

Contributed Articles

Project RAPTAR: Reduce Accidents, Prevent Tragedy, Activate Resources

by Sergeant Michael Musumeci, Ravenshoe Police, Queensland

Introduction

The Ravenshoe area in North Queensland had an unacceptably high rate of serious traffic accidents and ongoing traffic-related offences, with a high rate of injuries and fatalities. The Ravenshoe Police Division recognised that something had to be done urgently to address this ongoing carnage. After much research and community consultation, Project RAPTAR was formulated.

RAPTAR stands for Reduce Accidents, Prevent Tragedy, Activate Resources. Key representatives from the community, local businesses, government and others concerned about road safety were approached to form an action group. Interested participants formed a working group to discuss, develop and implement a range of initiatives to combat the high rate of road crashes and to bring about lasting change in road safety in the area.

The RAPTAR team consisted of:

Michael Musumeci	Sergeant of Police, Ravenshoe
Paul Casey	Constable, Ravenshoe Police
Ben Herbert	Constable, Ravenshoe Police
William Shaw	Constable, Ravenshoe Police
Robert Doyle	Captain, Ravenshoe Fire Service and Community
Henry Condon	Principal, Ravenshoe State High School
Mary Waltz	Principal, St Theresa's Catholic School
Tom Penna	Works Supervisor, Tablelands Regional Council
Arthur Scarborough	Roads Inspector, Tablelands Regional Council
Michael Ringer	Engineer, Department of Main Roads and Transport
Phil Rae	Roads Inspector, Department of Main Roads and Transport
Geoffrey Solly	RSL, RAISE Corporation and Community Representative

Aims of Project RAPTAR

Project RAPTAR was designed to actively engage and involve the community in finding solutions to local road safety

concerns. The RAPTAR team identified and worked with numerous stakeholders including owners of licensed premises, regional council representatives, government departments such as Department of Main Roads and Transport, various businesses and community organisations. The RAPTAR team also referred to, and were guided by, the *Queensland Police Service Strategic Plan 2011-2015*, the *National Road Safety Action Plan 2009-2010* and the *Queensland Government's Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland ambitions*.

Specifically, the objectives of RAPTAR were to

- bring members of the community together to work towards a common goal to improve road safety in the Ravenshoe region
- reduce road trauma, deaths and injuries
- educate the community about road safety issues and the tragic consequences and costs of road trauma.

Methodology and activities of RAPTAR

From the outset, consultation and collaboration were key to the success of the RAPTAR team. RAPTAR held regular monthly meetings. If serious issues needed more attention, further meetings were held. These meetings instigated a coordinated and collaborative approach to what to do, how to do it and when to do it. The meetings focused on identifying the issues, considering solutions, and implementing effective actions to address the issues within certain timeframes. The RAPTAR team developed the **3E Formula** to combat the identified issues in three ways: Engineering, Enforcement and Education.

Through the localised team approach, all members shared responsibility for the majority of tasks, liaising with external agencies and carrying out prevention, education and enforcement phases of the project. Throughout Project RAPTAR, consultation was the ongoing positive attribute. Members claimed ownership and could see positive change. This was one of the core successes of RAPTAR.

Engineering phase and solutions

RAPTAR identified the dangers in a number of well known crash locations in the district and sought engineering solutions. For instance, Ravenshoe was well known for numerous fog-related crashes occurring within the area. The RAPTAR team

decided a specific FOG warning sign was needed to alert motorists to the danger (Figure 1). Signs were strategically placed in areas throughout the district where heavy fog was known to be a contributing factor in vehicle accidents. Fog-related crashes diminished after the implementation of such signage.



Figure 1. New fog warning signage along a rural highway

Extensive road upgrades, hazard reduction and roadside clearing were carried out throughout the Ravenshoe district. Crashes occurred on this particular stretch of road (shown in Figure 2) on a monthly basis. RAPTAR instigated a complete roadway reseal with appropriate signage and delineators. Since the new reseal, no crashes have been reported.



Figure 2. A well known crash location before RAPTAR

In other dangerous areas where fatalities had occurred, HIGH CRASH warning signs were installed. No fatal crashes have been reported in these danger zones since the installation of these signs. A notorious intersection where many serious crashes involving heavy vehicles had occurred, and which had claimed the lives of three people, was upgraded. In other areas where crashes regularly occurred, other measures were taken such as

- installation of glass stud delineators (Figure 3)
- installation of double white lines in curved and troublesome sections of road
- implementation of POLICE ENFORCEMENT ZONE signage in high speed areas throughout the highway network
- installation of audible lines to counteract fatigue
- installation of STOP signs

- reduction of speed limits where appropriate
- installation of LED warning systems.

For example, some urban zones were reduced from 60 km/h to 50 km/h (Figure 4) and a dangerous stretch of the Kennedy Highway at Ravenshoe was reduced from 100 km/h to 80 km/h. Again, these ‘blackspot’ areas have seen a dramatic decrease in crashes since the implementation of the new speed limits.



Figure 3. Glass stud delineators installed on a notorious stretch of Kennedy Highway



Figure 4. Speed limits were decreased and speed zones extended in some areas

Enforcement phase and solutions

Traffic-related enforcement was a vital and strategic part of Project RAPTAR. Intelligence-based locations, high-risk crash zones, and high speed locations were nominated for specific divisional operations to be performed.

Team members monitored these locations by conducting static and mobile traffic enforcement within these areas. Targeting these specific locations successfully modified road user behaviours and provided effective deterrence. A comparison of Traffic Infringement notices issued showed a dramatic increase in notices being issued in 2008, followed by a significant reduction in traffic offences and infringements issued in subsequent years, as can be seen at Figure 5.

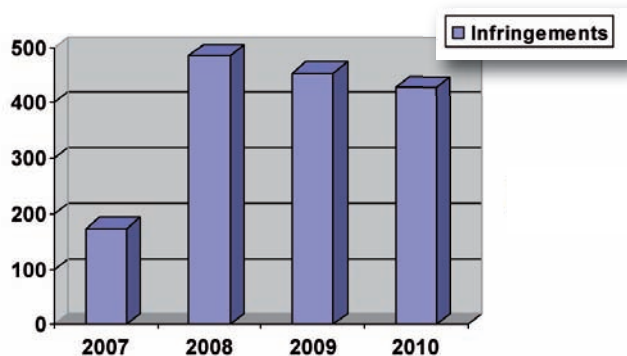


Figure 5. Traffic infringements issued 2007 - 2010

It was very clear that further police resources were needed on an ongoing basis to achieve RAPTAR goals. The following resources are now attached to Ravenshoe Station

- Vehicle Mobile Radar
- LIDAR
- Intoxiliser
- LED Safety interception warning lights
- additional RBT device on permanent loan from Mareeba Station.

In addition, Project RAPTAR has been extremely successfully in reducing the problem of drink driving within the Ravenshoe rural division. In response to intelligence, police carried out Random Breath Testing at specific targeted locations. RAPTAR members also worked closely with members of the Southern Tablelands Liquor Accord to consider various options to address drink driving. As a result, a specific condition was introduced to licensed premises in the area, restricting the sale of alcohol after 10.00 pm. This measure brought about a reduction in the number of drink drivers being intercepted by police, and also a reduction in alcohol-related violence.

Ravenshoe Police Division actively carried out 6764 random breath tests throughout 2010 and found that drink driving offences were decreasing since the introduction of targeted measures. The incidence of drink driving in 2010 was considerably less than in previous years – see Figure 6 – and the community response was very positive.

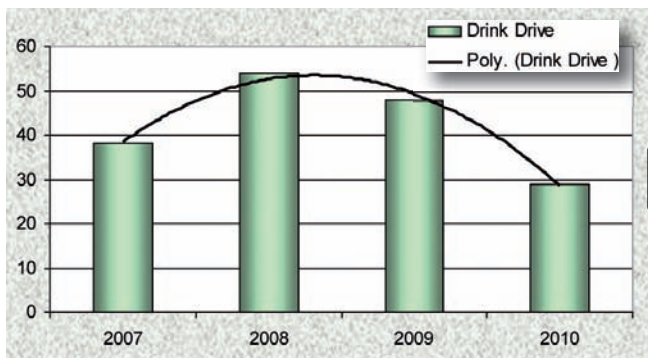


Figure 6. The dramatic drop in drink driving offences in 2010 for the Ravenshoe Police division

Education phase and solutions

Ravenshoe Police and Emergency Services attended the Ravenshoe High School with targeted audiences to discuss drink driving, road carnage, accident prevention, driver’s licences and youth in cars. Students in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 were targeted with a total of over 80 students attending these seminars. At these seminars, all students were confronted with the Jacqueline Saburido story – a 20 year old female who suffered burns to 90% of her body and the constant struggle to stay alive after she had been involved in a collision with a drink driver in the United States. The powerpoint presentation proved compelling, with students commenting on the horrific tragedy drink drivers can cause. This presentation was very effective in bringing the message home to the students of Ravenshoe High School.

Further to this, RAPTAR team members conducted numerous school visits implementing further road safety initiatives. These initiatives included Drivers Licences legislation, Queensland Transport information booklets, Party Safe initiatives including external agencies, as well as Traffic Infringement Notice information. RAPTAR also researched P-Plate traffic accidents throughout the division, as a large number of P-Platers had been involved in drink driving offences and traffic accidents. This research prompted education programs aimed at P-Platers and focused on traffic-related offences including Drink Driving, and the causes of traffic accidents.

Another important community education measure was the installation of a community display at a highway rest stop (Figure 7). The display, funded by community donations, features a wrecked car after a single vehicle crash, with confronting signage. The installation is covered with reflective tape to make it stand out at night-time.



Figure 7. An emotive display designed by RAPTAR and installed at a highway rest stop

Outcomes of RAPTAR

Project RAPTAR fulfilled its main aim of reducing the incidence of traffic offences, injuries and fatalities in the Ravenshoe area. The success of RAPTAR has had a significant impact on Ravenshoe and surrounding police divisions. It should also be noted that in 2010 the Ravenshoe police division did not itself suffer any fatalities.

The project has created a focused emphasis on the community's needs and supports the *Queensland Police Service Strategic Plan 2011-2015*, the *National Road Safety Action Plan 2009 – 2010* and the *Queensland Government's Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland ambitions*, particularly *Supporting safe and caring communities*. The project also generated an effective operational interlinking relationship between the Queensland Police Service, agencies and the community in working together to address road safety. Project RAPTAR has been able to effectively utilise the Scan, Analysis, Response and Assessment Model with many divisional issues being addressed.

RAPTAR has been instrumental in forming workable relationships between various agencies and members of the community and has shown how effective these relationships can be. The multi-agency approach and team effort achieved positive results. The method used by RAPTAR could be easily

utilised by other concerned communities to address similar issues and achieve similar results. In particular, the RAPTAR experience could assist other communities to find solutions to the ongoing tragedy of the road toll in other states.

Conclusion

Project RAPTAR has proved that it is possible to engage the local community to work collaboratively in order to promote road safety, to reduce road crashes and traffic-related offences, and above all to reduce injuries and fatalities on the roads.

Sergeant Michael Musumeci and the RAPTAR team won the inaugural 3M-ACRS Diamond Road Safety Award in 2011. As part of the prize, Michael travelled to Florida in mid-February to attend the American Traffic Safety Services Association Annual Convention and Traffic Expo.

Hoon club culture: A South Australian policing response

by Detective Inspector Philip Newitt, Operations Inspector - Organised Crime Investigation Branch

Introduction

The rise in popularity of 'hoon' driving clubs in South Australia in recent years saw three clubs build large, active memberships. The focus of these clubs was to actively promote and organise car cruises and hoon driving events on public roads. The activities of these clubs led to the formation of a policing task force called 'Task Force Diagonal' whose mandate was to move beyond the general enforcement of organised car cruises, to a targeted criminal approach designed to disrupt and dismantle an established hoon culture.

In July 2009, a South Australian newspaper featured an article with the headline *Mob Rule – Nightmare on Main Street*. It described the activities of the 'All Car Club', a group of car 'enthusiasts' captured the previous weekend by a reporter and photographer during a monthly cruise.



Figure 1. Lower Light on 5 July 2009 (reproduced with permission of The Sunday Mail)

The article outlined a night of continual hooning and what can only be described as patently stupid behaviour which posed a danger to participants, spectators and others. Groups of people were photographed standing on Highway 1, Lower Light (approximately one hour north of Adelaide's CBD), during the early hours of a Sunday morning while cars took turns to perform burnouts and 'circle work' in and around spectators. Their actions generated so much smoke and dust that the vision of oncoming traffic was obscured (Figure 1).

In a subsequent police interview, the newspaper reporter described B-double trucks travelling at 100 km/h passing through thick plumes of smoke from burning rubber as group members leapt off the carriageway. Other road users were forced to stop and wait for the burnouts to stop before proceeding. Young men and women were seen standing either side of stationary vehicles as rear wheels were spinning, participants seemingly oblivious to the danger of their actions. The hoon driving session was the culmination of a long night of 'cruising' throughout metropolitan Adelaide where on more than one occasion dangerous driving was photographed and described in detail within the article.

The actions of the group, the level of organisation, the sheer number of participants and unlawful activity clearly raised a significant public safety issue. Understandably the public reaction was intense and many looked towards South Australia Police (SAPOL) seeking a response. Prior to the publication of this story, police were aware of a number of hoon car clubs operating out of Adelaide's northern suburbs. However, the escalation of their activities created a major road safety issue which required an immediate policing response. Task Force Diagonal was created.