

Mackay/Whitsunday Safe Communities Project

12 monthly report

February 2000 to February 2001



M A C K A Y
W H I T S U N D A Y



SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Introduction:

As a response to above average injury rates identified in the Mackay / Whitsunday region, the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project was established to address this issue and help the region become Queensland's first internationally recognised safe community.

This project is a World Health Organisation (WHO) supported approach to community injury control that aims to reduce injury in the Mackay / Whitsunday region by 30 per cent over the next 4-5 years. It will be guided by the criteria and processes of the WHO's safe communities framework which has been proven to be an effective means of reducing injury throughout the world, including Australia.

While a number of single issue safety promotion projects have been conducted over recent years, this project aims to coordinate a systematic sustained response to injury in the region that is multisectoral in scope, collaborative in strategies and ecological in perspective.

This first annual report is a reflection on achievements and challenges of the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project from February 2000 to February 2001.

Launch

In February 2000, the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project was officially launched in both Mackay and Whitsunday.

Operating Structure

The Operating Structure of the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project consists of a part-time Project Facilitator, Project Management Team and a number of Project Working Groups.

- **Part-time Project Facilitator**

Tropical Public Health Unit Network, Queensland Health is providing funding for a part-time project officer to facilitate / coordinate the establishment of the project. Limited funding to support injury prevention interventions / strategies has also been made available by Queensland Health. This financial commitment by Queensland Health will be available for the next 3-5 years but in a reducing capacity.

- **Project Management Team**

In September 1999, an intersectoral project management team was established with representatives from Mackay City Council, Whitsunday Shire Council, Queensland Transport, Queensland Police Service, James Cook University and Queensland Health.

Terms of Reference for the Project Management Team have been established.

Over the last 12 month period, the Project Management Team have met regularly at 4-6 weekly intervals. A logo and the slogan 'Safety is Everyone's Business' was developed by the Project Management Team.

- **Project Working Groups**

There are several project working groups currently involved in the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project including a senior safety working group in Mackay; a child safety working group in Whitsunday; a collaborative injury research working group; and a road safety working group. Given that this a long-term initiative, further project working groups are planned to target other areas of significant injury.

Collaborative research working group:

Membership includes representatives from Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit (QISU), Queensland Health and James Cook University (JCU).

Surveillance data is collected at all public hospitals in the region (Clermont, Dysart, Mackay, Moranbah, Proserpine and Sarina) and the Private Medical Service at the Mackay Mater (from September 2000). This surveillance data is analysed at a state level by QISU and at a regional level by School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine James Cook University in collaboration with Queensland Health and QISU. This provides a powerful epidemiological tool to study the causation and impact of injury and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Initiatives include – ongoing analysis of local data to identify strategic areas for intervention; presentation of papers at Injury 2000 national conference; baseline public perception telephone survey of 461 local residents conducted by JCU PhD student, sponsored by the Tom and Dorothy Cook Fellowship; and injury bulletin (December 2000) by QISU outlining Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project as a demonstration / case study.

Telephone survey results – The following identifies the major findings from this survey

- Participants overwhelmingly agreed that injuries can be prevented. However few were aware of specific accident prevention or safety programs. The majority of participants perceived prevention to be the responsibility of the individual experiencing the injury.
- The street and the motor vehicle were perceived as the most likely locations for injury, whereas most injuries occur at home.
- Majority of participants complied with 3 or more safety practices (eg smoke detector, handrails, hot water tempering valve). Increased compliance with household safety practices was associated with increasing age.
- The 16-29 year age group were correctly perceived as the most likely group to be injured.

Future initiatives planned include – preparation of a baseline monograph of injury in the Mackay / Whitsunday region.

Senior safety working group in Mackay:

Membership includes representatives from Mackay City Council, Queensland Health and local community members. This working group has utilised a multi-strategic approach to address the issue of falls prevention, as well as address perceptions of safety for older persons.

Initiatives include – release of 3000 seniors information directories by Mackay City Council; community displays and distribution of home safety information; implementation of Healthy Homes Party Program; promotion of physical activity through integration of Just Walk It and Sitting Dance Programs and Implementation of Safe Shop Program.

Healthy Homes Party Program

Volunteer based peer education falls prevention program supported by the Aged Care and Disability Unit of Mackay Community Health Centre. Three volunteer facilitators have been recruited and trained, with six Healthy Homes Party Programs planned (3 conducted and 3 postponed). Telephone follow-up of consenting attendees has identified that all felt that the party was worthwhile.

All participants identified that their knowledge of falls prevention had increased as a result of attending the party. Following the Healthy Homes Parties, many participants had taken steps to prevent falls such as removing cords and mats.

Just Walk It Program

Four community based walking groups have been established, one in Slade Point (with approximately 10 walkers), two in Andergrove (with approximately 10 walkers each) and a workplace group (with approximately 6 walkers)

Safe Shop Program

In December 2000, a pilot safe shop program (based on a concept developed and utilised effectively by a local Government authority in Victoria) was implemented in the Mackay Central Business District / City Heart to enhance perceptions of safety particularly for older persons. More than 60 local businesses are participating in this program.

Child safety working group in Whitsunday:

Membership includes representatives from Whitsunday Shire Council, Queensland Health, Education Queensland, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Transport and Whitsunday Neighborhood Centre. This working group has utilised a multi-strategic approach to address predominantly the issue of bike safety.

Initiatives include – integration of Queensland Transport's BP Bike Ed Program into local schools; share the road campaign; development and implementation of Operation BikeSafe; liaison with local Government to discuss supportive infrastructure / environments for safe bike riding and provision of seeding funding for local schools to implement KidPower.

Queensland Transport BP Bike Ed Program

The Queensland Transport BP Bike Ed Program is a comprehensive practical bicycle education program designed to give children aged 8 to 13 years (years 4-5) the practice and knowledge they need to survive on the roads. Training was provided in April 2000 for persons to become instructors. Eleven local persons including teachers (from all mainland schools excluding Whitsunday Christian Community School), police and parents attended the training. Proserpine State School implemented the Queensland Transport BP Bike Ed Program in 2001. Other local schools identified that before proceeding, further training is required for additional facilitators. Further training planned by Queensland Transport in 2001.

Operation BikeSafe (July-December 2000)

Operation BikeSafe was a proactive program to promote safe bike riding behaviour by 9-13 year olds on the roads of the Whitsunday region, that used positive reinforcement rather than reactive enforcement as its strategy, utilising police, schools and the media.

From July-December 2000, 30 local Whitsunday 9-13 year olds were nominated by local Police for wearing helmets, obeying road rules and riding sensibly and defensively.

Prior to Operation BikeSafe, an observation and survey tool were developed to evaluate Operation BikeSafe and identify / measure changes in behaviour. Pre Project evaluation of Operation BikeSafe identified that the majority of local children observed wore their helmet properly, however it was observed that many (particularly in Proserpine) failed to wear appropriate footwear. Approximately 37% of a convenient sample of 51 local community members rated the bike riding behaviour of local children as poor or very poor. Overall, it was identified there was room for improvement in the bike riding behaviour of local children (aged 9-13 years) when riding on the road, with the findings from observation supported by the findings from the survey tool. Post evaluation of Operation BikeSafe is planned for March 2001.

KidPower

KidPower is a innovative new injury prevention resource aimed at significantly reducing the number of school based injuries in young people aged 10-14 years. KidPower uses a wholistic approach based on the health promoting schools process that includes - an injury committee (including students) and an injury database. The KidPower resource was provided to 4 of the 6 local Whitsunday primary schools. Seeding funding was provided for supportive injury prevention initiatives for 3 of the 4 schools.

Road Safety Working Group

In June 2000, a road safety community meeting was conducted in Mackay by Queensland Transport. At this meeting, the decision was made by attendees to establish a road safety working group as a component of the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project.

Membership includes representatives from Queensland Transport, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, Mackay City Council, industry / community member and Department of Main Roads.

Initiatives: identification of the following areas for strategic action – driver fatigue, data collaboration and coordination, driver education, train crossings, target groups (especially young males), cyclists, alcohol, footpaths / bicycle paths and drug driving; development / implementation of a safe party kit; and promoting responsible drinking of alcohol through integration of Drink Rite Program.

Safe Party Kit

In December 2000, a pilot safe party kit (based on a concept developed and utilised effectively by a local Government authority in Victoria) was implemented across the region. The safe party kit, 'Steps to a Smarter Party', provides tips for holding successful, enjoyable and safe parties specifically addressing antisocial behaviour, road safety and alcohol consumption issues. During the party season of the festive / new year season, party convenors were given the opportunity to register their party with the Police. Approximately 119 safe party kits were taken from various distribution points in Mackay / Whitsunday. Unfortunately it is unknown how many parties were registered. Post evaluation of the safe party kit is planned for March 2001 with follow-up of consenting party convenors who registered their party (7 completed party registration forms received). It is planned that 'Steps to a Smarter Party' will be available on an ongoing basis prior to peak party times from local councils, police, transport, community health offices and schools.

Drink Rites

From October – December 2000, 3 Drink rites were conducted in licensed premises of the Mackay / Whitsunday region by Queensland Police Service, Queensland Transport and Queensland Health staff to promote the responsible drinking of alcohol.

Planned future working groups in 2001
Child safety working group in Mackay
Working group to address injuries related to alcohol in the region

Partnerships

Links have been established with the Mackay Crime Prevention Partnership as demonstrated by: a Violence Audit Workshop conducted in June 2000 and the Safe Shop initiative.

Proposed Second Pacific Rim Safe Communities Conference

Two members of the Project Management Team (from Queensland Health) attended a World Health Organisation Safe Communities International Symposium in Melbourne (April 2000). At this symposium, the two staff were approached by international and national safe communities officials and asked whether Mackay / Whitsunday would consider hosting the Second Pacific Rim Conference for Safe Communities in 2001. The decision was made by the Project Management Team to look at the feasibility of hosting the conference.

Feasibility study: A professional conference organiser was commissioned by Queensland Health to conduct a feasibility study. The feasibility study identified the prospect of success of staging the proposed conference as very high, however it was reliant on obtaining seeding funding to establish a conference secretariat. Funding application with Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund unsuccessful in first round of consideration (December 2000). Further consideration of funding application will occur in next three rounds of 2001. If proposed conference was to proceed will now be in 2002.

Communications Plan

The Communications Officer from the Tropical Public Health Unit, Queensland Health assisted the Project Management Team to develop a Communications Plan for the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project. Each member of the Project Management Team and working groups have assumed the responsibility of providing ongoing communication of the projects' progress through their own networks and updating their own organisations and workplaces.

Active components of the communication plan include

- Information resource kit to provide to interested service providers, community members etc.
- Progress update for maintain profile of project and ensure communication with key stakeholders. First progress update released in June 2000, next progress update planned for February / March 2001.
- Maintenance of a media log identifying media coverage of the project

A total of 47 positive known media 'hits' were identified regarding the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project or associated program.

Evaluation of Project

Evaluation is planned of the processes of the project. This evaluation will be undertaken on an annual basis and include interviews of and surveys to members of working groups and the project management team. At the time of this report, only evaluation of the Project Management Team has occurred. Conclusions from the evaluation of the Project Management Team were: "overall, all project management team members felt positive about the project, and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to adopt a collaborative approach in promoting a safe community within the Mackay/Whitsunday region. Most regretted that their personal contribution to the project was limited by time, however all indicated that they were committed to the group and positive about the outcome of the project.

Pool fence inspection research project

Queensland Health and Mackay City Council in collaboration participated in a research project that was completed in 2000 to determine whether the inhouse model (inspections conducted by local council officers) was an acceptable method for determining the compliance of pool owners with current pool fencing standards.

The results of this study demonstrated that despite legislation requiring pool owners to ensure their pool fence complied with uniform pool fencing requirements compliance is still quite low. Further, the findings of this study indicated that whilst the inhouse model appeared to be an acceptable (to the majority of pool owners) but costly method of pool fence inspection, regular inspection of pool fencing, and enforcement of pool fencing ordinances may be necessary to ensure compliance.

Distribution of CPR Wall Chart / Poster to new pool owners

Both Mackay and Whitsunday Councils are providing a CPR Wall Chart / Poster (provided by Queensland Health) with an accompanying letter from the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project to all new pool owners. The letter congratulates the new pool owner on their acquisition, identifies ways to keep pools safe and provides local contacts for persons to access in regards to resuscitation training (as a chart is a guide only and not a substitute for essential training in resuscitation).

Conferences

- Attendance: Two members of the Project Management Team (both from Queensland Health) attended a World Health Organisation Safe Communities International Symposium in Melbourne (April 2000) that included: the formal accreditation ceremony of Melbourne, a 2 day seminar on community safety and three one day site visits to study community safety initiatives implemented in a range of settings.
- Presentation: Five papers were presented at the recent National Injury Prevention Conference in Canberra (November 2000): Becoming Queensland's First Safe Community – considering sustainability from the outset (verbal presentation by Dale Hanson); Non-fatal accident and injury in a north Queensland rural community (Mackay) (poster presentation by Tony Carter); Injury experienced by women in Mackay (Queensland) in 1998 (oral presentation by Vicki Taylor); Intentional acts of self harm in 10-14 year olds in three Queensland regions (QISU) and Contribution of an emergency department to the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project (poster presentation).