

**The Fatality Free Friday Road Safety Campaign**  
**A strategy for mobilising community ownership to improve road safety**

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**Abstract**

Fatality Free Friday is Australia's only national community based road safety program. The campaign utilises a Community Mobilization Strategy to encourage public and corporate participation. Fatality Free Friday also uses a number of social marketing strategies to help facilitate community awareness and action on the road safety issue. This paper outlines the campaign's philosophies, summaries the results to date and discusses the program's future objectives.

**Keywords**

Community Mobilization Strategy, Road Safety, Awareness Campaign

**Introduction**

Fatality Free Friday is an annual national campaign that has successfully engaged community action with numerous road safety stake holders. The campaign provides a focal point to help engage community activity whilst also providing a central and consistent theme for individual road safety activities.

The primary goal of the campaign is to ensure that there are no road crash fatalities around Australia on a specific target day in May each year. It is a call to action that serves as a platform for a targeted and ongoing approach to road safety nationally.

In addition to signing the Fatality Free Friday Pledge, participants can also choose to host their own events and campaigns locally. Doing this has allowed schools, councils, local road safety coordinators, government organisations and corporate groups to increase their focus on road safety and link in with a national event. This has created a number of opportunities for people to actively participate in reducing road trauma and helped facilitate greater community ownership at the local, state and national levels.

Road safety is a complex issue but we believe that if drivers consciously think about road safety and safe driving for just one Friday in the year, that day's toll - statistically about 5.3 deaths - could be reduced to zero. Just one 'Fatality Free Friday'.

Ultimately, it is our aim to use this approach to improve road safety awareness not only on one specific day, but every day of the year. Over the longer term, the aim of the campaign is to facilitate a cultural change in road user behaviour and establish a new paradigm in road safety. One that sees the road user themselves as part of the solution, not just part of the problem.

This type of approach has been successfully used in other fields. Examples of these programs include environmental and community campaigns. There is strong evidence to suggest that these campaigns have been highly effective in not only raising community awareness on a specific issue but are also successful in actively facilitating public action to assist in addressing the issue.

Whilst there has been some research into community based campaigns, little research is available on the full scope of this kind campaign in terms of road safety.

However, based on the studies that are available and the growing body of evidence from previous campaigns, Fatality Free Friday has demonstrated to be a highly effective road safety program and worthy of further research.

### **What is Fatality Free Friday?**

Fatality Free Friday is based on a Community Mobilization Strategy to increase public awareness and action on the issue of road safety. The inaugural Fatality Free Friday was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2007 and coincided with the first United Nations Global Road Safety Week. The initiative was established in Queensland and was expanded into a national event.

Fatality Free Friday provides a unique opportunity to raise community awareness on road trauma.

The overall strategy for the campaign is built around the concept of actively seeking to engage public awareness on road safety and to encourage a level of community ownership on the issue. This approach uses a number of specific events and media avenues to assist in building awareness and encouraging active participation.

It aims to develop a cumulative level of awareness of the issue with the aim of positively altering road user behaviour. Fatality Free Friday differs from conventional road safety campaigns by emphasising these key areas:

- An individual can make a difference
- Personal responsibility and accountability
- Positive reinforcement via community action
- Community ownership
- Collective involvement with other stakeholders

This type of approach has been successfully used in other fields. Examples of these programs include environmental campaigns such as Earth Hour and Clean Up Australia Day as well as Public Health Campaigns such as Red Nose Day and the Think Pink Program. Whilst there has been some research into community based campaigns, little research is available on the full scope of this kind campaign in terms of road safety.

However, there is strong evidence to suggest that other campaigns have not only been highly successful in raising community awareness on a specific issue but are also effective in actively facilitating public action to assist in addressing the issue.

### **Methods**

The Fatality Free Friday program is designed as a public information campaign that engages greater community mobilization on road safety.

It employs a diverse range of activities to promote its goals and objectives whilst increasing public action on road trauma.

From its inception in 2007, Fatality Free Friday utilised a communication campaign as its primary marketing strategy.

The Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto (1991) undertook an overview of health communication campaigns. The overview defined some key factors in effective communication campaigns. It stated that comprehensive communication campaigns are goal oriented attempts to inform, persuade or motivate behaviour change to a well defined and large audience. Rogers & Storey (1988), Berger & Chaffee (1988)

The activities involve media, interpersonal support and community events. It also stated that programs of this nature contain four basic elements.

1. Campaigns are goal-oriented.
2. Aimed at a large audience
3. Occur during a given time period.
4. Involve an organized set of communication activities.

The Fatality Free Friday campaign uses these strategies to engage community ownership of the road safety issue. Australians are urged to 'take the pledge' of Fatality Free Friday – it's a promise to 'drive to stay alive'. *The aim is to see a zero road toll for 24 hours.*

### **The Structure of a Public Information Campaign**

In a 2003 report on community mobilization and public awareness campaigns, the Oregon State University Family Policy Program provided the following overview on the key elements of a successful public campaign:

*A public information campaign is a strategic, comprehensive, and inclusive initiative undertaken to raise awareness, enhance knowledge, and increase commitment to specific, positive action.*

- *A **strategic** campaign is intentional - guided by clear desired outcomes.*
- *A **comprehensive** campaign aligns many activities in order to achieve a desired outcome.*
- *An **inclusive** campaign addresses multiple audiences – parents, neighbours, and employers – across diverse sectors and populations in a community.*

*Effective public information campaigns combine three strategic activities to achieve community outcomes.*

*First, widespread **media increases community awareness.***

*Second, **educational events and resources enhance knowledge** among targeted community members.*

*Third, **referral and linking services provide action opportunities** to people who are committed to act on the issue.*

Fatality Free Friday incorporates all of these strategic activities as part of its ongoing operations.

### **Strategic Media Activities**

The Fatality Free Friday promotional strategy was based on enlisting the support of various media agencies and networks to promote the campaign whilst at the same developing the Fatality Free Friday concept as a newsworthy story in its own right.

This approach targeted print, web, radio and television at the local, state and national levels.

The media strategy for Fatality Free Friday was fourfold:

1. Provide media relations assistance to sponsors, supporters and event organiser in the form of creating a media release for them to disseminate and adapt as required.

2. Assist these organisations with media contacts and distribution.
3. Highlight the key difference in the Fatality Free Friday concept – a positive, proactive campaign that encourages personal responsibility and participation.
4. Attract and foster media attention via newsworthy events leading up to May 28.

News and press releases were also supported by radio community service announcements. These aired both state wide and nationally. Media coverage for the 2010 campaign has the highest level achieved to date.

### **Educational Events and Resources**

Fatality Free Friday used a number of social marketing strategies to help facilitate community awareness and action. The primary information portal for the campaign is the Fatality Free Friday web site. Implemented for the 2007 Campaign and then redesigned for 2010, the web site was the hub of the program. It provided universal access to the pledges as well as the opportunity to add extra comment in addition to media information. As a result Fatality Free Friday instantly topped Google's loose-string search within a week and was linked to by private web sites and blogs, news sites and Government and community web sites.

The campaign also featured a more holistic approach to the event branding. All Fatality Free Friday promotional items featured a consistent branding message. A number of additional promotional resources were also produced for the 2010 campaign and were used to promote the program to the community and corporate sectors. These resources included posters that were distributed to a number of corporate and community outlets, flyers, bumper stickers, wrist bands and key rings. Each of these featured Fatality Free Friday branding.

These resources help to establish a consistent message and brand awareness for the event.

In addition, all major Fatality Free Friday partners received access to a specific media kit to assist supporting organisations to achieve greater community awareness. Customised sponsor media releases were developed to assist in maximising their exposure.

Apart from the media activities that promoted the overall goal for the event, Fatality Free Friday also provided an opportunity for various educational activities.

This year's event was launched via a world record attempt for the World's Largest Driving Lesson. This event was conducted nationally and saw learner drivers and their instructors undertaking a simultaneous driving lesson at venues across the country. The concept behind the event was to promote the importance of effective driver training in reducing road trauma.

The record attempt officially launched the Fatality Free Friday campaign and month of road safety activities.

For the 2010 campaign this included an expanded series of pledge signing events at the local level. These events were conducted by various schools, driver trainers, councils, regional road safety groups and corporate sponsors.

There were also major media events conducted in the lead up to the 28<sup>th</sup> of May as well as on Fatality Free Friday itself. For example, Fatality Free Friday and Kidsafe Queensland undertook a joint media event one week prior to the target day. This event was held at Suncorp Stadium and aimed to promote the dangers of reversing and low speed over runs as well as the Fatality Free Friday campaign.

In addition, major events were conducted on the target date. The most significant were the two "empty shoes" display. These were held at Reddacliff Place in Brisbane and Federation Square in Melbourne. The concept for this was to display 1500 pairs of shoes to represent the number of lives lost each year on

Australia's roads. Activities on the day included a pledge signing drive, interviews with key stakeholders, media call and road safety displays.

Supporters included corporate partners Suncorp, Armor All, Tyres and More, Isuzu Ute, Monroe, Radio 4BC and Energex as well as a number of government agencies. This included the Queensland State Government, Queensland Police, Q-Fleet, Victorian Police, Vicroads and the Transport Accident Commission.

Both these events generated significant public and media exposure for the campaign.

Other events were also held around the country. The Office of Road Safety in Western Australia conducted a safe vehicles display and a number of councils conducted pledge signing events.

### **Referral Linking and Community Action Opportunities**

The third foundation for the event was to look at opportunities to source support from government, the corporate sector, community groups and the public in general.

Obtaining this support would help to complement the media activities and facilitate a sense of community ownership. This was an essential ingredient to the overall impact of the event and its long term sustainability. Clearly a national community action campaign requires a significant level of resourcing and the broader support of other community based organisations to help promote the campaign around the country.

Fatality Free Friday is based on a targeted strategic plan. Research has suggested that when communities structure their road safety activities round a strategic plan, they are more likely to be successful in reducing road trauma than communities which do not have such a plan to direct their efforts.(Cairney 2001)

In all previous campaigns specific support was first sought from government. The Office of Road Safety in Western Australia, Queensland Government and Victorian Government were some of the state authorities to support the program. This principle support assisted in obtaining additional cross promotion and awareness activities with other state departments such as police, transport departments and other emergency services.

Local councils from around the country were also key partners in the campaign. Each council used the Fatality Free Friday campaign as a vehicle to help promote local road safety programs. These relationships with local government are vital to the overall structure of the event and will need to be expanded on as the program develops in the coming years.

The corporate sector was also a significant partner group. In addition to our major sponsors, corporate organisations were encouraged to become actively involved in the program via the Fatality Free Friday Alliance program. This initiative provided a number of membership levels which provided a range of benefits and access to Fatality Free Friday resources.

Finally, the event also served as a central campaign that smaller community based programs could align themselves with in order to increase local awareness. These programs included road safety programs from various local councils and schools.

In addition community activist groups like Kidsafe, Road Trauma Support Services and Play Group Australia used Fatality Free Friday as a promotional tool to increase road safety awareness and their own safety activities.

## Results

Fatality Free Friday has expanded significantly each year since its inception in 2007. The campaign has established itself as Australia's only national community based road safety program.

It has proven to be highly effective in laying the groundwork for creating effective volunteer networks, crafting more inclusive communities at the local and state levels, building positive community environments, and linking formal systems to community concerns and action as a pre-cursor to enhancing community Road Safety.

The campaign would also provide a number of opportunities for additional research and evaluation on the effectiveness of this style of community road safety at the national, state and local levels.

Henderson (1991) suggested that road safety mass media campaigns can achieve, and have achieved, the following:

- Increased awareness of a problem or a behaviour;
- Raise in the level of information about a topic or issue;
- Help in the formation of beliefs, especially where beliefs are not held formally;
- The establishment of a topic as more salient;
- Sensitisation of the audience to other forms of communication.

The results from the four previous Fatality Free Friday campaigns have demonstrated that the event provides a strong framework for the ongoing delivery of a road safety philosophy that enhances community ownership on the issue. Cairney (2002) highlighted that ownership depends on the community believing not only that the solutions are within its power, but that it has a responsibility to implement these solutions.

Fatality Free Friday served as a vehicle to enhance the community ownership and action in reducing road trauma.

The event proved to be highly effective in establishing partnerships with local government authorities, corporate organisations and associated community networks to achieve a greater focus on road safety outcomes at a local community level. The event also provides a structured theme for road safety campaigns beyond the main target day itself.

Ofcourse the main Key Performance Indicator is to have zero road deaths. Interestingly as the campaign has expanded the number of deaths recorded has dropped each year.

- 2008 - 6 out of 8 states were fatality free 6 deaths occurred nationally
- 2009 - 7 out of 8 states were fatality free 5 deaths occurred nationally
- 2010 - 6 out of 8 states were fatality free 3 deaths occurred nationally

Overall with 7 out of 8 states recording a zero road toll we feel that we are progressing towards our long term goal. Whilst the campaign itself cannot claim credit specifically for this reduction, it is none the less a very encouraging trend. Certainly the full impact of the campaign would be worthy of further research and ongoing evaluation.

The event did achieve a great deal of awareness and the efforts were encouraging for the future, however the result also vividly demonstrates that there is a lot of work that still needs to be done to encourage people to be more aware of the hazards on the road and to take responsibility for their actions behind the wheel.

The results to date are significant and provide a good foundation for future awareness programs.

Fatality Free Friday continues to achieved its primary aims in terms of increased public awareness and the event was successful in engaging more people to look at what individuals could do to improve road safety in the community.

These results have provided a very good platform to build on in 2011 and beyond. It also highlights that this is a long term project.

### **Future Objectives and Challenges**

Reducing the number of road deaths will ultimately remain the core philosophy of the program. However, the overall effectiveness of the campaign in increasing community action and awareness would be worthy of future research and evaluation.

Cairney (2002) and Cairney, Douglas & Frier (2006) state that while the objective of community road safety is always the reduction of road trauma there are also a number of subsidiary objectives. These include:

- Creating an informed community
- Creating informed activism
- Mobilising local resources to road safety ends
- Promoting effective action
- Integrating activities
- Raising awareness
- Influencing key stakeholders.

Previous Fatality Free Friday campaigns have been highly successful in achieving these objectives. This is certainly worthy of ongoing evaluation.

Cairney highlights however that specific evaluation of Community Road Safety programs in terms of crash reductions is very difficult due to a number of methodological challenges.

A potential way to overcome these issues would be to use a multi-level evaluation model. This would look at process evaluation for all activities and outcome evaluations in terms of knowledge and behavioural change.

Future evaluations could focus on the awareness of the campaign and its message in the community, the overall market reach, how well the event is structured and the level of community buy-in and additional strategic partnerships.

The next phase in the development of the program is the establishment of the Fatality Free Friday Road Safety Foundation. The Foundation will ensure the long term sustainability of the program into the future. It will undertake a range of activities designed to improve road safety outcomes, develop research and educational programs and work to persuade policy makers to address road safety issues.

### **Conclusions**

Fatality Free Friday provides a unique opportunity to provide a central road safety target that complements other road safety countermeasures. It provides a proactive means of engaging the community and individuals to take ownership on the road safety issue.

Many road safety strategies are based on deterrence and whilst this is certainly part of an overall approach to altering road user behaviour, it shouldn't be seen to be the only part.

Fatality Free Friday has demonstrated that there are significant opportunities to mobilise community ownership to improve road safety by creating a new road safety culture.

It also helps to identify that each road user can play a role in reducing road trauma.

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