

## **Evaluation of the Australian Indigenous Health/InfoNet's Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place**

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### **Abstract**

The Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place (electronic network) was launched across Australia in December 2005. The online resource, maintained by the Australian Indigenous Health/InfoNet, enables the dissemination and sharing of information about Indigenous road safety among stakeholders and the community.

This paper describes the development and evaluation of the web resource and yarning place. A survey in 2006 collected quantitative and qualitative data from stakeholders from across Australia. Additional evaluative material will be gathered in two focus groups with Indigenous people, with particular attention directed to how the sites can be made more user-friendly and attractive for Indigenous users.

This paper summarises development and evaluation of the Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place, noting particular issues which were brought up in the evaluation.

### **Introduction**

The effective sharing of knowledge is now recognised as critically important in maximising the impact of health-related programs, such as those addressing the impact of road injury. It has also been recognised that the Internet provides exciting new ways to facilitate the sharing of relevant knowledge and experiences.

The Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place uses these new ways to assist people committed to promoting road safety among Australia's Indigenous peoples. The development and maintenance of the resource on Indigenous road safety has been made possible with funds provided by the Roads and Transport Authority of New South Wales, Queensland Transport, the Western Australian Office of Road Safety, the South Australian Department for Transport, Energy and

Infrastructure, the Northern Territory Department of Planning and Infrastructure, VicRoads, the ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services, and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. Development of the resource is being guided by a Steering Committee comprising representatives of the agencies funding its development.

This presentation will illustrate the ways in which the Australian Indigenous Health/*InfoNet* ([www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au)) – the leader for many years in knowledge-sharing about general aspects of Indigenous health – aims to contribute to improving the health of Australia's Indigenous peoples by facilitating knowledge-sharing in the area of road safety through two main ways.

First, the Health/*InfoNet* has developed and maintains a comprehensive Indigenous road safety web resource – a 'one stop info-shop' for people working, studying or interested in the road safety of Indigenous peoples. The web resource provides quality information and resources about how to prevent and manage Indigenous road injury. Second, the Health/*InfoNet* supports the Indigenous road safety yarning place (an electronic network) by providing services that encourage collaboration and sharing of information and experiences among the full range of people working across Australia to promote road safety among Indigenous peoples.

The Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place can be accessed at: [www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/roadsafety](http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/roadsafety).

## **The Indigenous road safety web resource**

The home page of the web resource provides links to a wide range of information about Indigenous road safety, including:

- reviews/summaries of road safety among Indigenous peoples
- policy and program information (such as policies and strategies; initiatives and lessons; recommendations and relevant organisations)
- details of relevant publications and resources (such as journal articles, reports and other publications; safety promotion resources; and info about funding)

The web resource also links to related Health/*InfoNet* webpages (such as the general section on injury)

### **Reviews**

The 'reviews' section includes a review specially developed by the Health/*InfoNet* and ones prepared by other agencies. In addressing the gaps between research and action, such reviews are important in informing policy and practice.

The HealthInfoNet's review, which is updated as new information becomes available, provides:

- background information about road safety
- the best available evidence of the impact of road injury among Indigenous peoples
- information about the factors contributing to road injury among Indigenous peoples
- details about initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of road injury among Indigenous peoples (including attention to barriers, such as poor access to services)
- implications for the promotion of road safety among Indigenous peoples and the management of road injury

***Policy and program information***

Existing policy and program documents are important sources of information about current approaches to the development and delivery of road safety initiatives for Indigenous peoples.

Reflecting the importance of these aspects, the Indigenous road safety web resource provides information about:

- relevant policies and strategies - both Indigenous-specific and general road safety policies and strategies
- existing initiatives, including specific programs and infrastructure components (such as key advisory bodies)
- case studies demonstrating the application of general strategies in Indigenous road safety
- organisations and other agencies involved in the area of road safety

***Publications and resources***

People involved in Indigenous road safety often need to refer to research documents and other publications and resources to inform their work. Identifying and collecting these materials can be very time-consuming, but the HealthInfoNet has already done a lot of this work.

Details of Indigenous road safety publications are provided under the categories:

- journal articles
- reports - including books and book chapters, reports, and discussion and working papers (including the hard-to-find 'grey literature')

- other publications - such as conference proceedings and theses (also a part of the grey literature)

The publications section also provides a list of 'key references' and downloadable versions of the HealthInfoNet's full bibliography in the area (including an EndNote library for people who have the EndNote bibliographic software).

The resource section is still being developed, but already provides details of a considerable number of resources.

## **The Indigenous road safety yarning place**

The Indigenous road safety yarning place supports yarning and networking among the full range of people working across Australia to promote road safety among Indigenous peoples – even when people live in different States, Territories and regions, come from different sectors (such as transport, health and justice), and work for different organisations. (The top navigation button in this section provides full details of the yarning place.)

Membership – which is free – provides access to e-yarning services, which enable e-mob members to share information, experiences and ideas. This is done by means of the e-message stick and e-yarning board.

The e-message stick is a listserv (electronic distribution list) that provides the opportunity for members and the coordinator to share information and news and events, and to seek information about specific issues of relevance to Indigenous road safety.

The e-yarning board gives members the capacity to debate issues online by posting and replying to messages. (People who are not e-mob members can browse the e-yarning board, but cannot post messages.) The e-yarning board is organised by subject 'threads':

- Licensing;
- Restraints;
- Alcohol and drug related issues;
- Vehicle safety;
- Pedestrian safety;
- Use of open load space;
- Data and info;
- General discussion; and

- Meet and greet.

The 'Meet and greet' thread enables people to introduce themselves to the other members. This gives the e-yarning board a more personal feel, and 'chatting', or 'yarning' could be facilitated through personalising the process.

Members need to log-in to post a message on the e-yarning board.

Members also have access to the e-mob list, which provides members' contact details (permission to display the details is obtained beforehand).

The yarning place also provides information about current news and events, and encourages both members and non-members to share their information and experiences by submitting details about programs, projects, reports, and other resources.

The Indigenous road safety e-yarning place provides great opportunities to discuss and debate issues with other e-mob members, so people are encouraged to become familiar with its operation - and participate actively!

## **Development and maintenance of the web resource and yarning place**

Development of the Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place is funded by the road safety authorities of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. Core funding for the HealthInfoNet is provided by the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH). Other support is provided by Edith Cowan University.

A Steering Committee comprising representatives of the funding agencies provides guidance for the development of the web resource and yarning place. The Committee, coordinated by the WA Office of Road Safety, provides guidance on general and specific aspects of the resource, including reviewing draft content; facilitating access to the information collections of government agencies concerned with road safety and related aspects of Indigenous health and wellbeing; and advising on Indigenous road safety matters.

The HealthInfoNet is also assisted by a network of honorary HealthInfoNet Consultants. These Consultants, who are leading experts within various areas of Indigenous health (including road safety), serve as an informal reference group by providing guidance in their individual areas of expertise. They assist also in the identification and collection of other materials.

## Assessing the value of the web resource and yarning place

### Routine web statistics

The routine web statistics collected by the HealthInfoNet provide some indication of the use of the Indigenous road safety web resource.

**Table 1 Numbers of visitors to the homepage of the Indigenous road safety web resource (by visitor type) and page loads**

Month	All visitors	First-time visitors	Returning visitors	Page loads
August '06	169	153	16	319
September '06	198	158	40	406
October '06	154	121	33	363
November '06	148	108	40	282
December '06	86	61	25	166
January '07	90	73	17	164
February '07	105	81	24	225
March '07	99	88	11	154
April '07	120	94	26	183
May '07	124	112	12	221
June '07	77	68	9	144
July '07	92	69	23	150
August '07	97	89	8	146
Average	120	98	22	225

- Notes:
- 1 Visitor numbers are based on 'cookies' in the visitor's browser, based on access to the homepage of the resource. The cookies are cleared every 6 hours. Example: if someone visits the homepage of the resource twice within 6 hours, this will count as one first-time visitor and one returning visitor
  - 2 These figures represent the minimum numbers of visitors and page loads, as they reflect only visitors to the homepage of the resource. They do not include visitors who enter the resource through other points. Example: if the visitor links to a point other than the homepage, possibly as a result of identifying a specific component of the resource from a search engine (such as Google), their visit will not be counted by the package used at this time.

The numbers of visitors to the homepage of the web resource were highest around August to October 2006, almost certainly as a result of the distribution of the promotional CD-ROM and brochure that increased awareness of the resource, and

as a result of the Indigenous Road Safety Forum in October 2006. A new brochure as well as an updated CD-rom is currently being developed, in order to renew interest among people working in the area of Indigenous road safety.

## **The yarning place**

People need to be members of the yarning place to take advantage of the services provided, and joining is quite a simple online process. Recruitment to the yarning place has been slower than expected, however – at the beginning of September 2007, there were 63 members of the Indigenous road safety yarning place e-mob.

Of the 63 members, ten identified themselves as working in a government road transport agency, fourteen as researchers, eleven as 'other health professionals', six as working in local government, five as police officers, eleven as working in other areas of government, one as an Indigenous health worker, one as an Indigenous education worker, one as a student and three as a member of the general public. The variations in specific roles (such as magistrate, policy officer and Indigenous liaison officer) mean that, even though members may share a common interest in Indigenous road safety, it is likely that they have different viewpoints and educational backgrounds, as well as quite specific interests within the area.

Twenty-three (37%) of the members live in Western Australia, twelve (19%) each in Queensland and New South Wales, six (10%) in the Northern Territory, four (6%) in the Australian Capital Territory, three (5%) in South Australia, one in Victoria, and one each in New Zealand and Canada.

## **Questionnaire**

### **About the questionnaire**

As well as receiving general feedback from a variety of people about the web resource and yarning place, more structured feedback was collected through a questionnaire.

This questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first section collected some personal information and information about the respondent's use of the Internet. The second part contained questions about their impressions of the Indigenous road safety web resource, and the third about the yarning place. The final section asked respondents about their overall impression of the web resource and yarning place. Most questions asked people to respond to one of a number of choices, but a few were open-ended to enable respondents to provide specific comments and/or suggestions. The questionnaire required about 5 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire was made available in three forms – as a hard-copy, as an email attachment and in an online form. The hard-copy form of the questionnaire was sent to people who had indicated that they would be attending the Indigenous Road Safety Forum that was held in Broome on 23-25 October 2006, to e-mob members, and to Aboriginal community-controlled health services and land councils throughout Australia. (Copies of a promotional CD-ROM and brochure were also sent to intending Forum participants and e-mob members. Aboriginal community-controlled health services and land councils had received copies in an earlier mail-out).

Details of the questionnaire were provided to members of the Steering Committee and colleagues who were asked to (1) forward the email to interested people and/or (2) provide details of people to whom the questionnaire could be sent in electronic and/or hard-copy forms. Information about the questionnaire was also sent to: (1) three office-bearers of the Australasian College of Road Safety (by email with questionnaire attached); and (2) a Victorian government official whose details had been provided by a member of the Steering Committee (information sent by mail).

A request to participate was also displayed prominently on the home-page of the web resource.

Recipients of the hard-copy and electronic forms of the questionnaire were advised that they could complete these versions or, alternatively, use the online version, which could be submitted electronically after completion.

## **Results**

Most respondents accessed the questionnaire online, but three did so by email and two were interviewed on the telephone.

One-third of respondents came from WA, almost one-fifth from Queensland, and slightly more than one-in-seven from the NT.

Slightly more than one-half of respondents were members of the yarning place, and slightly more than one-in-five identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (one-ninth of respondents did not answer the question on Indigenous identification).

More than two-fifths of respondents had heard of the Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place through the survey or through the promotional activities (the CD-ROM and brochure). Word-of-mouth appeared to be the other main trigger to look at the web resource.



Of the respondents who looked at the introduction to the web resource on the CD-ROM, 95% found the introduction 'useful' to 'very useful'.

### ***Web resource***

Almost three-quarters of respondents had visited the web resource between one and five times. Interestingly, some stated they had never visited the resource!

Most respondents found the web resource attractive, easy to navigate, clearly written and easy to understand. No negative comments or evaluations were made, but a number of respondents were undecided on these aspects.

All respondents found the summary of road safety among Indigenous peoples a useful feature of the web resource. Most respondents found the other sections of the web resource useful. A small number of respondents reported finding the publications section (this section contains information about journal articles, reports and the like, and an Indigenous road safety bibliography) and the 'lessons learned' section (this section contains case studies and evaluations) 'not useful'.

Less than one-tenth of respondents reported that they had not found the information they were seeking or that they were expecting to find more information. In these cases, more information was sought about road safety statistics by State/Territory; and about resources and publications. Similar remarks came forward out of the open questions, but respondents also acknowledged that much of the information they were seeking did not exist.

### ***Yarning place***

Somewhat surprisingly, around 20% of respondents who identified as members of the e-mob reported that they had never visited the yarning place. Of those respondents who had visited the yarning place, most reported visiting between 1 and 5 times.

The respondents who had visited the yarning place found it attractive, clearly explained, clearly written, easy to understand, and easy to use.

The respondents who had used online discussion boards before rated the road safety e-yarning place to be of average quality compared with the other discussion boards.

Responses to the questions about the ease of use and usefulness of the e-yarning board and the e-message stick were not particularly helpful, due mainly to the large

number of 'undecided' responses.<sup>1</sup> Of the people who were not 'undecided', the majority was positive about the ease of use and usefulness of both functions.

### **General comments**

The vast majority of respondents found the web resource and yarning place a valuable resource for people interested in Indigenous road safety and would recommend it to others.

*A great resource that makes a very useful contribution to the field ... I use it regularly and also refer people to it probably every few weeks*

The need for more information on the web resource was an aspect highlighted by a number of respondents, but it was also acknowledged that much of the information they were seeking did not exist:

*There is quite a lot of information I would like to find but which is not there ... more evaluations of programs and more examples of materials produced - but in general these do not exist.*

*... documents about who are the people involved in research and practice, what has been done and published, what is being done and planned*

*... statistics on Indigenous road safety by state*

*... a list of contact people ... that work in the area of Indigenous road safety. [this is the intention of the e-mob list]*

A number of respondents suggested that the resource could be improved with a greater use of visual images and cultural materials.

*Add some simple Indigenous artwork that has some relevance to road safety.*

*Cultural information to support people who may be working with communities for the first time ... to assist in expanding the scope from 'not just being' culturally aware but being culturally competent*

The yarning place attracted a number of comments, some of which highlighted the need for members to realise its potential.

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<sup>1</sup> The large numbers of 'undecided' responses could be due to the fact these questions were at the end of the questionnaire, but, on the other hand, it could mean that most of the respondents did not have a clear impression of what the yarning place services entail.

*Like all communities of practice, it is reliant on the participation of members. The more activity, the more useful it is. ['community of practice' is the generic term used for services like the yarning place]*

*... it needs ... more members and discussion – not much use with little talk.*

*... the idea of a yarning place is an excellent one ... I don't think there are enough people... interested in Indigenous road safety for the community to be viable.*

Some useful suggestions were included among the comments made about promotion of the web resource and yarning place:

*I thought that for a CD to be produced to 'navigate' a web site, it must be pretty complicated - but I was wrong ... keep up the great work*

Some respondents provided suggestions about other aspects of the web resource and yarning place:

*make the text a bit ... less wordy - perhaps by using dots points more  
the term 'road safety' be used at the top of each page*

Some changes have been made to the web resource and yarning place, in response to the results from the questionnaire. A major change has been the recent redevelopment of the yarning place. It has been made less wordy, more visually attractive and easier to navigate.

## **Summary**

The Indigenous road safety web resource and yarning place is a 'one stop info-shop' for people working, studying or interested in the road safety of Indigenous peoples. By providing quality information, knowledge and resources, and supporting e-yarning services, the web resource and yarning place will assist efforts to reduce the impact of road injury and thus contribute to improving the health of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

The evaluation undertaken in 2006 has informed a number of developments of the web resource and yarning place. Two focus groups to be undertaken with Indigenous people in late 2007 will direct attention to how they can be made more user-friendly and attractive for Indigenous users.