

ROAD SAFETY – RESEARCH, POLICING & EDUCATION CONFERENCE

PROPOSED PAPER AND PRESENTATION

TITLE:

The KwaZulu-Natal Road Safety Project
- Enforcement, Technology and the Community -

ABSTRACT:

The results achieved by Victoria's approach to road safety over the last ten years have been recognised and applauded locally, nationally and internationally. The integration of high levels of enforcement combined with high levels of public awareness via mass media campaigns has seen significant changes in road user behaviour. Supporting the enforcement and public awareness campaigns with targeted education and road safety engineering combined with effective and transparent evaluation of all aspects of the strategy make up Victoria's road safety program – Safety First. But how relevant is the Safety First model in third world and developing nations? Since 1996, Victoria has been involved in introducing the principals of Safety First into the Province of KwaZulu-Natal in the Republic of South Africa. *ASIPHEPHE* (Zulu for "Let Us Be Safe") is the KwaZulu-Natal Road Safety Project that is based on Safety First. What became apparent during the post program development phases was that significant adaption to the existing model was needed to ensure the required road safety outcomes. The road safety project changed to one that was technology based and community orientated. This paper examines the economic, cultural, demographic and geographic differences between Victoria and KwaZulu-Natal and the changes that were required to make the Victoria model an effective application in the South African context.

PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY:

Mr Des Myers, Formerly the Principal Police Adviser to the Project

THE KWAZULU-NATAL ROAD SAFETY PROJECT
– **ENFORCEMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND THE COMMUNITY** –

INTRODUCTION

Background

Victoria

Victoria is recognised as a world leader in road safety. Its road fatality rates are the lowest of any state in Australia and amongst the lowest for any developed country of the world. Fatality and accident numbers in Victoria have fallen dramatically since 1970. This fall is due in part to innovative traffic law enforcement practices.

It is due also to hard-hitting public awareness campaigns introduced in recent years which have supported enforcement initiatives and highlighted the need for greater care on the roads.

In order to ensure that the Victoria maintains its benchmark position in reducing road trauma and its savings to the community, a strategic road safety plan developed in 1989 is under constant review.

The aim of *Safety First - Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 1995 - 2000* was to further reduce the incidence, severity and cost to the community of road crashes. This strategy is currently under review.

Improved research and education, continued media campaigns focusing on attitudes and behaviours, attention to the design and safety features of roads and vehicles and the stringent enforcement of road laws are the means by which the stated aim will be achieved.

Victoria has:

- A population of approximately 4.6 million people;
- Approximately 3.1 million registered vehicles or 1 vehicle per 1.5 people;
- 392 road deaths a year or 1.2 deaths per 10,000 vehicles registered or 8.5 deaths per 100,000 population (1998 figures);
- Unemployment rate of approximately 8%;
- Highly developed social and transportation systems in metropolitan and rural areas; and
- A low level of reported serious crime.

KwaZulu-Natal

The Province of KwaZulu-Natal is South Africa's third smallest Province by area and is geographically approximately one quarter the size of the State of Victoria. The Province has approximately 8.5 million people overall of which 38% reside in urban areas and 62% in rural areas, making it the most populous province with one fifth of South Africa's population which is estimated to be in excess of 40 million people.

South Africa has eleven official languages. In KwaZulu-Natal the home language of 79% of the people is Zulu, 16% English and 2% Afrikaans. KwaZulu-Natal has dual capital cities being Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi.

KwaZulu-Natal has:

- A population of approximately 8.4 million people;
- A road network of 24,000 kilometres of which 11,000 kilometres are bitumen and 900 kilometres of high grade freeways;
- Approximately 1 million registered vehicles or 1 vehicle per 8 people;
- About 1700 road deaths a year or 17 deaths per 10,000 vehicles registered or 20 deaths per 100,000 population (1997);
- Pedestrians account for 41% of all road deaths nationally and 45% in KwaZulu-Natal with the majority being in Durban;

- Unemployment rate of 25%;
- Approximately 1 million people without adequate housing;
- 58% illiteracy rate;
- Lack of developed social and transportation systems in rural areas; and
- A high crime rate – a robbery every 7 minutes and a serious crime every 26 minutes (murder, rape etc.).

Within KwaZulu-Natal there are sixty-four Traffic Departments including the Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) and the Durban City Police. Each of the cities and towns within KwaZulu-Natal has constitutional responsibility for traffic control and traffic law enforcement within their municipality. In many cases, Traffic Officers have multiple responsibilities.

The RTI utilises a range of technologies in its traffic law enforcement role and many of these are based on the experiences and activities within the Provincial Road Safety Project – ASIPHEPHE (Zulu for “Let us be Safe”) which was formerly titled Project Victoria. Speed Cameras, a Task Force and nine (9) booze buses (based on the Victorian model) currently operate throughout the Province.

The South African Police Service is a single service that provides all manner of police services across the whole Nation. However, their involvement in traffic law enforcement is limited to accident reports and investigation. Generally, they do not undertake any traffic law enforcement activities.

Within the Province there are a number of Coordinating Traffic Committees (CTCs). These CTCs provide a road safety coordination function involving all affected local government agencies.

METHODS

Project Development

The Province of KwaZulu-Natal approached the State of Victoria for advice and assistance following a presentation by Victoria Police at the 6th World Road Safety Congress in Cape Town in October 1994.

In April 1995 with financial assistance from the Australian Aid Agency, AusAID, a KwaZulu-Natal delegation, led by the Minister of Transport, Mr Subisiso Ndebele visited Melbourne and were briefed on the Victorian road safety program by the key role players. Upon return to KwaZulu-Natal, Minister Ndebele formed a senior committee to implement a road safety program in line with the Victorian model.

In mid 1996, a multi disciplinary road safety assessment team travelled to KwaZulu-Natal, and in conjunction with a locally appointed counter part team, undertook an extensive comparative assessment study of the road safety situation in the Province. The resulting Assessment Study Report contained some one hundred recommendations aimed at reducing the high level of road trauma in KwaZulu-Natal.

Subsequent to the acceptance of this report, Project Victoria was instigated in KwaZulu-Natal. The aims of this project were to implement the recommendations of the Assessment Study Report in line with the role and structure of the Victorian Model.

The Government of KwaZulu-Natal, through the Department of Transport, requested a proposal for the management and progression of the project. The Overseas Projects Corporation of Victoria and the Victoria Police jointly bid for the project and it was subsequently awarded to them.

A multi disciplinary project team was formed and on the 10th of January 1998, the first contingent arrived on site in KwaZulu-Natal. As the project progressed and developed, the Minister of Transport determined that it needed a locally determined and culturally acceptable title. It was subsequently renamed “ASIPHEPHE”, which is Zulu for “Let us be safe”.

Prior to 1995 road safety throughout South Africa was a social conscience responsibility that reared its head from time to time. Politicians would react with a need to be seen to “do something” and a board or commission would be established. Invariably the intervention would be random, under-resourced and poorly strategised. Public attention would waiver and very little would be achieved.

The Government, which took office in 1994, had a different approach to the value of life and well being of the citizens of South Africa. It was generally recognized that the death toll on South African roads was unacceptable. At that point the annual total for the country was in excess of 10 000, despite poor reporting systems and the exclusion of “homeland” information.

While acknowledging the problem the only experience available in South Africa was poor at best and few solutions presented themselves. Years of isolation had left South Africa in a technological and operational vacuum with outdated practices and equipment.

Exposure to the Victorian experience was opportune and provided the solution, which KwaZulu-Natal was looking for. A tried and tested philosophy for the continuous reduction of road carnage, which could be adapted to meet the South African environment.

The philosophy as it has been implemented can be summarized as altering behaviour through changing the risk perception of road users. This is done in a number of ways:

- An emotional marketing campaign aimed at raising awareness of the consequences of certain high-risk actions.
- Targeted education campaigns
- Co-ordinated and dramatically increased enforcement levels.
- Improved technology and equipment
- Engineering solutions to black spots.

In addition the KwaZulu Natal campaign focussed on grass roots support and community participation which was very instrumental in the overthrow of the apartheid government and acknowledges the critical role that communities play in South Africa. To this end the Minister lead a very emotive campaign in August 1997 called “Siyabakhumbula” – we remember them. The campaign saw focus days being held around the Province where thousands of people gathered to remember those who have died on our roads and to use their lesson to inform the living to be safe.

The focus days were repeated in 1998, made more emotional by 2 of the Minister’s bodyguards dying, in a road collision, during the period of the focus days. The focus days were used to launch Road Safety councils through out the province, which will work with the department and rural road transport forums to improve road safety.

Dedicated funding was secured by a 25% increase in annual vehicle licenses.

For the first time KwaZulu Natal had a cohesive road safety strategy, dedicated funding and Political will.

Public pressure was applied to the National Department and a diluted version of the Victorian strategy was implemented through out the country, focussing on holiday periods, called ARRIVE ALIVE.

Cognitive Behavioural Change

The concept of transferring a highly successful strategy from Victoria to KwaZulu Natal was met with some scepticism. Notwithstanding the vast physical and developmental differences between the two provinces, there was a concern that the South African risk propensity and the Victorian risk propensity are so diverse as to make a model for behavioural change meaningless.

However, the results have been staggering. In the 2 _ years of implementation the death toll has dropped by 35%, speeding rates have dropped from a rate of 60% to less that 5% in certain areas, public opinion no longer condones drunk driving and seat belt wearing has increased.

The emotional impact of the TAC adverts was dramatic in a country where the TV news is more shocking and bloody than TAC could hope to be. Yet, the sound of the mother crying, “give me back my boy”, brought complaints to the radio stations playing the advert. Hardened, cynical South Africans were touched by the horror of road deaths.

Reeling under the emotional onslaught, KwaZulu Natal introduced hard enforcement. The marketing softened attitudes and the department received praise where before it was criticized for “revenue raising.” In a pilot area speed detection has been increased ten fold, with dramatic reductions in offence rates. The Slogan “Zero tolerance for traffic offences” has meaning in a country where lawlessness is often the norm.

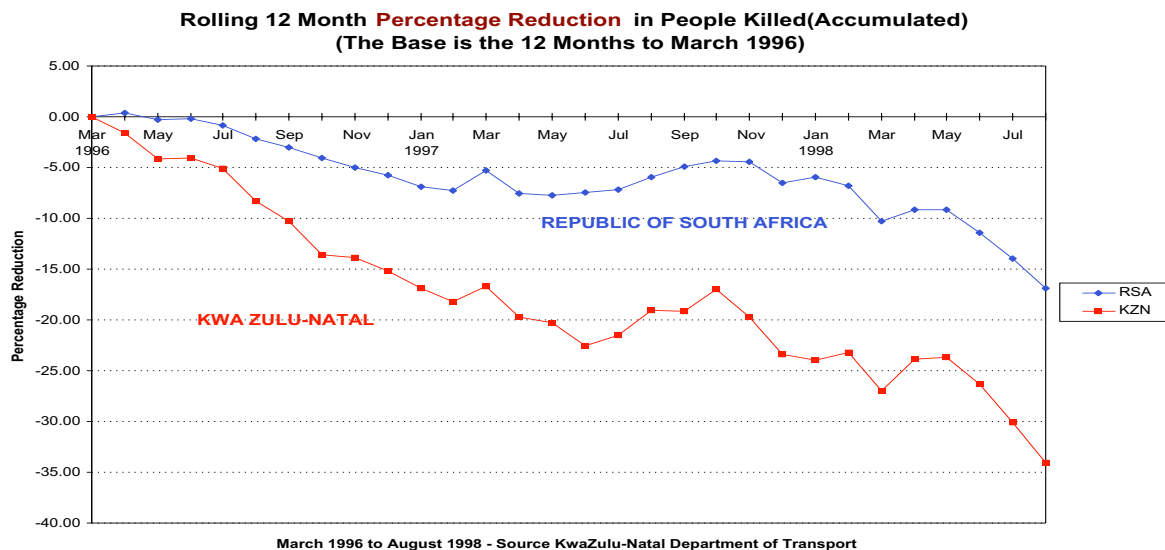
To further supplement this pilot, new technology via the LaserCam Speed Measuring device was trialed in the Province. The LaserCam is based on the combination of a laser speed-measuring device coupled with a digital camera. The images are recorded directly onto a magneto optic drive, which can store up to fifty five thousand dual images on a single disc. Four systems have since been purchased for permanent deployment.

RESULTS

The Impact on the KwaZulu-Natal Road Toll

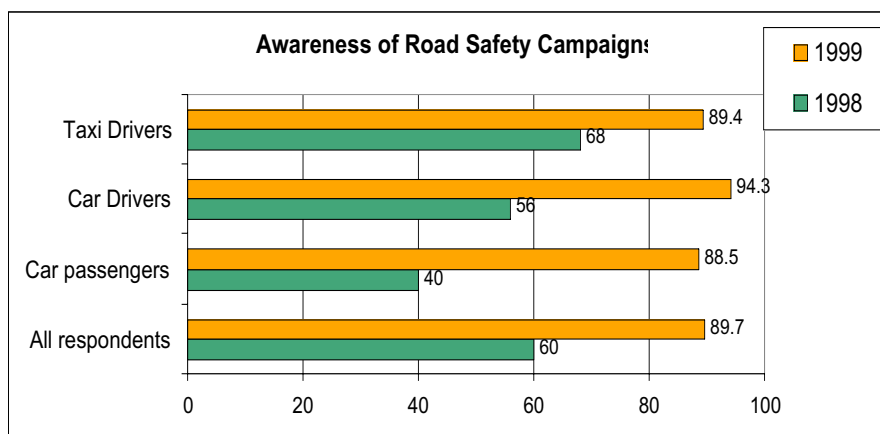
A rolling twelve month statistical analysis of fatal accident trends indicates that for the two year period since the original assessment report and August 1998, KwaZulu-Natal has realized a 35% reduction in fatalities compared to 17% across the whole country.

This graph has been prepared utilising the Statistics South Africa figures:

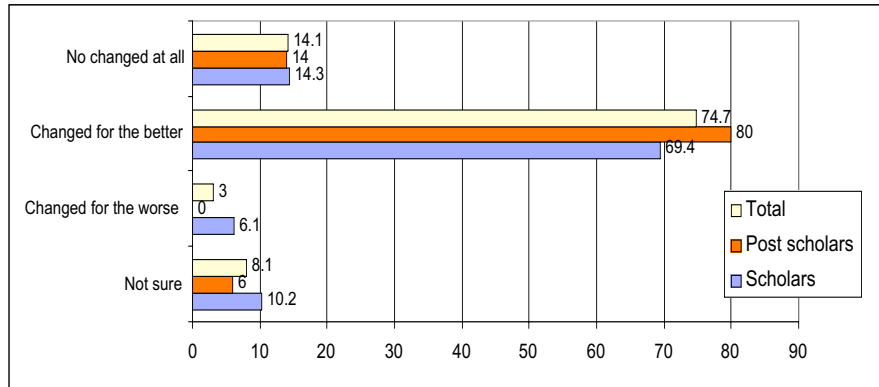


Impact On Awareness And Behavioural Changes

Marketing research was conducted in 1998 and 1999 to gauge public response to the awareness, marketing and enforcement strategies. The results indicated a dramatic increase in awareness of road safety and road safety issues.



Even more positive was the resultant behaviour changes which pedestrians reported. The following graph shows the extent to which pedestrian habits have changed over the relevant 12 months (%) period.



CONCLUSION

Road safety has become one of the key deliverables for a Democratic South Africa. It is inconceivable that the advances in operational techniques, marketing strategies and technology are not harnessed to curb the unacceptable situation on the roads. The Traffic fraternity has a responsibility to change the culture of South African's, to create an environment that respects life and the law. To erase selfish, lawless behaviour.

The achievements of the past 2 years have been dramatic. Yet there is still a long way to go. The current death toll in KwaZulu-Natal's roads is 1400 per 12 months. This is still double the Victorian level against 100 000 population. The cost of road trauma is unacceptable against the critical need for basic services.

The Victorian *Safety First* Model has laid the foundations for a new era in road safety in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. There is no doubt that the new institutional arrangement of the proposed Road Traffic Management Corporation will address many of the institutional, resource and capacity problems facing the country. The lessons of KwaZulu-Natal and Victoria will undoubtedly shape the strategy that this new body will follow.

Based on the outcomes realized to date, the Government of KwaZulu-Natal believes that with the help of the Victorian Road Safety Strategy they are on the way to reach their target of less than 1000 deaths a year, in KwaZulu-Natal, by December 2001.

With this outcome, the application of Victoria's *Safety First*, particularly the enforcement component, will have stood the test of time and will have proven its viability in foreign, and sometimes hostile, environments.