

Indigenous Road Safety Forum Report

Introduction

The Department of Infrastructure and Transport, in conjunction with the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority (NSW RTA), conducted the Indigenous Road Safety Forum in Coffs Harbour from 10 to 12 November 2010.

Invitations to the forum were sent to:

- The 2008 Cairns Indigenous Road Safety Forum participants
- Australian Government agencies with major responsibilities for Indigenous road safety policy/programs
- Dept of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland
- HealthInfoNet steering group members
- Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICC's) – Australia-wide
- Indigenous media
- Indigenous road safety organisations & individuals – WA
- Indigenous Road Safety Steering Committee (IRSSC)
- Indigenous Road Safety Working Group (IRSWG)
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Australia-wide
- National Road Safety Executive Group (NRSEG) (includes state & territory road safety managers)
- NSW Aboriginal Land Councils
- QLD attendees at the 2008 Forum
- The George Institute for Global Health

Over 100 people, with a wide range of skills and interests in Indigenous road safety, attended the forum. Participants included representatives from community groups, government agencies in the road safety, health and justice sectors, police, commercial organisations, academic institutions and local government. HealthInfoNet maintained a desk during the conference to introduce participants to the information available on their website.

Objectives

The objectives of the Forum were to:

- share resources and information to maintain an ongoing national commitment to addressing road safety issues that affect Indigenous people; and
- make recommendations for practical and locally-relevant initiatives.

Program

The program format included a day trip to the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Community of Corindi Beach, presentations on key road safety issues affecting Indigenous people and workshop discussions focussing on those issues.

The visit to the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Community on 10 November 2010 gave participants a chance to meet with the people from the Community and discuss issues affecting them, including road safety. The community provided activities including dancing and a guided nature walk and bush tucker tour enabling participants to learn about traditional cures and food. This was followed by short presentations on Aboriginal driver licensing in NSW and an alcohol interlock demonstration project in Western Australia. Participants were also able to view and purchase authentic Aboriginal art by artists from the Yarrowarra Cultural Centre.

The formal proceedings of the Forum were held at the BreakFree Aanuka Resort, Coffs Harbour, on 11 November 2010. Following a Welcome to Country by Community Elder, Aunty Sue Hoskins, the Forum was formally opened with an address by the Hon Catherine King MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport.

The day's sessions were chaired by National Road Safety Council (NRSC) Member Emeritus Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik (former Dean, Indigenous Research and Education, Charles Darwin University). Other NRSC Members in attendance were the Chair Roger Cook AM, Prof Ian Johnston AM (Deputy Chairman, National Transport Commission) and Freda Crucitti (President, Australian Automobile Association). Apologies were received for NRSC Members Wayne Gardner AM, Ann Bunnell and Dr Soames Job. NRSC Members engaged with Indigenous participants and discussed issues of concern to the Indigenous Community. Indigenous road safety is one of the priority areas for the NRSC.

The opening address was followed by presentations on the following topics:

- Injury of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island People due to transport
- Road safety infrastructure assessments for NSW identified Aboriginal Communities
- Information sharing related to Indigenous road safety through the HealthInfoNet website
- A preliminary assessment of Aboriginal fatalities on NSW roads
- A case study of best practice implementation of road safety measures in Queensland's Woorabinda Community
- Strategic and action planning in NSW
- Lessons learned and national implications of a safe systems audit in remote Indigenous Communities
- Road safety for Indigenous New Zealanders
- An evidence-based action plan for prevention of road traffic injuries among Indigenous Australians
- Aboriginal licensing in NSW
- Alcohol interlock demonstration project.

Two DVDs on Indigenous road safety were screened, one produced by the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Transport titled: *Being safe, not sorry* and the other by the NSW RTA titled: *Makin' In Roads*.

Facilitated workshops were held on 12 November 2010. Participants were encouraged to share information and ideas and later presented their ideas and recommendations to a plenary session of the Forum. The groups covered the following topics:

- Driver licensing (Facilitator: Nigel Robinson – NSW RTA)
- Safe System approach in Aboriginal Communities (Facilitator: Brad Hamilton – NSW RTA)
- Alcohol, drink driving: the big picture (Facilitators: David Willmette – Red Tracx Training, Australia and Colin Edmonston – Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland)
- Implementation and evaluation of injury projects in Aboriginal communities (Facilitator: Rebecca Ivers – the George Institute for Global Health and James Harrison – Flinders University)

Presentations on workshop outcomes were made and the Forum concluded with a plenary session. A summary of the workshop discussions and draft recommendations are in **Attachment A** to this report.

Record of proceedings

A record of proceedings will be made available on the website of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport. This will include:

- Invitations for the visit to the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal Community of Corindi Beach and the Forum.
- Forum program at the BreakFree Aanuka Resort.
- Powerpoint presentations.
- Major issues arising from the discussions.
- A postcard featuring artwork by artist Jingalu Melissa Craig from the Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre.
- Photographs taken at the Forum.

Four half-day workshops were conducted on 12 November 2010. These were: (1) program evaluation; (2) best-practice action plans for projects in Indigenous communities; (3) driver licensing in Indigenous communities; and (4) alcohol and drink driving. The main issues/comments arising from workshop discussion, as presented in the concluding plenary session, were as follows:

Program evaluation

The workshop recommended that the NRSC establish a modest fund for research in a range of areas relating to Indigenous road safety. Funds could be directed to demonstration projects on agreed road safety priorities that have an emphasis on producing measurable change, sustainability and capacity for replication in other settings.

Participants also suggested the establishment of a fund for project evaluation as well as the development of a set of guidelines for best practice evaluation and community engagement, to assist jurisdictions and researchers. The guidelines should reflect that conditions may vary across the country.

The NRSC was also called upon to recommend suitable mechanisms for communities to raise road safety issues and have them addressed as a means of raising community awareness and developing capacity.

Action plans

The workshop recommended that each state/territory should develop specific Indigenous road safety action plans. Key areas where action plans could be formulated include programs and policies that address:

- alcohol use by drivers and pedestrians
- restraint use
- licensing
- vehicle safety
- public transport access
- roads
- data collection and evaluation

Alcohol

Available research indicates that alcohol prohibition is an ineffective policy. The workshop was of the view that a better approach may be to have alcohol management strategies, such as restrictions on sales and alcohol strength and the provision of food and transport. The cooperation of licensed clubs was considered important, particularly with the provision of transport and high level interventions that may be required.

Similarly, punitive approaches to alcohol use were also considered to be ineffective with alternatives urgently needed. Communities should be actively engaged in the decision

making and alcohol management and community travel requirements should be separated from the issue of alcohol misuse.

Alcohol interlocks were not considered to be a panacea and it was agreed that more research is required to assess their costs, benefits and take-up rates. General opinion was that the success of these mechanisms is based on the extent of community support and that punitive action is ineffective. Pedestrian control measures such as fencing, pedestrian priority zones and community transport, were considered useful measures to address alcohol misuse.

Other recommendations made by workshop participants were:

- A strategy for the responsible service of alcohol should be developed by the Australian Transport Council in cooperation with the liquor industry.
- Community engagement is required to filter all programs for effectiveness and acceptability and positive behaviour should be rewarded.
- An Indigenous filter is needed for all policy development although there may be issues of implementation common to all cultures and the NRSC may have a role in this area.

Safe System approach

The Commonwealth was requested to:

1. develop and champion a national strategy for applying Safe System models to Indigenous communities in partnership with Land Councils; and
2. develop a national strategy to apply Safe System models to these outcomes including 'quick win' solutions and use 'demonstration' communities to implement the models.

The following areas were identified as requiring application of Safe System models:

- road conditions
- drainage
- unsealed footpaths
- poor lighting
- speed management devices
- un-roadworthy, uninsured and unregistered vehicles
- helmet use
- access to community transport
- road safety information

Licensing

Licensing was seen as a key issue by Indigenous communities. The loss of a licence or the inability to obtain one has wide implications for Indigenous Australians and their communities.

Indigenous involvement should be increased in all aspects of licensing, including service delivery, policy and training. Low literacy levels are a major barrier to driver licensing for Indigenous people and educational resources should be developed taking account of literacy levels. Documentation (proof of identity etc) requirements are another barrier for most Indigenous communities, in particular people from the Stolen Generations.

It may be appropriate to investigate a differentiated licensing regime for Indigenous communities. The standard testing requirements and procedures may discriminate against Indigenous Australians and be culturally inappropriate. As the requirement for achieving a minimum number of hours of supervised driving is an issue due to financial constraints and very limited access to driving instructors, a competency-based system could be substituted.

The result of all these impediments is that unlicensed driving is an issue exacerbated by an enforcement-oriented approach to the problem. Fining and incarceration of errant drivers is not considered an effective solution due to paucity of funds and strategies to address jurisdictional debt recovery issues should be investigated.

Key recommendations

1. A fund for Indigenous road safety projects be established by the National Road Safety Council (NRSC). Funds could be directed to projects on agreed road safety priorities that produce measurable change, sustainability and capacity for replication in other settings.
2. The NRSC request the Austroads Safety Taskforce to develop national best practice guidelines/criteria for Indigenous project evaluation and community engagement, taking into account regional differences and needs.
3. An Indigenous filter (social impact assessment) be made mandatory for all policy development in Indigenous road safety.
4. The NRSC advise the National Road Safety Executive Group to publish best practice procedures addressing the broad range of Indigenous communities, to raise and publicise road safety issues.
5. Each jurisdiction, based on their particular circumstances, develops Indigenous road safety programs and policies to address alcohol use, restraint use, licensing, vehicle safety, public transport access and roads. Data requirements and action plans to obtain required data will need to be established.
6. Relevant regulatory liquor authorities in each state and territory, in consultation with Indigenous communities, the liquor and hotel industries, relevant government agencies, Aboriginal Health Services and non-government agencies continue to implement strategies to support the responsible serving of alcohol.
7. The National Road Safety Strategy should promote the Safe System approach for Indigenous communities. Some of the initiatives should ideally incorporate 'quick win' solutions and use of Indigenous communities for application of the approach.
8. The NRSC request that the Austroads Registration and Licensing Taskforce consider a project to develop a differentiated licensing system for Indigenous communities. This

system could incorporate a competency-based approach and non-monetary measures for infringements. Alternative approaches including restricted licences and the use of a pilot project to evaluate the measures of non-monetary penalties are options.