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Improving road safety around schools

An overview of school road safety
The safety of students travelling to and from school is one of the most important issues for school communities. Queensland children are the future of our state, and it is imperative that we make school travel as safe as possible.

The traffic environment around schools is one of the most complex traffic environments regularly encountered by children. Children are not always equipped with the skills to deal with environments like these, which increases the risk of road crash incidents.

Today, more children are being driven to school than ever before. According to the South East Queensland Travel Survey, the number of primary school children being driven to school in south-east Queensland has increased from 94,000 in 1992 to 167,000 in 2009\(^1\).

Cars used for school-related travel also contribute to various increasing problems for the Queensland community. Not only do they add to greenhouse gas emissions and increase traffic congestion in many areas; but by adding to the number of vehicles on the roads, they also increase the road-safety risks, especially in areas where children congregate.

This is why the Department of Transport and Main Roads has introduced new road safety initiatives in school zones. These initiatives include:

- the use of standardised school zone times
- the installation of flashing light school zone signs at school zones operating outside the standard times for their area
- the installation of all-day school zones operating from 7am to 4pm with flashing lights at split campus schools, and
- the installation of vehicle-activated signs at school zones on multi-lane roads.

School road safety is a whole-of-community problem that requires whole-of-community awareness and commitment to addressing the issues. Improving the safety of school travel is dependent on the involvement and commitment of road and transport authorities, school communities, families, parent associations, educational authorities and police. For school road safety to be improved, it is vital that everyone works together.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads encourages school communities to do everything they can to improve the safety of our children around the road environment.

2011-2020 is the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety with the goal of reducing global road fatalities – the Queensland Government is committed to achieving this aim. Throughout the world, road traffic injury is the second leading cause of death for young people between five and 14 years of age\(^2\). Each year, children are killed and seriously injured as passengers, pedestrians and cyclists on Queensland roads. It is important for everyone to work together to do all we can to reduce the number and severity of these incidents.

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1 South East Queensland Travel Survey 1992, 2003-04, 2006-08; covering Brisbane Statistical Division, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast.
Introduction:

How to use this document

The Queensland Guide to School Road Safety has been designed to help schools improve road safety in their local community. It is recognised that improving road safety may seem to be a complicated and daunting task, involving a range of different parties with a range of different priorities and responsibilities. However, this guide can be used to develop and implement a systematic approach involving all stakeholders, to achieve improved road safety outcomes without undue difficulty.

In many cases, attempts to improve road safety around a school involve:
- the principal, school administration or teachers
- school students
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- local government
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Education and Training
- your school Parents & Citizens or Parents & Friends association
- local community groups.

This guide will help schools work through this sometimes complicated process by providing a step-by-step guide to improving school road safety, as well as a supporting toolkit of resources.

The Queensland Guide to School Road Safety has two sections:

Section 1: A step-by-step guide to improving school road safety in your community

Each school faces unique road safety issues, based on location and surrounding infrastructure. This step-by-step guide has been designed to help schools develop a way forward to address their concerns in the most appropriate way.

The appropriate road safety solutions for each school setting will be different – a combination of solutions is often necessary to reach the best outcome.

Section 2: Toolkit of resources

There are three broad approaches a school community can use to address road safety issues. These are commonly referred to as the ‘three Es’: education, enforcement, engineering.

The School Environment Road Safety Toolkit comprises a range of resources administered by the Department of Transport and Main Roads to help schools improve local road safety. The resources are classified under the three approaches of education, enforcement and engineering.
Section one:

A step-by-step guide to improving school road safety in your community

Scan, plan do and review

Improving school road safety can be addressed in four easy steps: scan, plan, do and review.

Scan for interest, and scan the environment:

- establish that there is sufficient interest to undertake a road environment improvement program at the school
- develop a process to address road safety within a school setting
- identify road safety problems in and around the school environment.

Plan for improvements:

- approach relevant stakeholders
- develop options
- develop an action plan.

Do it:

implement the improvements (education, enforcement, engineering).

Review progress:

- measure success
- celebrate and communicate success.

Scan for interest

Develop a process or solution to address road safety within a school setting

It is important that schools provide a forum for the discussion of road safety. Including road users and members of the community who are also interacting in the environment ensures that any process or solution is as comprehensive as possible.

Some road safety issues might be limited to a small area of concern; others are more complex, requiring a longer-term approach. Approaches will differ from school to school, however some successful approaches are:

An official school road safety committee (sometimes called a Safe School Travel or SafeST Committee) including representation from the school principal, parent representatives, local Adopt-a-Cop, students, teachers, local councillors and the Department of Transport and Main Roads road safety advisors.

- A joint school road safety committee with surrounding schools (if schools are close to each other). This will help make sure the best result is achieved for the whole community as efficiently as possible, and that one school will not benefit at the expense of a nearby school.

- A smaller, sub-committee of the P&C/P&F or even a road safety representative who is responsible for regularly raising road safety concerns with the P&C/P&F.

Scan the environment

Identify areas of concern

A helpful place to start is to make a record of the school’s road safety concerns. This record should be supported by evidence. Considerations should not be limited to the provision of road safety facilities requiring funding. They should also include issues such as: active transport, student behaviour on buses, public transport timetabling and parents’ pick-up/set-down behaviours (including illegal parking and other breaches of the Queensland Road Rules).

The School Environment Scan is a tool for schools to use to establish road safety concerns in their area (see Engineering, section 2). It is not a risk analysis tool. It does not intend to replace any engineering-based safety audits of a school area, such as those a local council may use. It is primarily intended as a tool to help schools identify various options and possible solutions.

Plan for improvements

Once schools have identified a priority list of their main concerns, they should consider approaching relevant local stakeholders to help them in develop and implement road safety improvement initiatives.
Approach relevant stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>How they can help</th>
<th>Area of expertise</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Department of Transport and Main Roads | • Provide assistance with and access to Queensland Government programs and initiatives  
• Provide local road safety knowledge and advice  
• Work with the school to develop tailored road safety solutions, where appropriate | • Education  
• Enforcement  
• Engineering | Contact organisation directly in writing  
Contacts for road safety advisors in your community are available online |
| Local government | • Provide assistance and access to local government programs and initiatives  
• Provide local road safety knowledge and advice  
• Work with the school to develop tailored road safety solutions, where appropriate  
• Some local governments have their own local law enforcement or road safety officers | • Education  
• Enforcement  
• Engineering | Contact organisation directly in writing |
| Queensland Police Service/ School Adopt-a-Cop | • Help enforce future road safety initiatives  
• Provide local knowledge and advice | • Enforcement  
• Education | Contact organisation directly in writing |
| Local Member of Parliament (MPs) | • Help identify potential funding programs  
• Help get concerns heard by other MP’s  
• Help facilitate partnerships with other stakeholders | • Engineering | Contact organisation directly in writing  
Click here to find your local member |
| Your school community | • Get involved in future initiatives  
• Help get the message out  
• Help to change or influence parent and motorist behaviours | • Education | School newsletter  
Announcements on parade  
Classroom activities |
| The wider local community | • Get involved in future initiatives  
• Help get the message out | • Education | Local newspaper  
Letterbox drops  
Personal approaches |

Develop options
After discussing road safety issues with relevant local stakeholders, road safety committees will have a clearer picture of what they can do to improve road safety in the community. Each school will have its own challenges requiring unique solutions. A combination of solutions is often necessary to achieve the best outcome.

Develop an action plan
A school road safety action plan is recommended to formalise commitment to improving road safety. Ideally, an action plan would outline:

• **what** the school is planning to do to improve road safety (refer to the toolkit of resources for suggestions)
• **how** it expects road safety will improve
• **how** the school will monitor and evaluate the plan’s success (for assistance see ‘Review your progress’ below)
• **when** it will be done
• **who** is responsible for making it happen.

See Attachment A for an example school road safety action plan.
Do it (implement the improvements)
After gaining endorsement from the school administration and any other relevant stakeholders, it is time to implement the improvements you have identified to make the road environment safer for students at your school.

It is important to remember that changes to the local environment will be gradual, so be sure to keep the school community up to date on any developments and ensure they are continually encouraged to stay focused and involved.

Review your progress

Monitor and evaluate your success
It is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any plan or action, for a number of reasons; this is also true for school-based road safety programs.

Monitoring enables the school to collect information to:
- gauge participation and satisfaction levels
- check a project’s progress
- ensure objectives are met
- identify possible process improvements
- design suitable and useful evaluation tools.

The way your school monitors its progress will depend on the approach used and the objectives of the project. Some tools that can help track your progress include:
- encouraging community feedback via the school newsletter to determine levels of satisfaction
- undertaking bike rack counts or ‘hands up’ surveys of how students travel to school to determine participation (e.g. modal shift)
- partnering with local authorities in undertaking traffic counts and/or obtaining local crash data to gauge possible impacts on safety
- monitoring any forums established when scanning the school road safety environment.

Evaluation is essential to:
- adequately identify and describe an issue when establishing program objectives in the initial stages
- identify a project’s strengths and weaknesses
- provide evidence that a program was successful and that the interventions achieved the desired result
- ‘win’ support for continued funding.

Please note: Evaluation does not need to be complex. It simply needs to capture whether the program was delivered as planned and resulted in the desired behaviour change.

Celebrate and communicate your success
In many cases, improvements around a school will be gradual. It is important to maintain interest and momentum by sharing successes as they happen. Remember, each small step is a step toward improved safety for the school community.