

# Contributed Articles

## First United Nations Global Road Safety Week

By Geoff Horne

This special road safety effort will be a worldwide event in the week 23-29 April this year. The project was actually launched by means of a United Nations General Assembly resolution (A/60/5) in October 2005. In announcing its plans, the UN said:

“ The Week, which will focus on ‘ Young Road Users’, is an historic opportunity to raise the issue of road traffic injuries to a higher level.” During the Week, it is expected that hundreds of initiatives – local, national, regional and global – will take place around the world, organised by governments, nongovernmental organisations, United Nations and other international agencies, private sector companies, foundations and others working for safer roads. The key global event will be the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety, bringing delegations of young people together from many countries to discuss and adopt a youth declaration on road safety and define ways to better serve as road safety advocates in their countries. It is hoped that the Week will be marked in all countries and by many communities. It is intended that the events of the Week should serve as launching points for new and effective road safety initiatives in the years ahead.

The main objectives of this First United Nations Global Road Safety Week 2007 are to:

- Raise awareness about the societal impact of road traffic injuries, highlighting the risks for young road users; and
- Promote action around key factors that have a major impact on preventing road traffic injuries: helmets, seat-belts, drink driving, speeding and infrastructure.

The slogan "Road Safety is No Accident" was chosen to emphasise that deliberate efforts are needed by many individuals and many sectors of society – governmental and nongovernmental alike in order to achieve safety on the roads.

### Global activities

International events for the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, and will involve those in a position to influence policies and programmes related to the safety of young road users, as well as children and young people themselves. The following events will be held:

World Youth Assembly for Road Safety, 23-24 April 2007, when young delegates from all regions of the world will gather to exchange ideas and adopt a resolution calling for action on road safety.

The Second Global Road Safety Stakeholders' Forum, 25 April 2007, when representatives of governments, United Nations agencies, civil society and the private sector will meet to “ share perspectives and ways to advance road safety efforts around the world” . The first Forum was held in 2004.

### Resources

A special three-part logo has been designed and is available to all partners preparing related events and materials for the Week. For more information visit <http://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/en/>. A toolkit is also available for events organisers.



**ROAD SAFETY  
IS NO ACCIDENT**



**Message from the (now retired)  
UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan  
on the announcement of the  
First UN Global Road  
Safety Week,  
23-29 April 2007**

“ The First United Nations Global Road Safety Week is an important opportunity for improving safety for the hundreds of millions of young people who travel the world's roads every day.

Since World Health Day 2004 and subsequent discussions in the United Nations General Assembly, governments and their partners have paid increased attention to road safety. But we still have a long way to go. Road traffic collisions kill nearly 1.2 million people worldwide every year, and injure millions more. They are the second leading cause of death for people aged 5 to 25, with devastating impact on families and communities. Among this age group, young men – as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, novice drivers and passengers – are nearly three times more likely to be killed or injured on the roads than young women.

Fortunately, there is a growing recognition that road traffic injuries can be prevented. It has been demonstrated in a number of countries that by acting on key factors, in particular drunk driving, speeding, infrastructure and the wearing of helmets and seat-belts, a significant number of lives and financial resources can be saved even as motorisation continues to rise.

Road safety is no accident. Road safety happens through the deliberate efforts of many individuals and many sectors of society, governmental and non-governmental alike. Every one of us has a role to play: ministers of transport, health and

education; health care providers; automobile associations; educators; students; insurers; vehicle manufacturers; the media and victims of road traffic crashes and their families. But a strong commitment at the political level is crucial. Today's success stories often result from a decision at the highest level of government to improve safety on the road.

## Advocating Global Road Safety

By Lori Mooren, Principal Consultant, Fleet and Road Safety, ARRB Group Ltd

The spate of youth road fatalities that we have seen in New South Wales in the last quarter of 2006 represents tragedies that no community should have to bear. These are made all the more tragic to those of us who know how these kinds of events can be prevented. There are evidence based solutions.

In Australia we have influenced significant change in community and political attitudes in favour of road safety in recent times. But somehow, we as a road safety “profession” have not entirely convinced the global – or even the Australian community – that it is best to choose safety intervention over “personal freedom” or other socioeconomic benefits.

Within the Australasian College of Road Safety, we have debated to what degree we should be a community advocate versus a professional support organisation. For a while, many of us took the conservative view that we should work towards a strengthening of our members' skills and knowledge before we embark on public advocacy. This has been a sensible approach. But increasingly, we are finding a role in ‘advising’ community leaders on some key issues. We have established a series of policy positions on major road safety issues based on our collective knowledge base. Beyond this we have organised seminars and forums for public discussion as well as responded to questions by media organisations.

In doing this we must not forget that road safety is a political issue. Many of the things that help to prevent road trauma present costs to the community. Whether it be in economic or social terms, the people and governments that represent them must make choices about doing things that will produce both beneficial and costly consequences. So the question becomes “are the restrictions that governments impose in the interest of road safety going to be acceptable to community.”

Over the past 3 or 4 decades we have seen quite marked shifts in Australian community attitudes with regard to road safety measures. The most significant shift we have seen is the support for random breath testing and the growing social disapproval of driving while under the influence of alcohol. Less so, but definite, has been the shifts in attitudes toward the problem of speeding. There is far more public demand for

Through the World Youth Assembly for Road Safety – the key global event of the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week – the World Health Organization, UN Regional Commissions and their partners are giving a voice to young people. Let us listen to their advice. And let us improve safety on the world's road, for their sake and for ours.”

speed enforcement now than there ever has been. These shifts in favour of road safety measures have come about as a result of deliberate road safety campaigns that have combined public education with other interventions, most importantly enforcement and penalty increases.

Even more so, governments in developing countries are making more or less deliberate choices about whether or not to embrace road safety as a community priority. Even in countries that have ten times the road trauma levels that we have in Australia are seemingly more committed to rapid road development than to address the rapidly growing incidence of road fatalities. The logic appears to be that rapidly growing economies need to rapidly develop road infrastructure to meet the demands of this activity. And this growth will reduce poverty quicker, which in turn improves the health, and indeed the life expectancy of the people.

How sadly ironic. Both sides of the argument have a point. However, the reality is that the rush to reduce poverty is in effect resulting in an exponential growth in road deaths. We are also learning more about how road death and injury contributes to poverty – of families and of communities.

There have been a few studies that have begun to demonstrate this. And at macroeconomic levels road crashes consume 1-2% of national gross domestic products. Studies that demonstrate the links between poverty and road injury are needed to help governments to make more informed choices in the development of public policy and in the management of community resources.

“Every 3 minutes a child dies on the world's roads.”  
The Commission for Global

Road Safety, chaired by Lord Robertson (former UK Cabinet Minister) uses these kinds of words to implore governments, especially the G8, to take action now to reduce this tragedy. Thus the sponsor, FIA Foundation, is embarking on a global campaign to draw attention to this issue.

