

Likely sustainability of a child restraint program among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in 12 communities in NSW

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Abstract

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in road related deaths and serious injury. *Buckle-Up Safely* was developed to work in partnership with twelve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in New South Wales to promote correct use of appropriate restraints. An important element of a community-based program is to ensure that it is tailored to suit the needs of the community and that it is part of a long-term strategy. *Buckle-Up Safely* adheres to these aspects, ensuring that the program promotes strong community engagement and program ownership.

Background

In Australia, road related fatality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-4 years are 4 times higher than for other Australian children the same age.(Henley G & Harrison JE, 2013) Children are less likely to be severely injured in a car crash if they are restrained in an age-appropriate car restraint, used correctly.(Brown & Bilston, 2006) Injury prevention programs have the ability to be more effective when they are: tailored to the needs of the community, part of a long-term strategy, led effectively, and part of a multi-agency collaboration.(Jamieson et al., 2012; Martiniuk, Ivers, Senserrick, Boufous, & Clapham, 2010) For this reason strong community engagement – Elders, local organisations and members of the community, linking in with existing services and resources has been an emphasis of the *Buckle-Up Safely* program.

Aim

The paper describes the program and its potential for sustainability.

Method

Buckle-Up Safely is a multi-faceted program providing various avenues of access to education and resources through the delivery of information and coordination of current Government funded and non-government services. Program elements include: parent and carer information sessions; preschool or childcare based professional development workshops; access to free restraint checks/fittings and, access to highly subsidised child restraints.

Program delivery is guided by the community and coordinated by a locally employed Community Worker recognising their local knowledge to tailor and adapt the program.

Based upon the Precaution, Adoption Process Model, program elements target key stages of the behaviour change model.(Neil D. Weinstein, Peter. M. Sandman, & Susan. J. Blalock,

2008) Information is first targeted to help parents become aware of the importance of and safety benefits associated with using child restraints, then focuses to help parents consider using restraints, leading to correctly using restraints with every car trip.

Governance and Sustainability

Buckle-Up Safely is overseen by a Steering Committee comprising representatives from local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, key government and non-government organisations, providing an opportunity to develop ongoing relationships between those responsible for service delivery at the local level, policy makers and statewide service providers. A key strength of *Buckle-Up Safely* is that it brings together existing services and resources, paving the way for key program elements to extend beyond the project's funded life.

Conclusions

Buckle-Up Safely develops local capacity to enable delivery of a program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in communities throughout New South Wales. The program gains its strength and sustainability from the participation and input of local individuals within each of the sites. *Buckle-Up Safely* will be fully evaluated by December 2016.

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