

2004 National Road Safety Conference

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clearing House for Road Safety Material

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Biography: Emma Hawkes is an acting Project Officer in the Office of Road Safety in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. She has worked in Indigenous issues in Western Australia since 2001. She has a research background, with a doctorate in legal history from the University of Western Australia.

Abstract: Road injury is a major cause of mortality and morbidity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The National Aboriginal Road Safety Working Group has acknowledged that there is a lack of information about the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experience of road trauma. To combat this, it was decided to establish an internet-based clearing house to effectively share information about Indigenous road safety amongst stakeholders and the community.

In September 2003 the National Road Safety Strategy Panel accepted Western Australia's offer to develop a proposal for this project. A steering committee of representatives from Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau has developed a tender for the development of the clearing house.

This paper describes the development of the project, noting particular issues which arose in the drawing up of the tender:

- Debate over the target audience for the clearing house;
- Issues relating to ensuring the accessibility of the clearing house.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clearing House for Road Safety Material

Introduction

This paper is about the ongoing development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) clearing house for road safety material. The intention is to develop an internet site which is a clearing house for all information on Indigenous road safety in Australia. It will have information about current projects in Aboriginal road safety, contact details for people working in the area and fact sheets about significant issues.

Background

Aboriginal people suffer seriously on Australian roads. A recent Queensland study suggests that Aboriginal people are six times more likely to have crashes than non-Aboriginal Australians.¹ Western Australian research indicates that Aboriginal people make up 3% of the State's population but represent 9% of those killed and 8% of those seriously injured in road crashes.²

While this disproportionate road trauma rate is established, there is a lack of information about the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experience of road trauma. In September 2003 the National Aboriginal Road Safety Working Group considered this issue and recommended in the *National Road Safety Strategy Action Plan for 2003 to 2004* that an internet-based clearing house be established 'to effectively share Indigenous road safety initiatives amongst stakeholders and communities.'³ The intention was to provide a resource for people working with local communities throughout Australia to access, share and adapt material used elsewhere to improve road safety outcomes for Indigenous communities.

An offer by Western Australia to develop a proposal for this project was endorsed by the National Road Safety Strategy Panel in 2003. Development of the clearing house has been overseen by a steering committee of representatives from jurisdictions with an interest in the Indigenous road safety clearing house, with the executive support of the Office of Road Safety in Western Australia.

Development of the Clearing House

Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau agreed to work on the project. New South Wales joined at a slightly later point. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau

¹ Colin Edmonston, Indigenous Licensing Project: Research Report (Queensland Transport and CARRS-Q, November 2003) 15.

² Arriving Safely: Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia, 2003-2007 (2003) 29.

³ Australian Transport Council, National Road Safety Action Plan 2003 and 2004, p. 24.

made a one-off contribution of funding and the other parties agreed to a funding model based on the proportion of Aboriginal people in the different States and Territories. Western Australia is holding the funds in a separate account, and the project is funded for two years. The funding issues were worked through by April 2004.

The representatives on the project are based across Australia but met by teleconference. The first meeting was held in May 2004 and the scoping document for the tender was complete by the end of June 2004. The tender then went through the lengthy administration processes of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, including seeking an exemption from the requirement for a Western Australian provider (as it is a national project).

The tender was advertised in the week of 25 August 2004. Western Australian Government requirements meant that it was advertised in the *West Australian* newspaper. In order to reach a national audience it was also advertised in the *Australian* and the *Indigenous Times*.

The evaluation committee is currently considering the submissions from contractors to do the work outlined in the tender.

Clearing House on Indigenous Road Safety

The tender requested that the contractor build on the theme of 'Indigenous road safety' in Australia. The clearing house is geared towards creating awareness of existing information and projects being undertaken in different jurisdictions, agencies and regions. The clearing house thus functions as a knowledge management tool.

The material will be aimed at a variety of potential users including Indigenous communities, community groups working in road safety, a broad spectrum of policy makers, road safety program managers, health care providers, researchers, teachers, students and the general community. The website is to pull together material on Indigenous road safety using the following components:

- **Information about organisations, agencies and individuals** – This section will provide a comprehensive inventory on road safety organisations, agencies and individuals including descriptions and contact details in order to enhance the coordination of efforts in Indigenous road safety.
- **Reviews of road safety issues and Indigenous health** – This section will provide an overview of road safety issues and summaries of various aspects of road safety among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Overviews and summaries will be aimed at a variety of potential users including Indigenous communities, community groups working in road safety, policy makers, road safety program managers, health care providers, researchers, teachers, students and the general community. These reviews will include an introductory

'frequently asked questions' section and more advanced, specialised reviews of individual issues.

- **News and events** – This section will collate information about social and political developments relevant to the planning and implementation of road safety programs for Indigenous communities. This information will be regularly updated and will include media releases by relevant parties/stakeholders.
- **Bibliography** – This section will provide a comprehensive, annotated bibliography. This will involve close collaboration between the various agencies involved across Australia in road safety issues of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will include research undertaken into Indigenous road safety and health issues, and will include links to texts whenever they are available electronically.
- **Resources** – This section will collect and maintain a central repository for resource material addressing Indigenous road safety in Australia. This will include links to the resources whenever they are available electronically (such as the proceedings of past Australian conferences on Indigenous road safety). The aim of this section is to assist in sharing information between different jurisdictions, agencies and regions.
- **Project information** – This section will collect and maintain a central repository for Australian road safety projects relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will assist in sharing information between different jurisdictions.
- **Community projects** – This section will provide information on Indigenous community-based projects and non-Indigenous community-based projects which are considered relevant to Indigenous road safety. This will act as a resource for those developing Indigenous community road safety projects in Australia.
- **Grant information** – This section will collect information on grants for road safety projects so as to allow more effective inter-disciplinary and cross-jurisdictional collaboration.
- **Training programs** – This section will collect detailed information about relevant training courses for road safety workers in order to facilitate their access to such courses, leading to a better trained and more competent workforce.
- **Comparative information** – This section will condense information on international projects on Indigenous road safety. This material will provide examples of best practice in Indigenous road safety.
- **Guestbook** – There will be a guestbook that will allow people bound together by a common interest in promoting Indigenous road safety to develop a 'community of practice'. The guestbook will encourage the sharing of knowledge between practitioners, program managers and policy makers in the various areas of road safety.

Issues Raised in the Development of the Tender

The steering committee discussed several issues that arose while developing the tender. Two central issues were the intended audience for the clearing house and the accessibility of the clearing house.

There was extensive debate as to whether the website was intended predominantly for road safety practitioners or for Aboriginal people. The *National Road Safety Strategy Action Plan for 2003 to 2004* recommended establishing an internet-based clearing house 'to effectively share Indigenous road safety initiatives amongst stakeholders and communities.'⁴ Ultimately, the steering committee concluded that the clearing house was aimed primarily at road safety practitioners but that it should be developed in a way that would allow it to also be accessible to the wider public.

The need for accessibility shaped two aspects of the tender:

- The clearing house must be culturally appropriate. The tender requested a strategy to make an inclusive site likely to be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The internet-based clearing house must also be supported by supplementary digital material designed for those with intermittent or inadequate internet access. This should make the material more accessible to those in remote and regional areas.

The steering committee are keen to develop a culturally appropriate clearing house which was more likely to be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The tender requested a strategy to make an inclusive site likely to be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and a strategy for copyright issues, including the use of images produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The steering committee also agreed that the clearing house should be supported by a CD Rom of material on Indigenous road safety resources which will include the following elements:

- Reviews of road safety issues and Indigenous health;
- Bibliography;
- Resources.

Conclusions

The tender hasn't been awarded yet and the project is very far from complete. On the other hand, the tender has been written and advertised. The project is now progressing. Once the tenderer is selected, the first draft of the website should be available at the end of 2005.

⁴ Australian Transport Council, *National Road Safety Action Plan 2003 and 2004*, p. 24.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clearing house for road safety material is the only specific measure dealing with Indigenous road safety mentioned in the national strategy for 2003 and 2004. The project represents a commitment from many States and Territories and will, hopefully, allow for further work in Indigenous road safety in the future.