

Government and Community Hand-in-Hand

Glenda Negus¹; Greg Stead¹; Julie Edwards² (Presenter)
¹Kidsafe NSW; ²Motor Accidents Authority

Biography

Julie is a Road Safety Advisor at the NSW Motor Accidents Authority. Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Science and a Masters in Educational Psychology. Julie has been working in the road safety field for more than 10 years and her current responsibilities include the development and implementation of the MAA Child Road Safety Program.

Abstract

In the field of child road safety, walking hand in hand is a key message, both to parents, as a reminder for vigilance in the traffic environment, and to road safety stakeholders, as a guide for best practice. The Motor Accidents Authority (MAA) and Kidsafe NSW have worked in partnership on a number of projects and continue to contribute to child road safety at local and state levels.

The MAA is the regulator of NSW's compulsory third party personal injury (or CTP) insurance scheme and has a legislative role to support injury prevention and contribute to the reduction of injury and disability as a result of crashes on NSW roads.

Kidsafe NSW is a well-established community, charity-based organisation, with a statewide presence in the domain of child safety and the capacity to work with communities at a local level. As a neutral agency, credible in the domain of child safety and injury prevention, Kidsafe acts as a key communicator and is able to promote child safety, coordinate consultation, and collaborate with a number of key stakeholders and community representatives.

Combining the Motor Accidents Authority's core business interest in road safety and Kidsafe's core business in child safety, this partnership conducts research and implements strategies to address child road safety issues and countermeasures. Recent joint ventures include the Child Pedestrian Safety In Communities Project (November 2001 – June 2003), consisting of the "kids need a hand in traffic" media campaign, community grants, a website and resource development, and the Child Road Safety Initiative (July 2003 – January 2005), addressing child passenger, pedestrian, and pedal cyclist safety issues.

Input from key stakeholders, through consultation and collaboration, has been a critical component to the efficiency and effectiveness of strategies, with projects building from previous lessons. Successes and challenges will be discussed from both partnership and project perspectives and provide insight into experience with meaningful partnerships.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kidsafe NSW and the Motor Accidents Authority are very different organisations, in both structure and overall purpose, working together towards a shared goal – that is, improving child road safety. Together they have addressed issues including child occupant restraints, bicycle safety and pedestrian safety and have contributed to improving child road safety in NSW. A number of factors have contributed to the continuation of this partnership, and a number of challenges and barriers have been overcome for continued success with child safety projects and initiatives.

2. TWO INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATIONS

To explain the partnership, it is necessary to begin by looking at the individual organisations.

2.1 Kidsafe

Kidsafe NSW is trading name for the NSW office of the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia. Operating since 1979, the NSW office is currently based in the grounds of the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Although based within NSW Health grounds, Kidsafe is a non-government, not-for-profit, charity based organisation, which relies on external funding to conduct day-to-day business to achieve its goals.

Kidsafe NSW has a statewide presence in the domain of child safety and injury prevention, with a charter to reduce the number and severity of unintentional injuries to children. Numerous issues are encompassed within child safety and can be broadly categorised into home safety, playground safety and road safety. These are the current units of Kidsafe NSW (namely the Home Safety Unit, Playground Advisory Unit, and Child Road Safety Initiative).

Looking specifically at the Child Road Safety Initiative, road safety is a priority area for child safety. The 2001-2002 NSW Child Death Review Team (2002) reported that "transport fatalities formed the largest group of external cause of death for children 0-17 years in the reporting period (n=50)".

Kidsafe's role in addressing child road safety includes:

- responding to public and media enquiries
- working with communities at a local level
- utilising current research and updates in the field
- consulting and collaborating with stakeholders and community representatives
- managing specific child road safety projects.

2.2 Motor Accidents Authority (MAA)

The Motor Accidents Authority is a statutory corporation that regulates the NSW Motor Accidents Scheme, which is the Compulsory Third Party (CTP) personal injury insurance scheme for motor vehicles registered in New South Wales.

MAA's role is to have a CTP Insurance and Compensation scheme that is affordable, fair and accessible by:

- being an effective regulator
- promoting appropriate treatment of injured persons
- providing medical and claims assessments in disputed cases
- providing advice to the Minister, Board, Council, Parliamentary Committee and stakeholders
- supporting injury prevention initiatives.

This last point highlights MAA role in contributing to the reduction of the incidence and impact of road trauma in NSW and supporting safety education. In line with general goals, the MAA's road safety activity focuses on decreasing serious injuries and gives priority to those areas that incur the greatest costs to the CTP scheme.

Current road safety priorities for the MAA include:

- young people aged 17 to 25 years
- children aged 0 to 16 years as pedestrians, passengers and pedal cyclists
- pedestrians
- motorcyclists

3. WHY KIDSAFE & MAA WORK TOGETHER

Why are a non-government charity and a state government regulatory insurance agency working together? Why have these projects been successful?

A key factor is a clear shared objective to reduce the incidence and impact of road injuries to children in NSW. MAA's priority area of children aged 0 to 16 years (as pedestrians, passengers and pedal cyclists) matches with the core business of Kidsafe addressing road safety as part of its charter to increase the safety of children.

MAA and Kidsafe NSW contribute to the partnership through:

MAA

- Statewide connections
- A strong road safety network at a statewide level
- Road safety and management expertise
- Access to funding

Kidsafe

- Community presence
- Established child safety recognition
- Structure for project management
- Structure for a road safety unit

Partnership benefits to Kidsafe NSW include:

- Funding – for a charity-based organisation, funding is an essential factor for core business and projects
- Links to a state-level road safety network
- Support from a state government department.

Partnership benefits to MAA include:

- Links with an organisation committed to and with community credibility on child safety issues, including road safety.
- Positive public perception of and interest in campaigns due to established links with community
- Cost effective project delivery.

4. EXAMPLES OF JOINT KIDSAFE & MAA PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Due to these benefits to both organisations, Kidsafe and MAA have addressed various child road safety issues including the following:

Child Restraint Program (1996-1997)

- To promote the use and correct fitting of child restraints to low and non users of child restraints (C. Pollachini, 1996)
- Included a NSW Child Restraint Network Committee, radio campaign, print media campaign (C. Pollachini, 1996)
- This project established a sound basis for future joint initiatives and was recognised with a Windscreens O'Brien Road Safety Award.

Research and Development of a Campaign for the Prevention of Childhood Pedestrian and Bicycle Injury (1997)

- A feasibility study investigated campaign possibilities to prevent child pedestrian and bicycle injuries.
- A literature search identified that there was very little research concerning the role and responsibilities of parents in child road safety.

A Study of Parents' Attitudes and Behaviours for Child Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety (1997-1999)

- This research sought information about parental behaviour, attitudes and perception in relation to child pedestrian and bicycle safety issues. Over 1,900 parents (English, Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese speaking) living in greater metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong were surveyed by telephone.
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Childhood Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Injury Prevention – Promotion and Networking Minor Project (2000-2001)

- Research findings were promoted to community workers involved with the three ethnic communities surveyed and the 16 local government areas which have the highest incidence of child pedestrian and bicyclist injury and to identify possible links and avenues for the next phase (Kidsafe, 1999)
 - In addition the Injury Risk Management Research Centre was requested by the MAA to undertake a review of the NSW hospital admissions data to provide further information on children aged 5-10 years admitted to hospital injured as pedestrians (Kidsafe, 1999).
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Kidsafe / MAA Child Pedestrian Safety In Communities Project (2001-2003)

- An 18 month project addressing the awareness of parents and carers in regard to child pedestrian safety within 16 priority local government areas (G. Negus, 2003)
 - Components of this project included facilitating small grants in local communities; designing and uploading website pages; developing and distributing resources; and developing and running the “kids need a hand in traffic” media campaign. This campaign achieved substantial recall of the media elements and high recognition of the “kids need a hand in traffic” message. Further the campaign evaluation indicates that 63% of respondents aware of the campaign stated that they were more conscious of holding their children’s hands in traffic (G.Negus, 2003)
 - The Project was coordinated through an intersectoral steering committee.
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Kidsafe / MAA Child Road Safety Initiative (2003-2004)

- An 18 month initiative is currently underway and aims to contribute to addressing the issues of child restraints, pedestrian safety, driveway safety, and bicycle safety.

The Child Pedestrian Safety in Communities Project will be used to illustrate the various aspects and challenges of working in partnership.

5. FUNDER-RECIPIENT RELATIONSHIP VS WORKING PARTNERSHIP

What contributes to the success of these projects and the successful partnership of Kidsafe and the MAA?

As opposed to a purely funder-recipient relationship, this is a working partnership. As demonstrated with the Child Pedestrian Safety In Communities Project (G.Negus, 2003) this partnership has included:

- Communication - There is constant communication, including informal phone calls and emails, as well as formal updates and reporting processes.
- Representation - Both Kidsafe and MAA are represented on the Steering Committee with the MAA chairing the meeting.
- Decisions - There is collaborative decision making for all major project decisions.
- Ownership – There is joint ownership of creative concepts, media and resources. Due to the nature of the project, including strategies such as a media campaign, resources, and

grants (all with both Kidsafe and MAA logos), approval of all materials had to be gained from both MAA and Kidsafe.

- Recognition – With promotion of both organisations through resources and media, there was joint recognition for the project. For example, the “kids need a hand in traffic” radio advertisement.

Both organisations played a key role in the project: MAA - strategic direction and support; and Kidsafe - project management and delivery.

6. CHALLENGES

Challenges encountered by the partnership include:

- Ownership - Joint ownership comes with negotiation and compromise. It was necessary to take into account both organisations perspectives when negotiating funding and expenditure.
- Processes & procedures - Both organisations have separate approval processes and procedures. It was necessary to ascertain which processes were necessary for both organisations. For example, the MAA have a number of steps to follow for the approval of a media campaign, where Kidsafe’s approval process is more straightforward. However for the purpose of joint recognition for the campaign it was necessary to follow both.
- Changing management - The project commenced in a period of turbulence within Kidsafe management. Due to unforeseen circumstances there were 3 Executive Officers and periods without an Executive Officer during the Child Pedestrian Safety In Communities Project. This situation necessitated more independence by the Project Coordinator and increased management by the Motor Accidents Authority by way of approval for project decisions.

7. BRIDGES

A number of factors contributed to facilitating the partnership and achieving goals including:

- Rapport - A history of joint projects provided an established rapport between the two organisations
- Structure – the structure of both organisations has facilitated both hosting a project and overseeing projects. In particular, the recent work of the MAA to prepare a Child Road Safety Plan provides a framework which recognises the priority of child road safety to the MAA and supports activity towards plan objectives
- Staffing – The Project Coordinator is a key player in this equation. Both Kidsafe and the MAA interviewed and selected the Project Coordinator, negotiated the project direction and were instrumental in briefing the project coordinator and maintaining support. Important elements included communication skills and project management skills, as well as a background with both government and charity organisations. This background provides a basis for networking skills as well as an understanding of the perspective, structures and procedures of both organisations
- Key Stakeholders - It is important to acknowledge, that although Kidsafe and MAA are the key agencies, many other key stakeholders have been involved with the projects in consultative and decision making roles. Without the support and input from these organisations, departments and sectors, these projects would not have achieved what they have. For example the Child Pedestrian Safety in Communities Project was coordinated by a Steering Committee with representatives from Kidsafe NSW, MAA, the Roads & Traffic Authority, the Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program, the Injury Prevention Branch - NSW Health, the Department of Education & Training, and NRMA Motoring & Services. This steering committee was particularly helpful in ensuring that the project complemented other child road safety initiatives.

8. LESSONS LEARNT

For successful partnerships a number of elements are crucial. These include:

- Aligned goals and objectives
- Compatible contributions - an organisation with a budget and an organisation with capacity
- Open communication
- Joint ownership.

9. CONCLUSIONS

There are many advantages to working in partnership with non-government organisations (NGO's) or community-based organisations. These organisations, such as Kidsafe, have the capacity to address issues within their core role that align with other organisations and departments aims and objectives. Together more can be achieved to benefit both organisations and, in this instance, the issue of child road safety.

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Keywords

Partnerships; Children; Road Safety; Community Organisations