the costs being estimated to be in the range of 1 to 3 per cent of an economy's annual gross national product.' The joint statement agreed on a number of actions and priorities that would address the road safety problem.

The World Bank

The World Bank has had an important role in road safety developments, particularly in developing countries, by providing financial loans for road improvements to be made and other safety activities to take place. The road safety aspects of projects got under way when the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility was launched in November 2005 and formal operations started in April 2006 [5].

With total funding of US\$15.9 million from fiscal years 2006 to 2010 [6], the new facility was a direct response to various resolutions on road safety adopted by the General Assembly of the UN, so although one might feel justified at times in being sceptical of UN General Assembly resolutions, numbers 58/289 of 14 April 2004 and 60/5 of 26 October 2005 seem to have borne fruit. Apparently the World Bank was also influenced by the World Health Assembly's resolution WHA57.10 of 22 May 2004, which stated, among other things, that the WHA 'considers that the public health sector and other sectors – government and civil society alike – should actively participate in programmes for the prevention of road traffic injury....' [7]

Australia, through AusAID, has been making a contribution to the facility, albeit only 5% of the total funding. One example of this support is in Vietnam. ‘As part of our contribution we’re funding a pilot in Vietnam to train officials in road safety and to identify affordable engineering projects which will improve the condition of roads,’ reported Kerry Groves, AusAID’s Counsellor in Vietnam [8].

The UN Road Safety Collaboration

Following the resolution by the WHA, the World Health Organization encouraged formal collaboration between a group of UN and other international road safety organisations, which is now referred to as the UN Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC). The UNRSC consists of some 40 UN and international agencies working in road safety, with a broad range of skills and experience from the transport, health and safety sectors, and representing governmental and non-governmental organisations, donors, research agencies and the private sector.

UNRSC meets biannually, with meetings alternating between WHO headquarters and the UN Regional Commissions offices. So far, the collective efforts have focused on implementation of the recommendations of the *World report on road traffic injury prevention* [9]. These include:

- publishing and disseminating good practice guides that provide technical guidance on major risk factors, i.e., drink-driving, excessive speed, and helmet and seatbelt use
- global and regional advocacy efforts
- a guide to advocate commemoration of the annual World Day of Remembrance for road traffic victims
- efforts to increase road safety funding.

The FIA Foundation

Discussion of global road safety participants would be incomplete without referring to the important role of the FIA Foundation. The FIA Foundation is an independent UK registered charity founded in 2001 with a donation of US\$300 million from the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), the non-profit federation of motoring organisations and the governing body of world motor sport.

The Foundation manages and supports an international program of activities promoting road safety, environmental protection and sustainable mobility, as well as funding specialist motor sport safety research. As a non-government organisation, the Foundation has Roster Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nation, and is a regular participant in the Working Party on Traffic Safety and a leading participant in the UN Global Road Safety Collaboration.

The Foundation works with a range of international agencies, including the WHO, the World Bank and the UN Environment

Programme, on road safety and environmental issues [10]. The proposal for a Global Decade of Action for Road Safety was first made by the Make Roads Safe campaign, led by the FIA Foundation, which launched an international advocacy effort to win support from UN members.

Road Safety Week

The first United Nations Global Road Safety Week was held from 23-29 April 2007 and encompassed a variety of activities in many different countries [11]. Part of the activities included the first World Youth Assembly for Road Safety, held in Geneva, Switzerland, and attended by some 400 young people. They agreed to take practical measures to improve road safety and encourage adults to do more as parents and leaders. At the end of the Assembly they issued a ‘Youth declaration for road safety’ [12].

Road assessment programs

The Safe System approach to road safety has enhanced professional and public awareness of the need for roads that are inherently safe. Ideally, roads should never be the primary cause of crashes and should never increase trauma in the event of crashes due to other causes. In Australia, the Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) has been very beneficial in highlighting sections of road that contain serious hazards for travellers. Similar programs have been running in other developed countries, and more recently, this effort has been extended to some developing countries under the International Road Assessment Program (iRAP) [13].

New car assessment programs

New car assessment programs have existed for a long time – for example, they started in the USA in 1978 through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [14] and in Australia in 1992 through the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (NCAP). However, the knowledge obtained from specific test and assessment protocols is not necessarily useful internationally, due to the often local nature of car production and different local safety standards.

Nevertheless, there has been increasing interest in harmonising test standards between the different national or regional programs so that where cars are exported to a number of countries, the NCAP tests are acceptable to all authorities. In this regard, EuroNCAP and Australasian NCAP signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1999. At a meeting in Japan in October 2010, Australasian NCAP and Japanese NCAP held a meeting of international NCAP organisations, which included a crash test of Mitsubishi’s new electric vehicle. Officials were present from Australia, Europe, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and the USA [15]. Current NCAP organisations exist in Australia/New Zealand, China, Europe, Japan, South Korea and the USA. Latin America and India are expected to announce their programs soon [16].

Individual initiatives

In spite of most global road safety activities being launched by international organisations, there remain niche opportunities for individuals or national groups to take useful initiatives at the global level. An example of this is ASIRT – the Association for Safe International Road Travel [17]. ASIRT is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1995 in response to the death of a young American in Turkey. The US Ambassador suggested the creation of a road safety organisation that would promote road travel safety through education and advocacy. It would protect both American citizens abroad and residents of countries around the world. ASIRT publishes road travel reports for over 150 countries to enable travellers to make informed travel choices.

Conclusion

Road safety is now well and truly on the global map! It will be very interesting to see what this means for the future of road safety, particularly for the poorer countries where budgets are very tight and money spent on roads means less for other health and education issues. Hopefully, more of the richer nations will come forward with specific aid programs to address the road safety problems of such nations.

Meanwhile, we have much work to do to make our own road systems safe. We can also share with the rest of the world what we have learned through hard experience and skilful research, and, in fact, have been doing so for some time. A number of our ACRS members, both corporate and individual, have been participants in overseas consultancies and as speakers at overseas conferences and seminars. It would seem that, internationally, Australian expertise in road safety is held in high esteem and that in contributing to the global road safety scene, we are already 'boxing above our weight'. That will only continue to be the case if our federal and state/territory governments and

industry together provide adequate funding for the research and implementation of road safety initiatives in pursuit of further reductions in the road toll.

References

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Principles of best practice for road safety education

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Introduction

Between 2007 and 2009, School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) and the Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University (CHPRC, ECU) worked together to develop best practice principles for road safety education. One of the benefits and critical success factors of developing a best practice model for road safety education has been the ongoing involvement of key stakeholders at both a state and national level. This national and state collaboration and increased commitment is unparalleled in the area of road safety education.

SDERA in conjunction with Edith Cowan University has widely disseminated the results of this project. It has been a unique initiative involving Western Australian, Australian and New Zealand stakeholders. In 2010, SDERA and ECU were jointly awarded an Injury Control Council of Western Australia Excellence in Community Safety Award in the research category for the research and development work on the *Principles for school road safety education* (SDERA, 2009). The principles that were developed ensure that content and delivery methods of road safety education are consistent with what is currently understood to be best practice in the field.