

Attitudinal Driving Workshops

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Abstract

Mission:

Engage the emotional conscience of the driving community to take personal responsibility in reducing road carnage and honour our commitment to the youth of Australia.

Objectives:

1. Contribute to a reduction in road trauma to the target audience.
2. Raise the profile of the relationship between driver attitude and road trauma within local communities.
3. Establish and foster community partnerships at a local level to address road trauma causes.
4. Support the expansion of Attitudinal Driving Workshops within Qld communities.
5. Contribute to a positive attitudinal change in the participants towards their personal driving behaviour.

Methods used

Attitudinal Driving workshops are educationally focused with a view to promoting awareness amongst road users of the ease and extent to which road trauma can negatively affect lives.

Delivery is by victims and practitioners who have been or are directly involved with road trauma. Central themes include 'it's your choice' and 'how road carnage affects me'.

In addition the workshops aim to heighten driver awareness of vehicle dynamics in motion and deal with driver perceptions related to following, closing and braking distances.

Summary of results and data:

The workshops are currently being reviewed and evaluated by the Qld Police Service Ethical Standards Command (Research and Evaluation Unit) that are examining issues including:

1. Take up of workshops in each area.
2. Partnerships developed.
3. Other agency involvement.
4. Reported change in driver behaviour.
5. Longevity of the effect of the workshops on participants.
6. Possible shelf life of the workshops in their current form.
7. 'Fit' with QPS corporate goals and strategic plan.

To date the workshops have expanded from the initial base at Maroochydhore to include centres at Cleveland, Ipswich, Townsville and Logan. Collectively approximately 3300 participants have attended workshops with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Statement of conclusions:

The wider community has embraced the Workshops feeling there was a void in opportunities to expose their young people to learning about road trauma and its devastating consequences.

It has been a common theme of community feedback that such a program should begin in the early years of school and continue to the conclusion of year 12.

Additionally overwhelming feedback has been received from participants and their families that attendance at an Attitudinal Driving Workshop should be mandatory prior to an application for a learner's permit being made.

Keywords

Road safety education, driver workshop, driver attitude, driver behaviours, driver choices, driver outcomes, driver emotions

Background

In late November 2006 as a result of a number of road deaths involving young drivers and passengers aged 16 to 25 years Sunshine Coast Police implemented Attitudinal Driving Workshops. The 2 ½ hour workshops directly focused on the driving attitudes of the target group who were the most over-represented in traffic crashes nationally. Secondly, their parents are fast developing into the next over-represented group.

Experience as road safety practitioners over a number of years lead to the development of a program that focused on changing the attitudes of the target audience via the sharing of true personal accounts of road trauma.

The same experience indicated age old road safety messages such 'don't speed', 'don't drink drive' and 'don't do burnouts' were falling on deaf ears in the driving community. Thus a decision was taken to exclude the use of such references in any presentation in order to heighten the effectiveness of the presentations and open communication channels with the target audience at a street level.

Credibility in the messages being sold during workshops was enhanced by the recruitment of and inclusion of a number of civilians, as opposed to all police, in that they delivered emotive, factual and personal accounts of how road trauma had affected their lives. These include persons who had lost loved ones in road crashes, comforted dying trauma victims and emergency service professionals who had lived a lifetime of dealing with road trauma.

Attendees are guided through an emotional journey, where the life experiences of various presenters are shared. The underlying themes of the workshops are "*Too young to die, it's your choice*". and "*How road carnage affects me*". This message is repeated in various forms throughout the workshops in order to encourage participants to take responsibility for their driving choices and the outcomes resulting from those choices.

In the first instance it was intended to run six workshops prior to Christmas 2006 with no view to a continuance of the program. They, however, became so successful that the Maroochydore area has run 26 workshops with over 2800 attendees.

Interest in the program was shown by police in other jurisdictions with Senior Sergeant Dennis Hayes of Wynnum District Traffic Branch recognising its potential for inclusion in his community programs for the District.

After liaising with Maroochydore, Senior Sergeant Hayes recruited a team of presenters for the Wynnum District. They included the Director of Surgery, Princess Alexandra Hospital – Associate Professor Daryl Wall who was chosen to add credibility along with a paramedic, police driver training instructor and road trauma victims from within the Redlands community. To date the Wynnum District has run 12 workshops with 1029 attendees at an average of 86 per session.

Partnerships

During the creation of the workshops it was identified that the target group may have reservations in attending what could be seen as a ‘Police run’ initiative. This was overcome with the development of a partnership with the Maroochydore RSL Sub Branch.

The sub branch in cooperation with the Maroochydore RSL Club was able to provide a workshop venue, financial support and secretarial and marketing services required to effectively administer the workshops. This partnership continues to be pivotal in the existence of the workshops as it provides a state wide expansion potential within almost all metropolitan and provincial areas.

The RSL partnership has been utilised in the Cleveland workshops with the Redlands RSL taking on a similar role to their Maroochydore counterparts. This partnership was ratified and endorsed at a 2007 state RSL conference.

The RSL, as part of their charter, are committed to *“Ensuring the youth of Australia is able to develop to their full potential”*, which is again a focal point throughout the workshop.

In addition to the foundation partnership with the RSL and its sub branches local partnership arrangements have been developed with media on the Sunshine Coast including Channel 7, Sunshine Coast News paper and radio stations ABC and HOT 91. This has been duplicated in the Cleveland area with support from the Bayside Bulletin / Redland Times.

Media partnerships are vital to the ongoing promotion and sustainability of the workshops in that they provide heightened road safety awareness needed in the community to encourage participants to attend.

Over time a joint partner’s mission surrounding the workshops has been developed being to *‘Engage the emotional conscience of the driving community to take personal responsibility in reducing road carnage and honour our commitment to the youth of Australia’*.

Expansion

Expansion of the workshops from their original concept initially occurred in the Cleveland area through direct liaisons with His Honour, Bevan Manthey - Cleveland Magistrates Court, who took personal interest in what benefits the workshops could potentially provide for traffic offenders. Ultimately Mr Manthey indicated he would refer all persons who were appearing on traffic related matters as part of their bail conditions especially if he was considering a custodial sentence.

Following the initial attendances by traffic offenders referred from the court system the initiative has been extended to include all persons applying for a s30 Hardship Driving

Licence (work licence owing to accumulation of demerit points) prior to consideration of their application. A Certificate of Attendance is issued by to ensure attendees have signed in prior to the commencement of the workshop and have remained for the entire workshop.

In addition, Youth Justice Conferencing and Probation and Parole now offer referrals to the Cleveland workshops.

External agency Top Gear Driving Academy, after attending a workshop, have undertaken to refer all potential students of the workshops and encourage their attendance as part of the learner driver experience. This has extended to a local Redlands football club (Redlands Bombers) cancelling training in favour of attending a driving workshop after advice from the Top Gear Driving Academy team.

Carmel College, Thornlands has taken the opportunity to utilise the workshops as part of a disciplinary sanction against a student in relation to several driving behaviours which were considered inappropriate.

Additionally, the college has now extended their school driving policy to include that all students must attend an “Attitudinal Driving Workshop” and obtain a certificate of attendance prior to them being granted permission to drive to school.

Following the example of the Cleveland workshops, Maroochydore now conducts ‘offender specific’ workshops in an association with the Maroochydore, Caloundra and Noosa courts resulting in approximately 100 participants attending each month.

A number of private and public schools in both the Cleveland and Maroochydore areas have requested the workshops be delivered in the school environment. This request has been denied on the basis of the workshops having best affect when they are attended by participants who themselves see a benefit in attendance. From experience this best occurs in a public forum as opposed to a school room.

Evaluation

The workshops currently being held in Maroochydore and Cleveland are being evaluated by the Queensland Police Service Ethical Standards Command (Research and Evaluation, Branch) against the following criteria:

- Take up of workshops in each area.
- Partnerships developed.
- Other agency involvement
- Reported change in driver behaviour
- Longevity of the effect of the workshops on participants
- Possible shelf life of the workshops in their current form
- ‘Fit’ with QPS corporate goals and strategic plan

The evaluation is the subject of another paper titled ‘An Evaluation of Attitudinal Driving Workshops’ by Philip Champness (Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, Ethical Stands Command, Queensland Police Service) to be presented at this conference.

Why it works

The Attitudinal Driving Workshops work for a number of reasons. The primary reason however is that above all else the workshop is genuinely entertaining. Throughout the delivery period it is common for audiences to laugh, experience apprehension and indeed cry. The flow of emotions enhances the messages of choice being put forward providing a positive experience.

In addition to being entertaining the workshops are free to all participants. The organisers completely dismiss the notion that a free workshop places no value on its self so will be treated in a like manner by participants.

Part of the connection established between presenters and participants at each work shop is that all presenters are practitioners in their field. All have dealt with road trauma in some way and most deal with it daily. Additionally the presentation is at ground level utilising street language including engaging the audience in discussion and enlightened banter.

The credibility of the workshops is enhanced in that all stories told are real and have actually happened in the lives of that particular presenter.

Of particular note is that the workshops challenge popular and preconceived ideas that environmental factors such as roads, wet weather and other drivers are responsible for an individual's road safety. The workshops squarely lay responsibility for safety in the lap off all participants.

Further enhancing the effectiveness of delivery and thus outcomes is that the presenters and stories relayed are predominantly local. In this manner the audience connects with actual events being discussed having knowledge of how they affected the community when they occurred.

Significantly the messages and delivery mechanisms are new to road safety. In short it is not the same boring old road safety messages that the public has long since turned a deaf ear too.

Future opportunities and limitations

There is an opportunity for expansion of the Attitudinal Driving Workshops. This expansion must be adopted with the following criteria in mind. Both Coordinators liken their workshops to a Mc Donald's franchise, in that if a franchise was to fail this would adversely affect the credibility across all areas in which the workshops were operating.

The ongoing quality of workshops and subsequent expansion relies upon the identification of a passionate, resourceful coordinator in each implementation area. It equally relies upon appropriate presenters being available and willing to assist the workshops as volunteers. In the absence of the above pivotal personnel the expansion of the workshops on a state wide basis would rely upon a core team of coordinators and presenters conducting workshops on a rotational basis. This situation is not considered ideal due to loss of local content and logistical implications.

Being voluntary in nature the continuance of the workshops largely relies upon internal passion from the QPS coordinators and their community partners in the RSL sub Branches

and RSL Clubs. In addition the involvement of media in all forms is vital to communicating the 'workshop message' to the community at large.

During the development of the workshops across various centres impediments have been encountered from organisations distantly linked to road safety that have covertly and in some cases overtly attempted to derail the expansion process. This remains a present threat, however given that the workshop are voluntary in nature and are copyrighted, can be controlled adequately.

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- Liana Mercoli (Cleveland Clerk of the Court)
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- Presenters (Maroochydore)
 - Senior Constable David Nelson
 - Noel O'Mara
 - Helen Nash
 - Sue Meehan
 - Senior Constable Gary Church
 - Phil Barry
 - Anita Rowland
 - Peter Steer

- Presenters (Cleveland)
 - Sergeant Neale Stoneley
 - Geoff Johnstone
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