

‘All Roads, All Road Users’ Regional Road Safety Forum, Rockhampton

Summary and key themes

Date: Friday 14 June 2019

Place: TMR Complex, Knight St, North Rockhampton

Background

On 14 June 2019, the Department of Transport and Main Roads hosted the ‘All Roads, All Road Users’ forum in Rockhampton which focused on the key road safety issues affecting the Fitzroy District.

Twenty-four delegates attended including local police, local government engineers, representatives of the local transport industry, vulnerable road user groups and Indigenous communities.

The delegates discussed four themes in an open forum session and in breakout groups – People, Environment (Urban), Environment (Rural) and Vehicles. The groups identified key issues and topics for each and identified potential actions.

Where to from here

The Queensland Government sincerely thanks everyone who attended the forum for their time and input. The ideas put forward are being considered as part of the development of the next Queensland road safety action plan. Key themes, discussion points and a sample of specific initiatives are outlined below.

Key themes

Note: The below summary aims to capture the key discussion themes raised by a range of participants at the forum and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Queensland Government or all participants.

People

Discussion of the ‘people’ aspect of crashes emphasised education in two ways: first, finding impactful ways of communicating to the public that serious road trauma is avoidable, not inevitable; and training for lifelong skills rather than just to get a driver licence.

Finding the right messaging to overcome complacency is a challenge. Impatience and distraction are common. While there is perceived value in ‘shock tactics’ in road safety advertising, research does not support these methods as effective behavioural change strategies for key risk groups. More innovative ways are worth trialling. This might include exploring ways to sensitively and appropriately discuss the individual circumstances of a

crash in a community context, to highlight the reality of road trauma and how it impacts lives and the broader community.

Delegates talked about the importance of education beyond that required to simply obtain a driver licence. They considered exposure to a variety of roads and conditions is the best approach to develop driving skills, and there is potential to tailor this to the needs of the driver, the environment in which they live and drive and the kinds of driving they do for work. Delegates also questioned the effectiveness of tough penalties, and whether these could be balanced with incentives for good on-road behaviour. The focus of education needs to be broader than just drivers, as people may also use the roads as bicycle riders and/or pedestrians.

Ideas:

- Lowering the blood/breath alcohol concentration limit for drivers
- Advertising campaigns are aggressive and targeted
- Integrated ongoing education (including 'refresher' courses) with licence renewal and other opportunities
- Reaching specific groups such as recidivist offenders through targeted intervention programs
- Competency-based approaches to licensing
- Development of a whole of schooling (P-12) education program.

Urban environments

There was consensus about the need for safe design and planning of urban road environments to encourage safety and user compliance with traffic laws. Supportive design was noted to be particularly important in the case of speed limits, which should match the environment. Uncontrolled intersections were identified as another site on the network where user behaviour could be reinforced by sympathetic infrastructure such as perceptual countermeasures, like visually narrowing approaches and retrofitting chicanes. Delegates also identified multiple opportunities around schools to improve safety for the community, including drop-off zones, walkable distances and defined corridors for safe access.

Delegates identified multiple areas for collaboration between urban planners and road safety engineers, including better consideration of routes for pedestrians (to facilitate walking for recreation as well as transport) as well as motorists (to discourage 'rat-running'). Local stakeholder knowledge, in addition to data, was discussed as another useful resource. Other opportunities to improve pedestrian safety including zebra crossings on slip lanes and ensuring safe pedestrian access around construction and maintenance were also noted.

Ideas:

- Work with the Department of Education and other education sectors to develop recognised corridors for safe travel to schools
- Visual prompts and perceptual countermeasures in low speed zones (for example, zebra crossings on slip lanes, edge lines at unmarked intersections)
- Physical countermeasures, such as curb extensions, on shoulders at uncontrolled intersections.

Rural environments

Delegates discussed the infrastructure solutions available to improve the safety of rural roads, many at low-cost. They noted audible edge lining, wide centre line treatments and better delineation of speed limits all help motorists to stay alert and compliant. It was suggested perceptual treatments could also be more widely rolled out, with an opportunity for local trials and data collection. Also, that better clear zones and 'flatter batters' also play a role in making the road environment more forgiving in the event of a crash, reducing the seriousness of a crash should a vehicle come off the roadway.

A major theme of discussion was how infrastructure supports drivers to make safe decisions on the roads – particularly around overtaking and fatigue. Overtaking lanes were identified as a key site for driver impatience and error, with length advisory signs and driver education on impatience (targeted to support specific treatments) noted as potential short-term opportunities. Longer term opportunities discussed include implementing 2+1 treatments and extending lengths to allow drivers more time and opportunity to overtake safely.

Delegates also identified multiple opportunities to better remind drivers to take rest breaks, including: changing texture of road surface for known fatigue blackspots; and providing greater advance notice of existing rest areas. Sites close to the roadway such as unused stockpiles could be repurposed for new rest areas. Delegates discussed the role of education around trip planning to support these measures. The popularity of fatigue trivia signs with the community was noted, as were opportunities to make use of existing ITS signage, reinforcing other education.

Noting higher speeds on rural roads means crashes are more serious and more likely to result in serious injury or death, delegates discussed lowering speeds for key areas of the network on safety grounds, including consideration of an 80km/h limit on unsealed roads. Consistency of speed limits (including through towns) was proposed to also improve safety and user compliance.

Given the higher speeds on rural roads, intersections are particularly risky. Delegates suggested better signage of T-intersections was needed, and consideration of an audit of give-way intersections in rural towns.

Motorcycle riders are particularly vulnerable, especially on these higher speed roads. However, delegates discussed the opportunity on the road network to provide better advice to motorcyclists of risky conditions, such as implementing more standard curve warning signs and turn warning signs – after checking these signs do not pose an additional risk for motorcyclists.

More broadly, delegates also discussed whether current approaches to education need review to ensure they address the unique risks of rural driving. They noted current approaches do not always match the rural environment – for example, hidden driveways, highway driving, animals, fatigue and long trips – and may neglect the 'unwritten rules' of driving on rural roads that shape driver behaviour. New communications technology was suggested to provide opportunities in this space.

Delegates also noted that opportunities for the community to provide feedback on rural roads could be made more readily accessible.

Ideas:

- Countermeasures for motorcyclists to reflect changing road conditions (for example, standardised, motorcycle specific curve and turn warning signs, perceptual countermeasures)
- Extended clear zones adjacent to the carriageway
- 80km/h limit on unsealed roads
- Measures to support drivers to manage fatigue. For example:
 - changing the texture of road surface for known fatigue blackspots
 - multi-purpose ITS fatigue trivia signs (for example, to include flood warnings),
 - repurpose sites such as unused stockpiles for rest areas
- Improved signage on rural roads to help motorists make better decisions. For example:
 - improve signage approaching T-intersections
 - advising length of overtaking lanes
 - provide advance notice of existing rest areas.

Vehicles

Delegates consider vehicle technology and features as offering many opportunities to improve user safety, alongside behavioural interventions. This was identified as particularly the case for behaviours that are habitual and difficult to enforce, such as mobile phone use while driving and failing to wear a seatbelt. It was also noted that for new vehicles, this may require legislative change.

Delegates noted some of the emerging safety features on newer vehicles, while very promising, rely on maintenance of infrastructure (for example, white lines for lane keeping assistance systems) which may be more challenging in regional environments. They considered this and other areas, such as correct use of headlights and bright LED lights, could be an area for driver education.

The safety of the current fleet was also discussed, including a role for a vehicle safety inspection regime.

Ideas:

- Seatbelt interlocks, including mandatory and after-market solutions
- Technological approaches to limit in-vehicle mobile phone use, for example, mobile phone interlocks
- Vehicle safety inspection regimes for older vehicles.