

## **Safety Town – A Collaborative Approach to Road Safety Education in NSW Schools**

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### **Abstract**

Transport-related fatalities are a leading cause of death of NSW children aged 5 to 14. The NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-2021 highlights road safety education as a key countermeasure to reduce casualties in this vulnerable road user group. Developed as part of an enduring partnership between Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and the education sectors, Safety Town is a novel, interactive online road safety tool for primary schools. Authentic collaborative partnerships were pivotal in developing this resource. Augmented by professional learning for teachers, Safety Town positions road safety education within a Safe System framework, and meets the needs of all partners.

### **Background**

In NSW, transport-related fatalities are a leading cause of death of children aged 5 to 14 (NSW Child Death Review Team, 2016). Road safety is taught in schools as part of the mandatory NSW Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) curriculum.

Local road safety issues are addressed using a whole-school approach. This recognises that schools, families and local communities can sustain positive, reciprocal interactions beyond the classroom to support road safety education.

Road safety education is a crucial element of the Safe System. While road systems should be designed to accommodate human fragility and error, road users also have crucial roles to play by complying with legislation and road safety guidelines.

### **Our collaborative partnership**

A 30-year partnership exists in NSW between TfNSW, NSW Department of Education, Association of Independent Schools NSW, Catholic Education Commission and the Kids and Traffic Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program. This unique partnership extends beyond resource development to joint initiatives, dissemination of policy advice and filtering of educational insights into statutory and policy documents.

There are 36 road safety education specialists who support schools K–12 and early childhood services. They provide road safety professional learning to teachers, with a focus on quality teaching and consistent road safety messages for families, teachers and students.

Development of Safety Town was a hands-on collaboration between TfNSW and the education sectors. Regular consultation, writing, evaluation and feedback were pivotal to producing a quality road safety education resource.

### **Safety Town**

Safety Town ([www.safetytown.com.au](http://www.safetytown.com.au)) is a 'one-stop-road-safety-shop' designed to actively engage primary teachers, students and their families in road safety education. It promotes adult–child road safety conversations at home, at school and in communities. The website can be freely accessed in classrooms and by families at home. It encourages sharing of consistent road safety messages – a key success factor in promoting safe travel practices.

Students are acknowledged as active participants in their road safety learning. Many of the activities support their developing understandings of how the human body is impacted by involvement in a crash –a key principle underpinning the Safe System approach. Students are not only engaged with learning what they and the adults in their lives need to do to keep safe, but also why they should adopt specific road safety behaviours and how these behaviours can prevent death or serious injury (Kids and Traffic, 2016).

### **Response to Safety Town**

Teachers are responding very enthusiastically. Feedback indicates teaching materials that meet a number of different syllabus outcomes, along with activities that make road safety more engaging for students are especially valued. July–December 2016 saw a 54% increase in visitors in comparison to the same period the previous year.

### **Conclusion**

TfNSW's long-term collaborative education partnership is pivotal to the ongoing success of Safety Town and continues to meet the needs of all road safety partners.

### **References**

Transport for NSW. (2012). *NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-2021*.

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