

RACV Education Programs for Schools - Work in Progress

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Abstract

RACV is committed to helping students, teachers and parents improve road safety in Victoria by:

- providing Victorian school children with age appropriate Traffic Safety Education (TSE) programs which are fun, engaging and encourage improved road safety attitudes and behaviours
- providing teachers and schools with programs and resources that support current educational initiatives and assist in effectively integrating TSE into the school curriculum.

Throughout 1999, with a view to identifying future strategic directions, RACV conducted a comprehensive review of its TSE programs delivered to schools. As a result of the review, innovative new programs were developed. The current pre-school, primary and secondary school programs are curriculum based, linked with relevant road safety resources, and are flexible in their content and structure so as to best suit the needs of a particular class, school or local community.

An overview of the findings of the 1999 review, the strategic directions underpinning RACV's new programs, and a description of the programs for 2000 are outlined in this paper.

Introduction

Road trauma is a leading cause of death and injury of children in Victoria. Each year hundreds of children under 17 years of age are killed or seriously injured as passengers, pedestrians and cyclists on Victorian roads. RACV's philosophy regarding children and road safety is that education provides the key to ensuring children adopt safe road user behaviours and develop responsible attitudes to sharing our roads. RACV has long held the belief that it is important for children to acquire road safety knowledge and skills to ensure their immediate safety as road users and to foster a responsible attitude to road safety as they grow to adulthood.

RACV has been actively involved in Traffic Safety Education (TSE) in schools for many years and is committed to providing high quality education programs. It is important that education programs are effective in their design and delivery. They must link to current guidelines and practices, and complement the programs and resources provided by other agencies involved in road safety education. In order to define future directions, and contribute most effectively to Traffic Safety Education in Victorian schools, RACV reviewed its TSE programs in 1999.

Background and Rationale

RACV has had two Road Safety Officers who visited primary, secondary and pre-schools throughout Victoria conducting talks and demonstrations on a range of road safety topics. RACV TSE programs have always been very popular and well patronised by all sectors of the Victorian school community for a great number of years. Programs and services have always been free of charge to participating schools.

In 1999, 'RACV's aim was to conduct a comprehensive review of the RACV Traffic Safety Education (TSE) functions. This was designed to provide input to, and the context for, future RACV TSE activities and include a review of the

relevance and balance of current activities and programs with a view to identifying desirable future directions.' (Di Pietro and Hughes, 1999)

Methods

Education consultants, Dynamic Outcomes, were contracted to undertake the review of the role of RACV in traffic safety education. The review obtained feedback about the perceived effectiveness and other impressions of the program from the following key stakeholders:

- kindergarten teachers who had an RACV session
- primary and secondary teachers who had an RACV session
- parents of children who participated in an RACV session
- representatives from agencies who deliver road safety education (VicRoads, Victoria Police, Department of Education, Transport Accident Commission, Public Transport Corporation)
- representatives of relevant RACV departments
- member survey about the RACV's involvement in TSE.

'Interviews with a wide range of people, both face to face and via telephone, were used as the primary means of gathering information and feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

The review of the RACV TSE program consisted of three components:

1. Research into effective methods of delivery of TSE within Victoria and elsewhere. This included contact with other key agencies who deliver TSE in Victoria and interstate automobile clubs. Information about their programs was gathered and possible opportunities for collaboration were canvassed.
2. Evaluation of the effectiveness and perception of the existing program from the perspective of each of the key stakeholders:
 - external stakeholders, including pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, state government departments and interstate automobile clubs;
 - internal stakeholders, including staff engaged in the delivery of the program and representatives of a range of other departments within the RACV; and
 - member input through the results from a recent member survey.

The development of strategic directions for future activities and programs based on the evaluation and research. This includes recommended frameworks for ongoing revision of TSE programs and the basis for making decisions on key age groups to target and appropriate delivery mechanisms.' (Di Pietro and Hughes, 1999)

Discussion of Results and Recommendations

A review of relevant literature on traffic safety education was also undertaken. The findings from each of the stakeholder groups, along with a list of detailed recommendations for the redevelopment of the RACV TSE program, were presented in the consultant report. The key findings of the review report clearly indicated that the vast majority of members (94%), teachers, RACV departments and road safety stakeholders believe RACV should be involved with and deliver traffic safety education in Victoria. It was evident from the review that RACV's TSE program could provide greater road safety benefits if some changes were made to the existing program.

In their report of the RACV TSE review, Di Pietro and Hughes outlined a number of recommendations for providing effective TSE programs in schools. It was noted that the effectiveness and benefits of a one-off lesson for students (pre-school through to secondary inclusive) is questionable, especially when offered in isolation. Consequently, it was recommended that such an approach not be continued by RACV and that incursions be provided as part of school's ongoing TSE curriculum. In the case of pre-schools, incursions should provide parent, carers and staff with information and support to be effective in their role as the ongoing teachers of traffic safety to their children. Incursions providing a face-to-face learning experience for primary school students should be continued but must complement a TSE unit of study within school curriculum. All programs and resources should directly link with CSF II, they must be student centred, age appropriate and flexible in delivery in order to meet the local needs of a school community. RACV TSE Educators delivering the sessions should also use the school visit as an opportunity to promote TSE and current resources to school staff. They

should also have expertise in providing advice and information to teachers and the wider school community regarding TSE curriculum development. Support materials for schools and parents need to relate to school curriculum, be informative, of high quality and complement the traffic safety education resources already being used in schools. Improving the promotion of RACV's traffic safety education activities and making greater use of the internet was also recommended.

It was also noted that a greater emphasis on secondary school students should be made in future RACV programs. Ideally, a program to provide an opportunity for teachers to lead an investigation of road safety through the school curriculum; a project to encourage students to take up the challenge of approaching road safety in a creative way.

Action and Re-development - Work in Progress

As a result of the findings and recommendations of the 1999 review of RACV TSE programs, new programs for Pre-school, Primary School and Secondary Schools have been developed and launched this year. The components of the new RACV Traffic Safety Education programs are outlined below.

1. RACV Transmission Program for Secondary Schools

This initiative has been designed to enhance education programs in schools and for teachers to use in a way that best suits their curriculum.

Transmission aims to:

- improve road safety attitudes and behaviours among young people (particularly pre-licence)
- promote and facilitate the delivery of ongoing traffic safety education programs in Victorian secondary schools
- encourage young people to develop an interest and commitment to safer road user behaviours
- actively encourage student-centred learning in a cooperative, team environment.

In conjunction with media partners Channel 7 Melbourne and WIN Television, RACV is offering a unique opportunity for secondary school students to be creative contributors in an RACV traffic safety initiative. Students will investigate and research a road safety issue and develop a production design for a Community Service Announcement suitable for television. The best designs will be produced and screened by Channel 7 and WIN Television.

Workshops

In July 2000, Channel 7 and WIN Television hosted full-day workshops to provide students with the opportunity to gather information from experts in the media and road safety fields. Guest speakers presented insightful and practical information to assist students research and develop their production designs. The Community Service Announcements will be produced, with the assistance of students, in November and will go to air in December 2000. There is every indication that the program, in the current format, will be an annual event.

2. RACV Street Scene Program for Primary Schools

RACV primary school programs still involve visits to schools, however the content of the sessions has changed. Classroom teachers are encouraged to include an RACV visit as part of their Traffic Safety Education curriculum or unit of study, subsequently promoting ongoing traffic safety programs in schools. Sessions and resource materials are free of charge to participating schools.

The new programs have a thematic approach and are designed to support and enhance a teacher's unit of study in TSE. Schools can book a visit by an RACV Traffic Safety Educator who will deliver tailor-made TSE sessions from Prep through to Grade 6. Teachers can choose a session that best suits their needs, and in doing so address elements of a number of key learning areas, with the program readily complementing Curriculum Standards Framework II (CSFII). CSFII is the current Department of Education, Employment and Training curriculum guideline for Victorian schools. Cross curricula themes include passenger safety, pedestrian safety, bus safety

and bike safety. RACV offers schools between two and six 45 minute TSE sessions and, due to demand, can only visit a school once a year.

Teacher Guide

Program support material encourages the investigation of TSE at the classroom level, whole school level and school community level. A comprehensive Teacher Guide is provided to each teacher participating in the program. The Teacher Guide has been developed to support the work of the classroom teacher in effectively integrating Traffic Safety Education into the school curriculum. Activities and suggestions directly link to CSFII curriculum foci and learning outcomes across seven Key Learning Areas, and promote the use of current resources such as RoadSmart, Bike Ed and Travel On.

Teacher Information Session

Each RACV Traffic Safety Educator, where possible, delivers a 10-15 minute informal information session for the whole school staff at either recess, lunchtime or after school. The purpose of this session is to:

1. promote TSE to those teachers who may not have had a class involved in the program
2. highlight current resource materials and those organisations involved in TSE
3. encourage the whole school community to consider the importance of TSE to their health, safety and wellbeing
4. promote the ease at which TSE can be integrated into the curriculum and the subsequent benefits to staff and students
5. answer questions, and direct teacher enquiries to the most appropriate person or organisation.

Parent/carer Information

Students are provided with a take-home information brochure for parents and carers. The aim of this brochure is to:

1. alert parents and carers to the fact that Traffic Safety Education is an important part of the school curriculum
2. prompt discussion between adult and child regarding traffic safety
3. provide parents and carers with information and practical hints so they can take an active role in their child's 'out-of-school' and ongoing traffic safety education.

RACV Traffic Safety Educators

At present, RACV has eight Traffic Safety Educators employed on a casual basis for in-school program delivery to primary school students throughout Victoria. All educators are qualified teachers with recent school experience. A number of RACV's educators have extensive knowledge and experience in the area of TSE and all have participated in a thorough training program. As a result of their experience in education, all Traffic Safety Educators are able to develop programs for delivery which are age, curriculum and issue specific to a particular class or school. They are also very familiar with current TSE and educational issues and practices, and can provide teachers and parents with information and advice regarding the integration of TSE into curriculum and into every-day practice.

RACV educators are based in a region which is a negotiated distance from their home-base. There are five educators in the metropolitan area and, at present, three educators based in regional areas. The educators are encouraged to link in with established networks in their area (ie. VicRoads Road Safety Coordinators) in order to contribute to the wider world of road safety.

3. RACV Hand-In-Hand Program for Pre-schools

Traffic Safety Educators are available to visit pre-schools to conduct practical and interactive information sessions for parents, carers and staff. Sessions are arranged by the pre-school with groups of 25 or more adults encouraged. Sessions and resource materials are free of charge.

A session that best suits the needs and concerns of the particular group is discussed with the pre-school manager. A 90 minute session is delivered using a combination of the following: power-point presentation; participation in practical awareness and problem solving activities; discussion of issues, dilemmas and solutions; information sheets outlining limitations of young children in traffic and associated helpful hints; and take-home ideas and activities for parents and carers to do with their children.

Topics for discussion include:

- why children are at risk sharing our roads
- limitations of children in the road environment
- passenger safety - importance of correct restraint use

- children as pedestrians
- safe places to play
- parents as role models.

Support information has been developed for pre-school staff. A small booklet has been produced to provide suggestions for incorporating Traffic Safety Education into the pre-school program and to complement programs already in place. It also provides practical ideas for getting parents and carers involved as the key facilitators in their child's learning experience.

4. Website and Promotion

With an emphasis in Victorian schools on information technologies it has been prudent to up-grade the school education section of the RACV website. The education pages have a new and contemporary 'look' about them and reflect the style and images used in promotional print materials relating to the programs. Students, parents and teachers can obtain information about the three school programs, and teachers can book on-line for the primary school program and register for participation in the secondary school program. There is also information regarding other road safety organisations which provide for TSE. Further development of the school education section of the website is planned to provide interactive educational components and readily available school support materials.

Summary

Through its commitment to road safety education, RACV has sought to be progressive and strategic in its approach to TSE programs provided to schools. As a result of the review commissioned in 1999, RACV identified the areas in which programs needed changing and upgrading to suit the current educational climate. It has done so with overwhelming feedback and support from RACV members and the road safety and educational communities. The RACV TSE programs now in place link with school curriculum, are flexible in their approach and are delivered by qualified and experienced educators. Promotional opportunities and support materials (including the website) have a fresh and coordinated look, but most importantly, are useful and targeted. Measures have been set in place for continued review and evaluation; this ensures that RACV Traffic Safety Education is a *'Work in Progress'*.

Reference

Di Pietro, G. & Hughes, I. (Dynamic Outcomes), Review of the RACV Traffic Safety Education Program – Report, May 1999.