

## **Changing attitudes to use of carseats in a low income community**

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### **Abstract**

In late 2018 Blacktown Council was contacted by the local highway patrol sergeant concerned about the large number of infringements being issued for unrestrained children in Mount Druitt. We set about providing education in the community to improve compliance but more importantly to protect the young children in the area.

### **Background**

The area around Mount Druitt in the Blacktown Council area contains a number of small suburbs. It is an area with a high proportion of social housing and low income families. With a high number of infringement notices being issued for failing to restrain children in vehicles, local police were frustrated that the cost of the fines were similar to the cost of a car seat yet drivers were constantly caught with unrestrained children in their vehicle. In a community with a high proportion of low income households the effect of the fines on the household was a greater impost than in many other areas. Blacktown Council current holds free car seat checking days every 6 weeks at various locations. The events at Mount Druitt are less well attended than in other areas of the LGA.

### **The challenge**

This area of Western Sydney is largely low income families, often welfare dependent or in low income jobs. There is a large population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the area as well as Pacific Island and other migrant and refugee peoples. The cost of purchasing car seats is an obstacle for many families.

### **The Project**

Two main communities have been identified; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community and the Polynesian community. The police arranged meetings with the local Aboriginal Health Centre and with local Polynesian church ministers. We are still working with the Aboriginal Health service and more info will be available by the time of the conference.

The Polynesian church leaders were keen to improve the safety of their community. They decided to get senior church leaders involved and a large group gathered to discuss how to provide help in the community. Blacktown Council agreed to hold a car seat checking day at one of the local churches in addition to the normal schedule of car seat checks. This event is scheduled for 16 Feb and more information about the outcomes will be available after this date. The local Police Multicultural Community Liaison Officer worked with local businesses and secured the donation of 3 car seats. It is planned to use these seats for families who attend the car seat checking day but whose seats are too old or damaged to be safely used.

More information will be available as this project continues.