

**BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL
SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROAD SAFETY PROGRAM**

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Abstract

Road safety is a concern for every school, parent and members of local school communities. The purpose of the Brisbane City Council's School Community Road Safety Program is to improve road safety and local amenity around school communities and make streets safer for children. The Program develops successful partnerships between Council and school communities to address road safety issues through education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering.

The BCC School Community Road Safety Program has been designed to encourage school communities including parents, teachers, students and local residents to become aware of, and to take ownership of, local road safety problems.

The School Community Road Safety Guide provides positive and practical ways of targeting road user behaviour around schools, thereby improving road safety for children. A video, Improving Road Safety Around Your School, is introduced by Dick Johnson and complements the Guide. A range of other resources (brochures, stickers, book labels) to encourage safe behaviour is also available.

The Program has been implemented in approximately 120 Brisbane schools and had positive results. It has also reduced demands for Council to provide engineering solutions.

Background

Brisbane, Australia's most livable city, is the centre of the fastest-growing urban region in Australia. It has a current population of 900 000 and a further one and a half million people live in the Brisbane Metropolitan area which extends from the Sunshine Coast to the north, Ipswich to the west and the Gold Coast to the south. Many of these people travel to or through the city for work, shopping, recreation and entertainment or to attend educational institutions.

With these population figures rising steadily and car ownership increasing, traffic growth has implications for the safety of road users in Brisbane, particularly as 65% of serious road casualties in Brisbane involve vehicles. The cost to the community of this, an estimated \$200 million this year, will also increase.

As the controlling local authority, Council has a direct role in addressing the road safety needs of road users within its boundaries and to influence the behaviour of all road users as they travel into or through the city.

Brisbane City Council conducted a pilot Road Safety Scheme in 1995. Jointly funded by the Federal Office of Road Safety, Queensland Transport and the Brisbane City Council, it targeted an area in Brisbane South and focused on road safety around a cluster of schools and the local community in the surrounding area.

The scheme has since been expanded to a citywide Program and a Road Safety Unit has been established in the Urban Amenity Section of Traffic and Transport Branch, Urban Management Division.

School Community Road Safety Program

Brisbane City Council's School Community Road Safety Program uses a community based approach to solving road safety problems around schools. The Program aims to improve safety for children and all road users around schools and to educate school communities about safe road use in the local environment. This is achieved by encouraging school communities to become aware of, take ownership of, and help provide solutions to local road safety issues.

The Program uses a combination of strategies from the four Es of road safety - education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering.

Education

Education is one of the most powerful tools that can be used to change behaviour and improve road safety around schools. The Program aims to educate children, parents/carers, teachers and members of school communities about safe road behaviours in the surrounding school environment.

This is achieved through classroom education by teachers using Council and Queensland Transport resources and community education with brochures and other information distributed by Road Safety Officers and the school. The Program also recognises that the children themselves can be used to educate their parents and the community and their involvement is encouraged for this reason. Recently, a mascot, **ROADSTAR**, was made to support the education aspect of the Program.

Encouragement

It is important to acknowledge positive road safety behaviour of children, parents/carers and community members. A range of resources (certificates, stickers, badges) is provided of schools to use, but they are also encouraged to develop their own material using messages appropriate to their own environment. Classroom teachers are encouraged to allow students to participate in this activity to reinforce positive road safety behaviour and use students as the road safety educators of their parents and the community.

Enforcement

While an emphasis is placed on education and encouragement in the Program, there are times when enforcement is necessary. Initially, this need not be heavy handed as in Council Officers issuing parking infringement notices or police issuing tickets for speeding and other traffic violations.

The school community could design their own notices to remind road users that they have been displaying inappropriate road safety behaviour. Of course, if this proves to be ineffective, then the appropriate authorities should be called.

Engineering

Major engineering works (car parks, traffic/pedestrian lights, bus bays and indented drop off zones) were often regarded by schools to be the only way to address road safety problems. Council still does such construction where necessary to alleviate serious problems. However, it has been found that many road safety problems around schools can as easily be addressed through education, encouragement and enforcement strategies combined with minor works such as traffic signs, kerb build outs and better access points (paths and gates).

The approach of involving the school community in the process has been successful and requests for major works have steadily reduced since the Program has been in operation.

School Community Road Safety Program Process

The process to implement the Program in a school is relatively simple, but does require a commitment from the school community. Following a phone call from a school or request to a Councillor regarding issues around a school, a Road Safety Officer arranges to visit the school. The Program is explained to the Principal and a request to speak the P&C/P&F is made.

At the P&C/P&F, the Program is explained, the Video played and a copy of the Guide is left for perusal. The school is informed that the next step, if they are interested in resolving road safety issues around the school, is to form a **Safe School Travel Committee**. The Committee need only comprise a few members, but must be an official subcommittee of the P&C/P&F and report to them.

Officers generally try to have the Committee formed at the initial meeting as support for the Program is usually at its highest at that time. However, it is left to the school to contact the Road Safety Officer when they have formed a Committee.

When the Committee is established, the Road Safety Officer attends to discuss how the Committee will operate and to initiate a **Site Audit** and/or **Travel Survey**. These will assist the Committee to identify the 'real' as opposed to 'perceived' issues around the school.

The Road Safety Officer writes a **Road Safety Action Plan** to address issues identified. The P&C/P&F must sign this off as it involves activities to be done by the school administration, teachers and Committee members as well as the Road Safety Officer. The Action Plan is then implemented and monitored by the Committee.

An **Evaluation** of the Action Plan is conducted and a new one developed if necessary or actions in place are continued.

Resources

To support the education and encouragement aspects of the Program, a number of resources are available. The School Community Road Safety Guide and Video have been mentioned, but there are also stickers, certificates, badges, book labels and a Back to School Show Bag which contains stickers, a balloon and a colouring sheet for students and a brochure for parents – *Road Rule Tips for School*.

Schools are encouraged to produce their own signs and enforcement notices that can be displayed in parking areas or on Cardboard Cops. **ROADSTAR**, an inflatable walking mascot, has recently been added to available resources and is already proving to be popular. If speeding is identified as an issue at a school, a **Speed Alert Program** can be conducted. If speeding persists, the police are alerted to conduct enforcement.

Engineering Programs

To support efforts to address road safety issues around schools, engineering solutions are sometimes appropriate. Minor works programs include the **School Zone Enhancement Program** and the **Safe Routes to School Program**.

The **School Zone Enhancement Program** marks a threshold across roads in line with the 40km School Zone. It serves as a reminder to motorists that they are entering a lower speed environment. Evaluations have indicated a marked reduction in the speeds in the streets where the treatment has been marked. While speeds are still not down to the signed limit, speeds at all times, not just in the restricted hours, have been reduced.

The **Safe Routes to School Program** aims to improve the safety of students, as they travel to and from school, not just in the immediate school environment. Improvements may include: kerb build outs, footpaths, pedestrian refuges and safety fences.

The **Safe School Travel (SafeST) Scheme** is a program for major works. The Council and the Main Roads Department jointly fund it. It allows internal car parks, indented bus bays and passenger drop off zones to be constructed.

Evaluation

At the end of 1999, an evaluation of the program was conducted. A questionnaire was distributed to all schools on the Program at the time - the response rate was 47%. The questionnaire was structured around the process of the Program (the presentation, the Action Plan, the resources).

Positive responses were received about all aspects of the program:

- 93% regarded the presentation as very informative or interesting;
- 90% regarded the Road Safety Officer as being either very knowledgeable or knowledgeable about road safety;
- 88% considered the Action Plan to be thorough or adequate; 58% found it easy or very easy to implement – 25% found it difficult; and 72% found it effective or very effective in addressing road safety issues; and
- 73% found the Guide to be useful or very useful and 63% considered the resources (stickers, etc) to be useful or very useful to encourage safe behaviour.

With regard to the overall effectiveness of the Program, 81% of schools considered it to be effective or very effective. As far as improving the Program, schools would like more support from Road Safety Officers through personalised visits (a difficult proposition as they cover approximately 70 schools each), greater Adopt-A-Cop support and enforcement of 2 minute Passenger Zones.

Other material the schools would like to see include:

- different resources for older students;
- more brochures with road safety information;
- a newsletter with articles about other schools and education ideas;
- material in Languages Other Than English (LOTE); and
- a Road Safety Week Program with guest speakers and activities.

The Future

The Road Safety Team is pursuing several of the options mentioned in the evaluation. In particular, the concept of a newsletter or the provision of regular information for schools to include in their own newsletters is being investigated. Considerable thought about resources for older students will be needed before we produce alternatives to our current ones.

Conclusion

In conclusion, from its beginning in 1995, the School Community Road Safety Program has grown to become a successful approach to reducing road safety problems in school environments throughout Brisbane. The evaluation conducted last year supports this and has also provided ideas for improvement in the structure and delivery of the Program. Feedback from school communities and Councillors has also been positive. The success has seen the Program significantly expanded in terms of resources and the work that is undertaken as part of the Program.