

Crash data – when it's wrong, are we putting more lives at risk?

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Abstract

Port Stephens Council in NSW, is proactive in road safety and is evident by Council's award winning educational programs & civil projects. Local Government relies on accurate data to review and design treatments that aid in the reduction of casualty crashes on local roads.

Council is increasingly concerned over misreporting of crash locations within our LGA in official records and is questioning how widespread the issue is?

Misreported crashes, unless corrected, can be a domino effect of treatments in the wrong location to treat nonexistent crashes and at worst, misappropriation of Government funding in this critical area of national focus.

Road Safety Issues

Firstly, as a fellow stakeholder in Road Safety, Council is not critical or unaware of the Police task at a crash scene and the stressful situations that have to be faced in the line of duty. Port Stephens is part of two Local Area Commands and issues highlighted are not exclusive to either area. What we are stressing is that the accuracy of information is crucial in prevention of further incidents at or near that location if an engineering solution can contribute to future gains in road safety.

In NSW, crash data is supplied by Police to RMS who then make the information available to stakeholders and the public. Councils use the data and local knowledge to assess locations for road improvement and for applications to Federal and State funding agencies for road safety projects.

Council's own investigation of the serious crash locations is undertaken to check possible road related factors on local roads. In too many cases Council contacts Police or RMS to ensure the data is correct on official fatal crash report or serious injury data. If this is not done, from our experience, data goes on unchanged over many years. As a result, historical crash data for the most recent five years that is used for funding of major projects can remain corrupted.

Port Stephens Council is questioning if the process of official logging of an event by generation of a latitude and longitude location through descriptions such as a RUM code and location descriptions such as '2km west of Pacific Hwy' as an example, has out lived its usefulness? When analyzing crash data, these generic distances from intersections raise accuracy concerns immediately. Stakeholders in road safety may be aware of this issue. Over the years at forums and conferences the discussion of accuracy leads to a story of a 'trial of GPS locator where the crashes were recorded in the police station', this urban myth has run its course when the technology exists on any device to give a latitude / longitude position including the NSW State Government's promoted Emergency + application for mobile phones.

Port Stephens Council has accumulated data and case studies of misreported crashes that we are aware of, to assist accuracy of RMS / Police data official records (example on next page).

Year	Crash Severity	Crash #	Date	Street	Suburb	Road	Distance from FCR crash location to actual location (metres)	PSC Advice on locatio To RMS / Police	Data corrected Yes / No @ 15.2.18
2017	Fatal Crash	1144147	1.8.17	Pacific Highway	Kings Hill	State	1600m	Yes - Feb 2018	No
	Fatal Crash	1130397	16.3.17	Clarencetown Rd	Woodville	Local	1700m	Yes - Mar 2017	Yes
2016	Fatal Crash	1122704	12.12.16	Newline Rd	Raymond Terrace	Local	450m	Yes - Jan 2017	No
	Fatal Crash	1107987	21.7.16	Nelson Bay Rd	Bobs Farm	State	400m	Yes - July 2016	Yes
	Fatal Crash	1095184	8.3.16	Tomago Rd	Tomago	State	1270m	Yes - Mar 2016	Yes
2014	Fatal Crash	857706	13.1.14	Port Stephens Dr	Anna Bay	Local	530m	Yes - Oct 2017	Yes - Police database only
2013	Fatal Crash	845739	23.9.13	Paterson Rd	Woodville	Local	RUM incorrect	No	No
	Serious Injury	856381	23.9.13	Clarencetown Rd	Seaham	Regional	510m	Yes - Jul 2017	No
2012	Fatal Crash	782399	18.3.12	Richardson Rd	Campvale	State	900m	Yes - Mar 2012	No
	Serious Injury	785303	20.2.12	Port Stephens Dr	Anna Bay	Local	370m	Yes - Aug 2017	Yes - Police database only
2010	Serious Injury	734303	9.11.10	Gan Gan Rd	Nelson Bay	Local	900m	Yes - 2014	No
2006	Fatal Crash	F06344	3.9.06	Mustons Rd	Karuah	Local	750m	Yes - 2007&2009	No

Port Stephens Council- Serious Crash Location Records: 2006 – 2017

One of these crashes listed had the property address of the fatal crash in the thorough Police narrative, which occurred in front of the driveway, and still was recorded as over 1 km in the wrong direction from the nearest cross street. This example raises questions such as, is the initial reported location by the public becoming the official crash location with a post generated latitude and longitude?

Port Stephens Council is concerned that the issues raised seem to be increasing regardless of available technology and is asking these questions to promote conversation that leads to a process change that benefits road safety for all our communities.