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Information on Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project

Initiated in 1999 by the Tropical Public Health Unit Network, Queensland Health. Endorsed by Mackay City Council in November 1999 and Whitsunday Shire Council in February 2000. The Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project includes the region of Mackay City Council and Whitsunday Shire Council.



Overview of Region

Profile

This tropical sub-rainforest region is situated approximately 1000 kilometres north of Brisbane (capital of Queensland) and approximately 800 kilometres south of Cairns. The region supports diverse industry including tourism, sugar cane and other crops, grazing, and coal mining. This region is Australia's largest producer of sugar. As this region includes more than 70 islands and an extensive section of the Great Barrier Reef, the region is a popular tourist destination.



Demographics

Population: 108,805 (estimated resident population 30 June 2000)

Age Distribution:

Age	District (numbers, %)	Queensland (%)
0-14 years	24,954 (22.9%)	21.1%
15-34 years	32,132 (29.5%)	29.5%
35-49 years	25,695 (23.6%)	22.3%
50-64 years	16,050 (14.8%)	15.6%
65-74 years	5,934 (5.5%)	6.3%
75+ years	4,040 (3.7%)	5.1%

Source: ABS cat.3217.3, Health Information Centre, August 2001

Ethnic Diversity

Within the Mackay Health Service District 3.1 per cent of the population identify as Indigenous persons (whole of Queensland 2.9 per cent). From the 1996 Census it is predicted that this amount is under represented as a significant proportion of the Mackay population identify as South Sea Islander which was not an indigenous category on the census. The Mackay area has the largest population of South Sea Islanders outside of the Pacific Islands. People from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background make up 3.0 per cent of the population (whole of Queensland 6.3 per cent).



Injury Profile

Australia

In Australia in 1999, injury was responsible for 6 per cent of all deaths, 7 per cent of all hospital separations / admissions and approximately 2 million Emergency Department presentations. The estimated direct cost to the health care system is \$2.6 billion per year with a total cost of \$13 billion per year (including indirect cost). Injury is one of six national health priority areas, the others being, Cardiovascular Health, Cancer Control, Mental Health, Diabetes and Asthma.

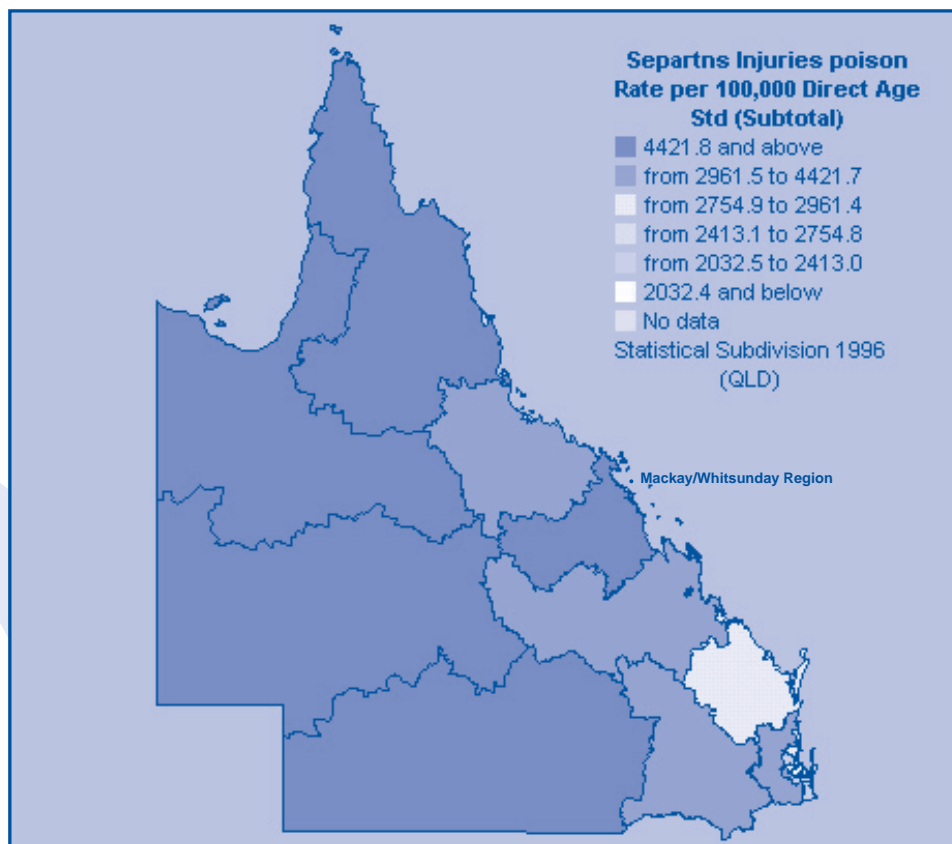
Queensland

Queensland's death rate for injuries from transport related accidents, falls, homicide and accidental drowning are higher than the national average. Justifiably, injury is an identified health priority area for Queensland.

Mackay / Whitsunday Region

In 1998 the Mackay Division of General Practice conducted a community needs analysis which identified that hospital separation / admission rates for injury and poisoning in 1995 / 1996 were high in the Mackay region.

Subsequent review of Age Standardised Injury Separation Rates by the Tropical Public Health Unit Network of Queensland Health confirmed that injury separations were more than double those observed for other Queenslanders.



As Figure 1 shows, the Mackay Health Service District has a similar injury rate to more remote areas of Queensland and not other coastal urban areas (eg. Townsville, Rockhampton) as might be expected.

Breakdown of Injury in the Mackay / Whitsunday Region

Local data has empowered the project to identify strategic issues for intervention and provided some insight into the underlying situational and environmental factors that predispose to injury. Strategic issues identified include; falls – especially in children and older persons, pushbike injuries, injuries in young males, injuries in older females, injuries in the home, transport related injuries, sport injuries and workplace injuries.

Young males in 1999 are especially at risk of presenting with injury. 22,546 (68 per cent) injury presentations were reported in males compared with 10,441 (32 per cent) in females. Young males in the 10 to 29 year age group accounted for 34 per cent of all injury presentations. This is double the rate in comparison to the rest of Queensland.

In 1999, 9408 injury presentations were reported in children under 15 years of age (29 per cent of all injury presentations), 55 per cent of these injuries occurred in the home. For children under 5 years of age, 83 per cent of injuries occur in the home.

There were 1480 reports of injury for patients older than 60 years (5 per cent of all injury presentations), 45 per cent of injuries resulting from falls, with 62 per cent of falls occurring at home.

Community Consultations

Community consultations were conducted by a James Cook University PhD student using a phone survey focussing on practices, knowledge and perceptions towards accident and injury in the Mackay / Whitsunday community.

Objective:

To assess household injury prevention practices, knowledge and perception of injury risk factors and safety in the Mackay / Whitsunday community as a basis for the implementation of a Safe Community project.

Methods:

A standardised telephone survey was developed by James Cook University and administered to a random sample of 1510 Mackay / Whitsunday phone numbers during July / August 2000.

Results:

A total of 461 completed questionnaires were obtained resulting in a second-stage response rate of 47.5 per cent.

The majority (54.7 per cent) of study subjects complied with three or more household safety practices. The street (29.5 per cent), the motor vehicle (47.9 per cent) and the 16 - 29 years age group (71.6 per cent) were perceived as the most likely locations and the most likely age group for injury in the region. The majority of participants (87.7 per cent) agreed that injuries resulting in people going to hospital are common, and 97.4 per cent agreed that injuries can be prevented. Household safety practices were independent of the perception of the home as the most likely location of injury ($p=0.39$), home structures and furnishings as the most likely cause of injury ($p=0.42$), and injury as the most likely cause of people going to hospital in Mackay ($p=0.50$).

Conclusions:

Household safety practices were independent of subjects' knowledge of injury risk factors and perception of safety. Consequently, any successful injury prevention strategy cannot be restricted to increasing the knowledge of injury risk, but has rather to focus on the development of injury prevention skills while controlling at the same time the cognitive, affective and environmental forces that influence injury prevention behaviour. These findings, in the context of the relatively high injury mortality and morbidity rates in the region, indicate that the Mackay / Whitsunday community will benefit from a specifically tailored concerted community based injury prevention project.



The Development of Mackay / Whitsunday in becoming a Safe Community

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

1997

- Injury Data began collection at Hospital Emergency Departments within the Mackay Health Service District.

1998

- Mackay Division of General Practice report was released highlighting injury as a significant health issue in Mackay.

1999

- Visit by Leif Svanstrom from the World Health Organisation suggesting "Can Mackay Become a Safe Community?" to local key stakeholders.
- Visit from representatives of other Australian accredited Safe Communities sharing their experiences of instigating and working to a Safe Communities framework.
- Mackay City Council endorsed the Safe Communities Project.
- Project Management Team formed involving (Mackay City Council, Whitsunday Shire Council, Queensland Transport, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health).
- Mackay Injury Research Collaboration Working Group established.

2000

- Whitsunday Shire Council endorsed Safe Communities Project.
- Launch of Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities.
- Working Groups established including Senior Safety Working Group in Mackay, Child Safety Working Group in Whitsunday, and the Road Safety Working Group.
- Injury data collection commenced at the Mackay Mater Medical After Hours Service.
- James Cook University community consultation on practices, knowledge and perceptions on injury was conducted.

2001

- Alcohol and Injury Working Group established.

2002

- Department of Emergency Services involved as new key stakeholders and represented on the Project Management Team.



World Health Organisation Indicators for a Safe Community

Criteria 1: Formation of a cross sectoral group that is responsible for injury prevention.

The Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project was established to address above average injury rates identified in the Mackay / Whitsunday area. An intersectorial Project Management Team has been established with local key stakeholders in injury prevention represented. The project involves a number of state and local government departments including Mackay City Council, Whitsunday Shire Council, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Transport, Department of Emergency Services and Queensland Health working in partnership with the local community to reduce injury and promote safety.

Other organisations that are represented on working groups include James Cook University, Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit, Liquor Licensing Division of Queensland, Department of Main Roads, Whitsunday Neighbourhood Centre, Education Queensland, Mackay Division of General Practice, plus community representatives.

Within Queensland Health areas represented and involved are: Tropical Public Health Unit Network and Mackay Health Services District including the Emergency Department of Mackay Base Hospital, and the following Community Health Services: Aged Care and Disability Unit, Child, Youth and Family Health Service, and Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Service.

Criteria 2: Involvement of the local community network.

Many representatives of local organisations are participating in the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project through membership on the Project Management Team and/or Project Working Groups (Refer to Flowchart Page 7).

CASE STUDY

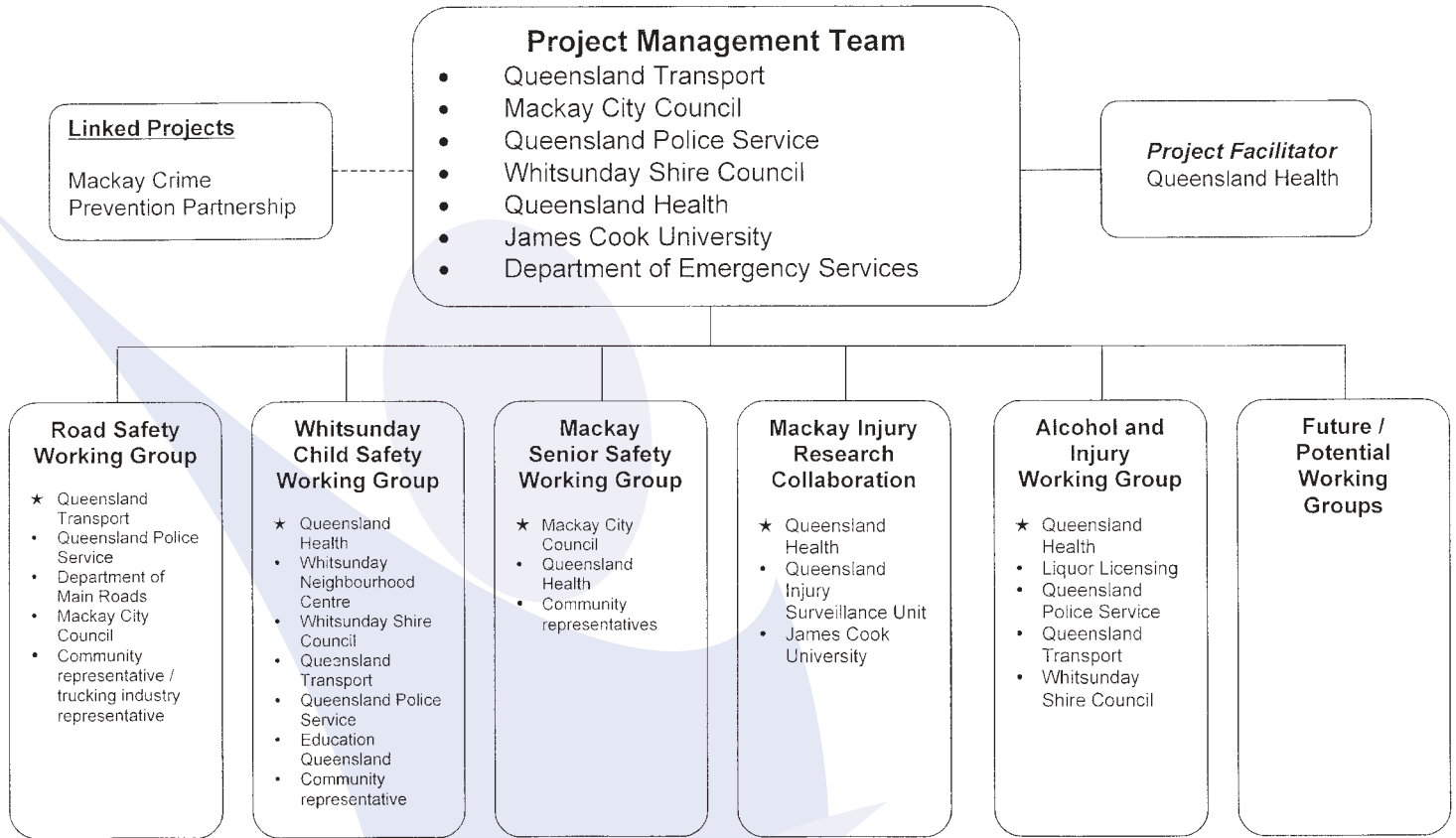
Andergrove Neighbourhood Watch Injury Project

The Department of Emergency Service and Queensland Police Service are working collaboratively on a pilot project in three communities across the state to broaden the focus of the existing Neighbourhood Watch crime prevention program, to incorporate the community safety initiatives of the Department of Emergency Services. Andergrove, a suburb of Mackay, is one of the pilot sites. The project is being conducted over a three month period, from March to May 2002.

Representatives from Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Counter Disaster and Rescue Service and the Queensland Police Service are working closely with the Andergrove Neighbourhood Watch community group. The safety issues identified by Andergrove are being addressed as well as providing details of how to access free services such as basic first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation training, home fire safety audit and home security information. A random household survey to determine the current level of safety awareness has been distributed to residents in the Andergrove community, and these responses will assist Department of Emergency Services and Police to review the current level of safety in the community.

Andergrove was chosen as one of the pilot locations to maximise the community safety focus created by the Mackay / Whitsunday Safe Communities Project.

OPERATING STRUCTURE OF MACKAY/WHITSUNDAY SAFE COMMUNITIES PROJECT



★ Denotes team leader

Current as at March 2002

Criteria 3: The program will address all ages, surroundings, and situations.

Injury priorities for the region were identified through a process of community consultation and data analysis of the injuries presenting at the local hospitals within the region. The project aims to cover all ages, environments and situations. It has working groups in children's safety, road safety, alcohol safety and senior safety.

Whitsunday Child Safety Working Group

Goal: To reduce / control injury by promoting safety for children aged 0-14 years.

Road Safety Working Group

Goal: To reduce / control injury by promoting safety on the roads.

Alcohol and Injury Working Group

Goal: To reduce / control injury by promoting responsible alcohol consumption.

Mackay Senior Safety Working Group

Goal: To reduce / control injury by promoting safety for older adults aged 60 years and over.

Potential Working Groups

Working groups are based on priority areas of need for Mackay / Whitsunday, but are also dependent on opportunities and the existing capacity of current partners and stakeholders to work in safety promotion.

The Mackay Injury Research Collaboration continually identifies areas for future action from the data collected. Future working groups will include:

- Sports Safety Working Group
- Home Safety Working Group
- Senior Safety Working Group in Whitsunday
- Child Safety Working Group in Mackay
- Occupational Safety Working Group

Criteria 4: The program will address the concerns of high-risk groups (such as children and the elderly), high risk environments and aim to ensure equity for vulnerable groups.

Project Working Groups have been formed in response to the injury data. Injury data analysis has included the identification of high risk situations and groups. Children and older people have been identified by the project because they are over represented in the injury data and are particularly vulnerable groups in the community. Older people and children need additional assistance to protect themselves and require a focus on environmental strategies that are not reliant on behaviour change.

Examples of Projects undertaken by the working Groups:

Whitsunday Child Safety Working Group

- Queensland Transport Bike Ed Program
- Share the Road
(See Appendix 1)
- KidPower

