

Road Safety Education for 0 – 20 Year Olds in Western Australia – A Targeted Approach

Nicole Pettit¹ (Presenter); Anne Miller¹ (Presenter)

¹Road Aware Program

Biographies

Anne Miller: Trained as a primary school teacher with an extensive Kindergarten to Year 3 experience, Anne has written curriculum materials for the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education and lectured to tertiary students in the area of early childhood education.

Nicole Pettit: Originally a primary school teacher in the north-west of Western Australia, Nicole has previously worked in community development roles as a Road Safety Officer for RoadWise and as Coordinator for an environmental community education program for the Department of Environmental Protection.

Abstract

Rationale

This paper highlights the strategic approach taken towards youth road safety education in Western Australia. It provides a working example of how research findings have been formulated into strategic action through the development of a targeted road safety education program for young Western Australians.

A model of best practice for the development of road safety education initiatives, particularly in regard to Priority 6 - special groups and issues (youth, those living in rural and remote areas) as identified as National Road Safety Priorities is presented and an opportunity for discussion on the advances in research and practice in road safety education will be provided.

The topics covered, including the identification of key target age groups, a focus on the role of parents in road safety education and the development of strategic alliances for implementation, will be of significant interest to conference delegates as they provide examples of practical strategies that can be used by a range of road safety professionals to address issues in local and/or state-wide contexts.

Abstract: Road Safety Education for 0-20 Year Olds in Western Australia – a Targeted Approach.

Background

In November 2000, Barry Elliott, Independent Research and Communication Psychologist, presented his paper, Review of Good Practice: Children and Road Safety Education to the Road Safety Council of Western Australia. The review investigated a number of Australian and international road safety education programs and made recommendations for the development of a comprehensive road safety education program for young Western Australians.

The report, which highlighted the importance of identifying key target age groups, focusing on the role of parents in road safety education and developing strategic alliances for effective implementation, led to the Road Safety Council establishing the Children and Road Safety Steering Committee, which coordinated the initiatives of a number of working parties during 2001 and 2002.

Following Elliot's report and consultation with the working parties, a policy document titled Road Safety Policy for Infants, Children and Young People in Western Australia, describing all the initiatives to be implemented, was endorsed by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in August 2002. The Road Aware Program (RAP) was subsequently launched in September 2002.

Windows of Opportunity

The main recommendations in the policy paper related to the identification of three key age groups (0-4 year olds, early primary students and pre-drivers) as 'windows of opportunity' for road safety education.

These age groups were identified as being significant times at which children are engaged in a number of specific road safety issues, including restraints for infants, pedestrian safety for school children and driving safety for pre-drivers. In addition, these key times represented periods where parents are actively engaged in their child's road safety.

The Road Aware Program has comprehensively planned three strategies in accordance with these key target age groups. These include:

- Road Aware Parents (0-4 years)
- Road Aware Kids (4-14 years – with a focus on early primary years)
- Road Aware Drivers (15 – 20 years)

These strategies include child restraint checking systems and providers; road safety curriculum resources; a pre-driver course for 15 and 16 year olds; and supporting parent packages.

Strategic Alliances

Existing networks within Health, Education and Road Safety fields were identified in order to assist in the implementation of the three programs throughout the large geographical area of Western Australia.

In particular, in acknowledging the Health Promoting Schools Framework, developed by World Health Organisation, the Road Aware Program aims to utilise an established network of trainers linked to the School Drug Education Project's Regional Organising Committees throughout Western Australia. This network of trainers, developed through a strategic alignment with a 'sister' program the School Drug Education Project provides training for teachers and other agencies, support and the provision of resources, policy development and helps to foster community involvement. This strategic alignment will enable the success and sustainability of a focused road safety education initiatives for the young people of Western Australia.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights the strategic approach taken towards youth road safety education in Western Australia. It provides a working example of how research findings have been formulated into strategic action through the development of a targeted road safety education program for young Western Australians.

The topics covered include the identification of key target age groups and the role of parents in road safety education. In particular, this paper highlights how strategic alliances with existing networks in school and non-school environments form a crucial part of the implementation of the program throughout Western Australia. This implementation model will serve as an example of a practical strategy that can be used by a range of road safety professionals to address issues in local and/or state-wide contexts.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2000, the Road Safety Council commissioned a comprehensive review of road safety education for children and young people, aged zero to 20 years. The review, carried out by Barry Elliott (Independent Research and Communication Psychologist) was undertaken in order to:

- examine the nature and extent of injuries and fatalities in Western Australia for zero to 20 year olds;
- examine existing road safety programs throughout Australia and overseas, with a view to identifying the best practice and evidence-based programs; and
- recommend priorities for Western Australia taking into account existing structures and budget constraints.

In November 2000, Barry Elliott presented his paper, *Review of Good Practice: Children and Road Safety Education* to the Road Safety Council of Western Australia. The review investigated a number of Australian and international road safety education programs and made recommendations for the development of a comprehensive road safety education program for young Western Australians. These recommendations focussed on achieving the greatest road safety benefits while maintaining cost effectiveness.

The report highlighted the significance of targeting key age groups, the crucial role of parents in road safety education and the importance of developing strategic alliances for effective implementation and lead to the Road Safety Council establishing the Children and Road Safety Steering Committee, which coordinated the initiatives of a number of working parties during 2001 and 2002.

Following Elliot's report and consultation with the working parties, a policy document titled *Road Safety Policy for Infants, Children and Young People in Western Australia*, describing all the initiatives to be implemented, was endorsed by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in August 2002. The *Road Aware* Program (RAP) was subsequently launched in September 2002.

3. WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

One of the main recommendations in the Road Safety Council's policy paper related to the identification of three key target age groups. These included:

1. parents and young children (zero to four year olds);
2. students from Kindergarten to Year Nine (four to 14 year olds); and
3. pre-drivers and novice drivers (15 to 20 year olds).

These age groups were identified as being significant times at which children and their parents are engaged in a number of specific road safety activities, including the use of restraints for infants, pedestrian safety for school children and driving safety for pre-drivers.

The *Road Aware* Program has comprehensively planned three strategies in accordance with these key target age groups. These include the following initiatives:

3.1 Road Aware Parents (0-4 years)

- An infant and child car restraint program
- Support to parents to improve child pedestrian safety and road use
- Road safety training for community health and child care workers
- Resources to encourage children and their parents to be involved in road safety

3.2 Road Aware Kids (4-14 years – with a focus on early primary years)

- Production of new road safety curriculum resources for Kindergarten to Year 9 students with online access
- Teacher training and support
- Road safety information and activities for parents
- Framework to assist schools to develop road safety policies

3.3 Road Aware Drivers (15 – 20 years)

- Pre-driver (before L Plates) program for young people (15 and 16 year olds) in school and non-school settings
- A parent workshop to raise awareness of issues affecting young road users and to promote increased supervised driving hours

3.4 The Role of Parents

In addition to highlighting key target age groups, the Elliot Report also stressed the important role that parents play in road safety education for children and young people.

Parents are both direct and indirect educators. Because effective road safety education requires development and practise of skills in real world environments, parents play a direct role as they are the major educators of children and young people in the traffic environment. Indirectly, they also observe and model adult road user behaviours (both positive and negative).

Reflecting the findings of the Elliot Report, the *Road Aware* Program includes a number of initiatives to involve parents in the road safety education of their children.

4. STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

4.1 The context

The development of a state-wide road safety education program within Western Australia entails a number of unique challenges. The vast geographical distances and high number of isolated schools necessitates effective regional networks for a successful implementation process. In order to address this, the *Road Aware* Program is developing links to a number of existing networks within education, health and road safety fields. When viewed in relation to crash statistics, the regional implementation of the program becomes even more important due to the over-representation of rural children and young people in road deaths and injuries.

4.2 Evaluation of the WA School Road Safety Project

Prior to the commencement of the *Road Aware* Program, road safety education for children and young people was the responsibility of the Western Australian School Road Safety Project (WASRSP). Educational resources produced by this project were supplied to all schools within in Western Australia.

The evaluation of this project by Curtin University stated that teacher training in road safety education, especially in the Kindergarten and Pre-primary areas, had been insufficient and not accessible to all teachers throughout Western Australia.

4.3 School Drug Education Project

In light of this evaluation, Elliott reviewed other Western Australian programs involved in the delivery of professional development to teachers. From this review, the School Drug

Education Project (SDEP), launched in 1997 was identified as being highly successful in accessing teachers and delivering professional development regarding drug education. In addition, the SDEP was seen to be a highly effective model of comprehensive planning and implementation for a health education intervention within the Western Australian context.

As such, a strategic alliance between the *Road Aware* project and the School Drug Education Project was formed in 2003 with the appointment of the three *Road Aware* Project Officers. This strategic alliance will enable the success and sustainability of focused road safety education initiatives for the young people of Western Australia.

The alliance has resulted in the two projects sharing a number of key areas. In addition to sharing managerial and administrative personnel, the two projects have the same management group which includes representatives from the two funding bodies, the Drug and Alcohol Office and the Office of Road Safety. The three educational systems and sectors, the Catholic Education Office, Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia and the Department of Education and Training are also represented on the group.

Both projects carry out planning and evaluation processes based on the Health Promoting Schools Framework, developed by World Health Organisation. This framework highlights the key areas for successful school based health education programs which include curriculum, resources and training, policy, principles and practices and parent and community involvement.

Of particular significance in the strategic alliance is the utilisation of the established network of trained professional development facilitators known as Regional Organising Committees (ROCs) originally created by the School Drug Education Project.

4.4 Regional Organising Committees

This network of teachers are trained to deliver professional development and support for their education based colleagues as well as other agency representatives, provide assistance in policy development and help to foster community involvement in school based programs.

The School Drug Education Project has established 16 Regional Organising Committees, throughout the state. The ROCs ensure the coordination of ongoing drug education teacher training and regular networking opportunities for teachers and other relevant school staff. Network meetings involve:

- a needs assessment process which leads to the development of training tailored to the specific needs of children and young people in the local area.
- sharing of ideas and progress using an action research (problem solving) approach; and
- identification and development of school and community links (discussion of ideas, opportunities and progress), which may include the attendance of, invited regular community and agency guests.

4.5 Road Safety in Schools Coordination Group

There are numerous agencies working to deliver road safety education in Western Australian schools. Realising this, the Road Safety in Schools Coordination Group was established by the Road Aware Program with the aim of encouraging agencies working in school road safety to be coordinated to maximise efficiency, avoid duplication of efforts and promote consistent road safety messages to children and young people, their parents and teachers.

The Road Safety in Schools Coordination Group promotes and utilises the Health Promoting Schools framework to guide road safety activities in school communities, whether curriculum

based or community based. The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework will assist community organisations and agencies to provide effective support for school road safety education.

4.6 Networks outside schools

As the project targets children and young people aged 0 - 20 years which extends both before and beyond the school age group, the utilisation of additional networks is a key part of the implementation process. In particular the *Road Aware* program has made links to the following groups:

- ***Regional Road Safety Coordination Groups***

The Regional Road Safety Coordination Groups involve key road safety stakeholders in each of the regional areas of Western Australia. Supported by the Office of Road Safety, the aim of the groups is to provide a coordinating mechanism involving senior managers to provide strategic planning and decision making for addressing locally specific road safety issues while complementing and enhancing the work of the local community road safety (*RoadWise*) groups.

- ***RoadWise – Local Government and Community Road Safety Program***

The *RoadWise* Program involves approximately 70 Local Government based road safety committees coordinated by Road Safety Officers. These act as advisory committees to councils and their members are drawn from areas including local government, Main Roads WA, police, education, health, service clubs, emergency services and the general community. They provide a regular forum for ongoing consideration and discussion of road safety issues and a mechanism for planning, implementing and evaluating community-based road safety initiatives.

By linking to these groups the *Road Aware* Program is able to effectively and efficiently access key regional stakeholders in order disseminate information and foster community involvement and ownership of the program.

5. CONCLUSION

The development and delivery of the *Road Aware* Program initiatives involves several key strategies. These include a focus on target age groups, the involvement of parents in road safety education and the utilisation of existing regional networks for implementation.

In particular this implementation model provides an example of a practical strategy that can be used by a range of road safety professionals to address issues in local and/or state-wide contexts.

References

Centre for Health Promotion Research, (2000) Western Australian School Road Safety Project: 2000 Process Evaluation Report, Curtin University Western Australia
Elliot, B. (2000) Review of Good Practice: Children and Road Safety Education
Western Australian Road Safety Council (2002) Road Safety Policy for Infants Children and Young People in Western Australia.

Keywords

Targeted age groups, Parent involvement , Regional networks, Implementation