

Social Voices – Evaluation of the RACV Safe Mates road safety for secondary schools pilot program

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Abstract

Road safety education can play an important role in young people becoming safer road users. The RACV Safe Mates program was piloted in 2015 to give students an opportunity to have a voice in their road safety by developing social media campaigns. The pilot program was developed with good practice road safety education principles and promoted to all Victorian secondary schools. The evaluation shows the pilot program has been well received within school communities; that there were 500,000 views of the students' road safety messages; and the program can have a positive impact on road safety attitudes of young people.

Background

Road safety education can be important in ensuring young people adopt safe road user behaviours and develop responsible attitudes to sharing our roads (State Government Victoria, 2015). A valuable use of social media is to purposefully engage with young people by valuing their input into real outcomes (Rose & Mostyn, 2013). In light of this, RACV piloted the RACV Safe Mates secondary school social media program in 2015.

The program was developed to promote road safety in Victorian secondary schools; provide student-centred learning opportunities that enable students to share road safety messages with their peers through social media; and encourage young people to be safer road users. The program's objectives and activities were designed to align with the Principles of School Road Safety Education (Government of Western Australia, 2009); the Road Safety Education in Senior Secondary Schools Good Practice Guide (State Government Victoria, 2015) and the Victorian AusVELS curriculum to ensure that the program was based on the good practice and to assist teachers utilise the program.

Pilot Program

All Victorian secondary schools were invited to participate in the program via email and direct mail-out. Students worked in groups to research a road safety issue and created a social media road safety campaign. The finalists were selected by a judging panel and worked with road safety and advertising professionals to fine-tune their work before their campaigns were run on the RACV Young Driver Facebook page. The winning concept was determined by a set of criteria that looked at innovation, creativity and impact of the social media campaign. Cash prizes were on offer for both students and schools.

Evaluation and Results of Pilot Program

The anticipated outcomes of the pilot program were to receive a minimum of 50 entries from Victorian secondary schools; and increase awareness of road safety issues among a broader audience of young people through social media. The pilot program received 94 entries from a range of secondary schools; and finalists were able to successfully engage with the broader community with their messages seen over half a million times, with 75,000 video plays and 8,125 likes, shares or comments.

All teachers who registered for the program and all students who participated in the program were invited to complete feedback surveys. The teacher evaluation survey (N=23/93) found that the RACV Safe Mates program was an attractive (57%) or very attractive (43%) program and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that through the program students learnt about road safety. The student evaluation survey focused on students' road safety knowledge and attitudes. In total, 440 students from 34 schools completed the initial survey and 39 of these students completed the follow-up survey. On 17 of the 19 questions, students showed an improvement in their road safety knowledge and attitudes over the course of the program.

Conclusion

The results from the RACV Safe Mates pilot program show the program has been well received within school communities and there are early indications that the program can have a positive impact on road safety knowledge and attitudes of young people.

References

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