

**Engaging with the Community – a case study of best practice road safety consultation.**

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Road Trauma is a leading cause of death & serious injury in WA. 2006/2007 saw an increase in deaths necessitating new, longer term approaches and comprehensive measures. Evidence supports a Safe System road safety philosophy, a profound shift in thinking and insight in society's effort to curb road trauma. A fundamental principle of road safety is shared responsibility where evidence supports community participation making positive contributions to the enhancement of health & road safety initiatives. 'Towards Zero' road safety strategy provides a useful case study of best practice community consultation to guide road safety policy & direction 2008-2020.

Office of Road Safety engaged expertise of two independent community engagement & research agencies ensuring best practice community consultation facilitated the process of participation and effective bureaucratic consultations. A three phase process to gauge community, stakeholder debate and then consultation after the dissemination of 'Towards Zero draft discussion paper' was conducted throughout WA; an online survey & independent representative sample substantiated views of the WA population. Final phase incorporates recommendation to Government based on optimum strategy model balanced with the community and political acceptance and understanding of Safe Systems approach.

A continuum of community participation was utilised to guide findings. Features beyond consultation provided substantive participation (Baum, 2008) where people were engaged and actively involved in determining key findings to guide strategy.

With 4,170 people participating in the process, majority provided strong support for three of the cornerstones of the Safe Systems approach. There were divergent views on speed limit reductions cornerstone particularly with special interest groups/ individuals with community at large less resistant. The consultation findings demonstrated the voice of the community was valued.

Opportunities for participation were transparent and viewed as 'rigorous developments in participatory governance' empowering community, interest groups, stakeholders, political leaders and Road Safety Council to engage in the process, building capacity to support the implementation of the strategy.