

Whole-of-community approaches to school transport safety: Evaluation of the Safe Travel for School Communities Trial

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Biography

Colin Edmonston hails from Central Queensland and is a Senior Research Officer with CARRS-Q. Since joining the Centre, Colin completed a Graduate Certificate in Road Safety and provided research support to Queensland's School Transport Safety Task Force. More recently, Colin was involved in an independent evaluation of an enhanced enforcement campaign [Queensland Holiday Period Road Safety Trial 2001/02] and a national review of Indigenous road safety. As such, he has developed a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous research protocols and road safety concerns. Colin's primary research interests are Indigenous and rural and remote road safety.

Abstract

Based on a review of current policy and practice, extensive community consultation and advice from experts and practitioners, the School Transport Safety Task Force handed down recommendations to government in October 2001 to improve school transport safety in Queensland. The overwhelming conviction of the Task Force (2001) was that school transport safety is a 'whole-of-community' problem and that interventions will only work with 'whole-of-community' awareness and commitment. The Task Force stressed that community partnerships would need operational leadership from Queensland Transport (QT) and state education authorities. The first community engagement initiative was the Safe Travel for School Communities Trial conducted in the latter half of 2002 at four sites - Tullawong, Childers, Tannum Sands and Cairns West. Phase one of the project involved the provision of community engagement and road safety training to a Community Participation Officer (CPO) in each of the four trial sites. Phase two of the project involved six month on-the-ground trials in the chosen school communities. During this time, CPOs [with the support of regional QT and education authorities] aimed to engage the local community in the development of a Local School Transport Action Plan and work towards the realisation of the goals specified in the plan. Phase three of the project involved a comprehensive process evaluation of the trial, including post-trial consultations with CPOs, regional road safety advisors, school community members and the manager of QT Community Programs Section. Using an "action research" framework [ie. the logic model of program evaluation], the evaluation: (1) identified the strengths and weaknesses associated with different engagement methodologies; and (2) examined the transferability and sustainability of varying approaches. The outcomes of the trial will influence future community-based road safety policy and practice in Queensland.