

Merging in the Years Ahead – providing interactive road safety education to senior drivers

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Abstract

With older South Australian drivers continuing to be overrepresented in our state's road toll, RAA provides ongoing road safety education to older road users. RAA's new program, *Years Ahead – Road Rules Quiz*, uses interactive technology to generate valuable data, which highlights the knowledge gaps faced by older road users. The program provides participants with up-to-date information and allows RAA to understand the challenges and issues faced by these drivers so that we can target these particular issues in future advocacy and education.

Background

RAA has always advocated for people to continue driving as long as they are safe to do so. The question we asked ourselves was: what can we do to support this ideology, to keep these drivers safe?

Older drivers continue to be overrepresented in the road toll each year in South Australia. A total of 243 older road users (65+ years) were killed on our roads in the last 10 years, equating to approximately 24% of the state's total road toll over the same period. This is concerning given that they only make up 18.2% of the population in South Australia. Of these fatalities, 101 were drivers of a vehicle and 57 were pedestrians (*Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, 2019*). As South Australia has an older and more car dependent population compared with the rest of Australia, this issue is significant (18.2% of SA is 65+ years compared to the national average of 15.8%) (*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018*).

In line with safe system principles (*National Road Safety Strategy, 2018*), RAA addresses this issue by providing a number of education programs for senior road users, including the Years Ahead program. Years Ahead has now been delivered for 10 years and has educated more than 16,000 participants.

Method

Over the past 12 months, RAA has introduced a new Road Rules interactive quiz to the Years Ahead program suite. Using the Lumi software, we have converted a PowerPoint presentation into an interactive program. The Lumi Click handsets (see Figure 1) are user-friendly devices that display on-screen feedback to attendees.

We have used this technology to present a number of the most misunderstood and newest road rules in a multiple choice quiz. Each participant is provided with a Lumi Click handset, enabling them to answer each question in real time. The group's results are then displayed which, particularly when quite varied, generates a robust discussion around the choices made and what the legislation states for each question.

Following the presentation, the facilitator encourages participants to periodically take the online driving test or obtain the latest version of the Driver's Handbook to update their road rule knowledge. Once the session is complete the data is then collated and saved by the program.



Figure 1 (IClick – Interactive Presentation Solutions, 2016)

Results

To date, RAA has used the interactive Road Rules Quiz to educate and inform around 90 groups – comprising 2,000 individuals – across South Australia. This has provided us with a substantial sample size from which to extract valuable data.

The retrospective analysis of the questionnaire data from these presentations has provided us with an insight into older drivers' knowledge of the Australian Road Rules. In the majority of questions, around one quarter to a third of participants chose the incorrect answer, with a couple of questions scoring even higher.

For example:

- ❖ 77% of people did not know the safe following distance behind another vehicle
- ❖ 75% did not know the law requiring drivers to indicate when leaving a roundabout
- ❖ 37% did not know which driver gives way at a zip merge.

Implications

The data collected demonstrates extensive knowledge gaps in older South Australian road users. This has prompted the RAA to develop a second Road Rules Quiz and cross-promote older driver refresher courses through our community engagement programs.

RAA's aim is to continue providing quality education programs to older drivers in the hope that we make an impact on the number of fatalities in this state as we head towards zero.

References

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