

## Can \$2000 make a difference?

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### Background

As a vulnerable and high risk group, young people remain a key target group in the WA Road Safety Strategy *Towards Zero 2008-2020* as they are frequent users of the road and transport system in our state, as pedestrians, passengers, cyclists, drivers, and increasingly as moped riders.

It is widely recognised that effective road safety education provides the best opportunity for achieving a sustained improvement in behaviour change and a reduction in road trauma for children and young people. However, despite many innovative school-based interventions, there is little evidence-based research that demonstrates positive changes in children's road safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviours (SDERA 2007). This makes choosing, and then implementing, effective road safety programs challenging for school administrators and practitioners. Additionally, scarce resources and competing priorities within school communities contribute to the difficulties of promoting and implementing a new program and reinforce the need for concrete evidence for educators on what constitutes effective road safety education (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2009).

In 2006, the National Road Safety Education Forum, a nationally representative group of senior managers who oversee the implementation of road safety education in schools, agreed that a set of nationally-relevant principles of best practice would enhance the effectiveness of road safety education in schools. This follows a pattern established by other health fields where principles rather than 'How to manuals' have been developed to guide decision-making in school communities.

SDERA coordinated and commissioned the research project, with some financial input from other jurisdictions including South Australia and Victoria, and contracted the Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University in WA to develop the *Principles for School Road Safety Education*. After a robust and systematic review and analysis of empirical, theoretical and practical evidence for best practice school road safety education, draft principles were developed. An internal review of the draft principles by a panel of expert National road safety education practitioners and policy makers ratified the 16 *Principles*. The *Principles* provide a framework of core concepts and values to guide the planning, implementation and review of road safety education programs, policies and practice in school communities. The *Principles* ensure content and delivery methods of road safety education are consistent with what is currently understood to be best practice in the field.

A whole-school approach and increased efficacy are key elements of the *Principles*. This approach is also fundamental in that it is a way for schools and educators to contribute to the *Towards Zero* strategy, by helping schools focus on:

- best practice

- a shared responsibility between school staff, parents, community and students
- a collaborative approach to road safety that includes parent and community involvement, sound teaching and learning programs, and an enrichment of the school ethos and environment
- a high level of road user compliance and responsibility
- positive student attitudes towards being an advocate for their own road user behaviour and that of their peers.

In 2009 SDERA developed, and then published, the resource *Getting it Together: A Whole-School Approach to Road Safety Education (Getting it Together)*. This resource is based on the research conducted by the Child Health Promotion Research Centre. The resource endorses a whole-school approach to road safety education and focuses on the *Principles* and the three components of the *Health Promoting Schools Framework* (HPS Framework) - Curriculum, Ethos and Environment, and Parents and Community. The aim of this resource is to assist school communities to develop School Road Safety Guidelines and Action Plans in order to assess, plan and implement a whole-school approach to road safety education.

In partnership with the launch of the *Getting it Together* resource, all WA schools were invited to apply for a SDERA Road Safety Education Grant. The purpose of the \$2000 grant was to provide schools with an incentive to develop School Road Safety Guidelines using the *Getting it Together* resource as a guide. A total of 44 schools applied for a very limited number of grants. SDERA requested applications in the form of a brief Expression of Interest.

### **SDERA Road Safety Education Grant Process**

Grants were advertised through a variety of sources including system and sector e-newsletters and publications, the WA Council of State School Organisations E-news, and the SDERA News and website. Additionally, all schools received a letter from SDERA which accompanied the *Getting it Together* resource and outlined the grant process.

Of the 44 schools who completed an Expression of Interest, 37 were Department of Education, 4 were Association of Independent Schools WA, 2 Catholic Education Office and 1 other. Furthermore, of those schools that applied for funding, 29 were Primary Schools (PS), 12 were District High Schools (DHS), High Schools (HS), Colleges or Senior High Schools (SHS), and three were Education Support Centres (ESC). 12 schools were successful. The majority of schools funded were Department of Education Primary Schools in regional areas.

### **Grant Specifics**

Grants were offered to those schools whose applications endorsed a whole-school approach, used strategies to address all three components of the *HPS Framework* and promoted the *Principles*, and supported the *Towards Zero* strategy.

Successful schools received a *Road Safety Grant Information Pack*, were offered support in the form of a half-day visit from a SDERA Consultant and were able to access ongoing SDERA professional learning. SDERA developed a 12-month timeframe with a series of milestone outputs. Each successful grant recipient was required to adhere to these or negotiate a more suitable completion date for the individual output (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Key Outputs – 2009-2010 Road Safety Education Grant

KEY OUTPUTS	COMPLETION DATE
Completed pre-questionnaire returned to SDERA	12 May 2009
School representative/s attend <i>Getting it Together: A Whole-School Approach to Road Safety Education</i> SDERA professional learning workshop	26 June 2009 or 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2009
Form a School Road Safety Leadership Team	31 July 2009
Develop a School Road Safety Action Plan	30 September 2009
Commence road safety strategies identified in School Road Safety Action Plan	1 October 2009
Develop School Road Safety Guidelines	30 June 2010
Completed post-questionnaire returned to SDERA	30 June 2010

### **SDERA Road Safety Grant – Pre-questionnaire**

Funding recipients were required to complete a pre-questionnaire to establish baseline data. Questions in the pre-questionnaire covered areas such as: recipients' understanding of road safety issues, level of support for road safety education in the school community, road safety concerns in the school community, and the strategies the school community currently uses to address road safety concerns.

Data collected from the grant recipients stated that whilst 66% rated the priority their school placed on road safety as either moderate or high, 25% rated the priority as low. Of particular interest is that the same schools that rated the priority their school placed on road safety as low, also stated that there was a low level of support by the parent body for road safety education in their schools, and furthermore that the level of support for the inclusion of road safety education in the curriculum by school staff was also low.

### **Road Safety Concerns**

Significant uniformity existed within the 12 schools funded for what constituted as road safety concerns within the school environment. All schools funded suggested that students' crossing the road to get to and from school was of significant concern. 92% of funding recipients stated that students' cycling to and from school was of concern and 83% suggested that parking in and around the school area was an issue. 42% of funded recipients acknowledged that unsafe driver behaviour in the school vicinity was of concern. Furthermore, 42% suggested that there was a lack of road safety education for students in the school curriculum.

## **School Road Safety Guidelines**

*School Road Safety Guidelines* aim to keep young people safer in the traffic environment and encourage a shared commitment to road safety between parents, staff and students. Research suggests that when guidelines are developed in consultation with school community members, and are clear and well communicated, they are more likely to be implemented and effective (SDERA 2007).

Only three of the grant schools had existing School Road Safety Guidelines whereas five of the schools had already established a Road Safety Committee. At the time of receiving grant funding, eight of the schools were implementing SDERA road safety programs including *Challenges and Choices* (for 4-15 year olds) and *Keys for Life* (for 15-18 year olds). Five schools had previously utilised other road safety agencies eg RAC and Western Australia Police.

## **Initiatives, Strategies and Aims**

In analysing the types of initiatives or strategies schools wanted to implement from the funding, similarities were found. All schools wanted to use the funding for more than one initiative. 83% of schools sought to implement classroom programs to meet specific needs, 66% of schools wanted to develop, implement and analyse a road safety survey, and 58% of schools wanted to develop and distribute information flyers throughout the school community. Other general strategies included parent evenings with more specific activities focusing on implementing programs for using public transport safely and bike education days in conjunction with Local Councils.

Schools funded had similar aims with slight variations depending on the specific needs of their school community. All schools were enthused by the opportunity to develop a whole-school approach to road safety, for raising awareness of specific issues pertinent to their school, and formalising programs within the school community. Many of the schools were also focused on parents/carers modelling appropriate attitudes and behaviours to road safety. Strategies for achieving this included presenting parents with opportunities to enhance their own knowledge and understanding of road safety issues, and providing them with insight into the impact they can have on their own children's road safety choices, behaviour and attitudes.

Strategies chosen to be implemented by the funding recipients support the notion that there needs to be a shift from traditional perceptions about how to respond to the health and safety issues of young people, that is a curriculum-based knowledge only approach, to an approach which harnesses the community and community environment to explore values and attitudes in partnership with knowledge to practise safe road user behaviours.

## **Post-questionnaire Results and Comparisons**

Each funded school was required to complete a post-questionnaire that outlined their outcomes. All schools completed this document. Results from the questionnaire stated that seven schools remained consistent in their understanding of road safety issues

specific to children. Significant shifts were noted in four schools with knowledge levels increasing from *below average* to *average* and *average* to *above average*. One school reported that their knowledge base increased from *below average* to *very high* with the issue of road safety being prioritised within the school community.

## Road Safety Concerns

In the pre-questionnaire schools listed their road safety concerns. All schools suggested that walking to and from school were of significant concern. To address this concern, schools devised a number of strategies including:

- the marking of safe routes to and from school on footpaths and the marking of safe entry and exit points to the school
- the development of a 'walking school bus'
- regular walk to school days with parents and community members modeling correct road safety behaviours.

83% of grant recipients stated that parking around schools was a specific concern. To address this schools have utilised a variety of strategies including:

- creation of designated 'kiss n ride' areas
- signage around the school indicating student drop-off areas
- lobbying of local councils to establish further designated parking areas.

In the pre-questionnaire 50% of the grant recipients stated that there was a lack of explicit road safety education being taught within the school curriculum. With the grant funding, all of these schools developed classroom programs. Of note is that three of these schools, who had previously not taught the *Challenges and Choices* program, introduced this to their students during the funding period. Additionally, these schools have made a commitment, through their guidelines, to continue to teach road safety education using the SDERA resources.

## School Road Safety Guidelines

On conclusion of the grant timeframe, 10 schools had formalised their guidelines. Eight of the schools have modeled their guidelines on the template provided by SDERA in the *Getting it Together* resource with one of the schools choosing to include key elements of the guidelines within their Health Promoting Schools Guidelines. Discussion with grant recipients highlighted the value of having the simple and user-friendly guide to assist in the development of their guidelines. Table 2 illustrates the key elements for inclusion in the guidelines and how schools addressed these.

Table 2: School Road Safety Guidelines

School Road Safety Guidelines – Key elements	Grant recipients – How the key elements were applied
1. State the school's road safety vision and goals	Schools wrote a succinct vision for road safety within their school community. The visions outlined where the schools would 'like to be'. Seven of the schools chose to use, and modify slightly, the vision created by SDERA in the template

	<p>provided. A sample vision is included below:</p> <p><i>'At Dalkeith PS we believe that a road safety policy provides a framework of common understanding for students, staff, parents and the community. Road safety is an essential part of the wellbeing of our students and we aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for the school community. We endeavour to engage the whole-school community in our road safety initiatives and we are committed to providing our students with road safety education across all year levels.</i></p> <p><i>The main intention of this policy is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our students who use the services and facilities of this school. We do this by assessing the risks in the road environment around our school, developing practical school management procedures and ensuring that curriculum that pertains to all road safety issues is taught to our students'.</i></p>
2. Highlight strategies being used to achieve road safety goals	In developing their guidelines, nine of the schools clearly used the <i>HPS Framework</i> to outline strategies which included for example: using school communication methods to share the road safety message within the school community, dedicated road safety weeks, and incursions to complement explicit road safety curriculum being delivered in the classroom.
3. Focus on improving road safety in and around the school	In their guidelines, schools have outlined the strategies they will use to improve road safety in and around the school. Some examples include: the development of designated school traffic management plans, developing traffic management brochures for distribution to parents/carers, establishment of 'kiss n drive' areas and the creation of signage around the school.
4. Identify roles and responsibilities of school staff and parent groups	Included within the guidelines, schools have stated roles for parents/carers, school staff, students and leadership teams.
5. Identify agencies who can contribute to achieving the school's safety vision	Schools included in their guidelines agencies that could assist in the delivery of their road safety programs eg Local Councils, Police, Roadwise, and the Public Transport Authority.
6. Provide guidance on school road safety issues	The guidelines outline how schools will achieve their vision and what strategies they will use to achieve this.
7. Be reviewed on a regular basis	None of the schools included a review date but some suggested that the guidelines were current for a specified timeframe (eg three years). The task of review was not allocated to any particular individual or group within the school.

### **Initiatives, Strategies and Aims**

The strategies and initiatives used by the schools for their road safety programs endorse Elliot's (2000) viewpoint which suggests that children learn best in a social context when they are interacting in meaningful ways with their peers and adults. Peg's Creek PS, one of the funded recipients, utilised this philosophy in the development of safe pathways to and from school. Students, staff and parents worked together to establish safe routes to school and then to paint the SDERA mascot, Izzy, on the pathways indicating where it was safe to walk. Collaborating on this project enhanced and encouraged the development of a workable relationship between the school, parents and the community to deliver a shared road safety message in a culturally appropriate manner.

Waksman and Piritto (2005) suggest educational programs which include parents are often more successful than those that do not as they result in improved supervision and positive role modelling. The inclusion of parents in road safety programs by the funding recipients is well documented. Comet Bay PS has encouraged parents to be active members on the Road Safety Committee, and a series of parent morning teas to discuss road safety initiatives and to gather support, have been held. Numerous schools used information sessions and established school communication channels, such as the school newsletter, to progress road safety initiatives. Peg's Creek had this to say about including parents in their road safety program:

*'A large focus was placed on parent participation to ensure the success of the 'Walk Safe to School Day' event. Whilst most parents used strategies to keep their children safe in the road environment they didn't necessarily understand the powerful influence and impact that they as role models had on their children's road safety attitudes and behaviours. Some of the strategies that supported parents' participation included:*

- *morning tea road safety information sessions provided by the P&C*
- *P&C 'Chat' newsletters incorporating developmentally appropriate and inclusive road safety information for all school years*
- *shopping centre displays and information stands*
- *parents supervising and assisting students to paint Izzy templates on the footpaths*
- *parents full participation in the event by either walking from home to school with their children or parking their car outside the school grounds and walking the designated safe routes to school with their children'.*

*The now inaugural National Walk Safe to School Day event has expanded to become a Walk Safe to School Week event. However, many students now walk or ride to school daily under parental supervision. With the bonus of increased exercise and the opportunity for socialisation there has been a fostering of community connectedness, in particular among parents who are generally taking more interest in school activities'.*

Booth and Samdal (1997), in introducing the *HPS Framework*, suggest that the formal curriculum should equip students with sufficient knowledge to make informed choices about their health as young people and adults, foster the development of a range of cognitive, physical and interpersonal skills, and support aspects of intrapersonal development including personal values, positive self-concept and resilience. Halls Head Community College ESC has attempted to ensure that the curriculum that they provide to their students is culturally and developmentally appropriate. They have modified the existing *Challenges and Choices* resources to suit their learners. Furthermore they have engaged their learners through interactive strategies of multiple-session duration where students were required to complete an observational traffic survey. The results were then compiled, with the assistance of staff, to be presented to administration in the school. It is anticipated that the student analysis is to be used in the development of a traffic management plan for the school.

## **Barriers**

A number of the funded recipients suggested impediments to the full achievement of their aims. Barriers included:

1. Lack of time for collaborative planning within the school community.
2. Large size of the school community requires continual motivation and ongoing support to engage in and support safe road practices.
3. School building works meant continual adjustment of the planning process to ensure messages about safe entry and exit points to the school were updated and communicated to the school community.
4. Crowded curriculum which left limited amount of time to include explicit road safety teaching and learning opportunities.
5. Harnessing parent involvement in sharing the road safety message and modelling best practice road safety behaviours.
6. Targeting hard-to-reach parents.
7. Sustainability of projects in schools with changing administration, staff and the parent body.
8. Embedding the cultural change within the school community.

Four funded recipients suggested that an increase in the funding timeframe would have assisted in the full achievement of their project aim. Additionally, one funded recipient stated that they would like ongoing support for programs that target the courtesy of parent drivers as a means of modeling future safe driver practices.

### **Peg’s Creek Primary School – Grant Project Overview**

Peg’s Creek PS is a multi-cultural school centrally located in the mining town of Karratha, 1557km north-west of Perth.

Aim of the Grant Project	To provide a safer environment for the whole-school community.
Road safety issues within the school community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Congestion and parking</li> <li>2. Signage</li> <li>3. Students crossing the road, and cycling to and from school</li> <li>4. Lack of road safety education for students in classroom programs</li> <li>5. Unsafe driver behaviour in school traffic environment</li> </ol>
Strategies used to target specified road safety issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classroom programs</li> <li>2. Road safety forum</li> <li>3. Drama performance – ‘Izzy’ and ‘Constable Care’</li> <li>4. Parent morning tea</li> <li>5. Footpath and roadway markings involving students</li> <li>6. Signage</li> <li>7. Simulated traffic awareness activities in a controlled environment</li> <li>8. Walking Wednesday’s – students and parents walk to and from school</li> </ol>
Outcome(s) of the strategies used in the grant project	<p>Within the confines of budget restraints and time, the Peg’s Creek PS success story has not only achieved a safer environment in the immediate community but has facilitated road safety education and implementation in most schools within the Pilbara regions of Karratha, Dampier and Roebourne Shires.</p> <p>Peg’s Creek have identified priority issues and developed a set of School Road Safety Guidelines that provided the focus and framework for parent, student, school and whole of community engagement that aligns with the school’s motto ‘<i>Be Aware Be Involved</i>’. To do this they have incorporated best practice principles using a ‘whole-school approach’ whilst observing the road safety issues that are concurrent with recent trends in road safety</p>

	<p>education.</p> <p>The biggest contributor to road safety implementation was the inclusion of parents in all planning and implementation phases of the program. Not only did the parents take ownership of the program which gave it more meaning, it brought the community together and all involved were exposed to receiving correct road safety knowledge and information, a very empowering effect.</p> <p>The initial '<i>Walk Safe To School Day</i>' project is a true demonstration of what can be achieved with a small amount of funds, a set of road safety guidelines, a proactive P&amp;C, and community partnerships with organisations who share a common vision of keeping children safe on the roads.</p> <p>The success of the program has meant that road safety education is embedded in the school curriculum, police continue to monitor driver speeds around all schools and provide bike safety education on request, and the Shire is working with the school to provide engineering works that keep cars away from the immediate school grounds.</p>
Barriers to implementing strategies	Time constraints and limited financial backing impacted upon the ability for the committee to be able to administer all of their initiatives. Community support and partnerships have assisted to spread the message but Peg's Creek could do so much more with further funding.

### Comet Bay Primary School – Grant Project Overview

Comet Bay Primary School opened in 2007 and is located in the southern suburb of Secret Harbour. In 2010 it had a student population of 850. The school has been developed around the *HPS Framework* where the three domains are interconnected in order to achieve a type of 'magic' in the school. The motto, *Growing Together*, represents this interconnectedness and the importance of the partnership between the school and home.

Aim of the Grant Project	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Greater awareness for staff, students and parents of road safety issues.</li> <li>2. More explicit teaching in classrooms of road safety education.</li> <li>3. Form a Road Safety Committee and develop School Road Safety Guidelines.</li> </ol>
Road safety issues within the school community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Congestion and parking</li> <li>2. Students crossing the road</li> <li>3. Unsafe driver behaviour in school traffic environment</li> <li>4. No cross walk attendant</li> <li>6. Students not wearing bicycle helmets while riding scooters</li> </ol>
Strategies used to target specified road safety issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classroom programs</li> <li>2. Information flyers to the school community</li> <li>3. Developed a 'walking school bus'</li> <li>4. Organised crosswalks</li> <li>5. Purchased signage for around the school</li> <li>6. Marked footpaths for safe entry/exit points</li> </ol>
Outcome(s) of the strategies used in the grant project	<p>Comet Bay has achieved their aim of providing a safer environment for their school community. They now have explicit road safety lessons in the school curriculum.</p> <p>Comet Bay has developed a Road Safety Committee and School Road</p>

	Safety Guidelines. These guidelines have been communicated through whole-school staff meetings, the P&C, and through School Board meetings. The guidelines include a vision and the strategies to be used to achieve this vision. Strategies and initiatives have been grouped into the three areas of the <i>HPS Framework</i> . The school has also developed a Traffic Management brochure which highlights the key road safety initiatives within the school and how parents can work with the school to ensure the safety of students. All parents within the school community received a copy of this brochure. The Road Safety Committee are encouraged to think proactively about new road safety initiatives and review existing strategies.
Barriers to implementing strategies	Time played a factor in Comet Bay being able to successfully translate their initiatives into actions within the 12-month timeframe. Currently, strategies are still being implemented to address all of the road safety concerns within the school community.

## Conclusion

Analysis of the data from both questionnaires and an examination of the case studies indicated that providing the \$2000 grants elevated road safety as an issue and encouraged school community engagement. The concept of a health promoting school is one that emphasises the close associations between health and education. According to this concept schools influence the health status of their students (and staff). This philosophy has embodied the principles of the grant process by providing real opportunities for school communities to make a valuable contribution to preparing young people for the challenges of living and working in the world around them by providing best practice road safety education during their developmental years.

Furthermore, the results of the study support the approach that SDERA is adopting in implementing Changing Health Acting Together (CHAT). CHAT aims to embed a more comprehensive approach to road safety education by offering WA schools the opportunity to develop and implement longer-term road safety initiatives. At the heart of CHAT is a process which will enable schools to identify needs, develop actions and implement changes, ensuring they are relevant and grounded in the ethos of the school and the needs of the local community. Schools engaging with CHAT will have access to grants as well as receiving significant information, consultation and collaboration over a period of several years. Of note is that a number of the funded recipients have joined the CHAT program and several more are interested in perusing the opportunities that participation in the SDERA's CHAT program can offer.

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