

Aboriginal Road Safety Issues Report

Mandy Watson, Paul Elliott, Carl Kinsella & Scott Wilson

Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc.

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For Transport SA,

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Abstract

This report investigates the over representation of Aboriginal people in road toll statistics in the far west of South Australia. It endeavours to document views on the reasons for the over representation, and to offer recommendations based on information gathered from a number of sources. To compile the necessary information a best practice review was undertaken, extensive Aboriginal community consultation was conducted, information was sought from a comprehensive list of key stakeholders, and available statistical information was assembled. Importantly, this report also adds to a very small body of literature on the subject of Aboriginal Road Safety in South Australia.

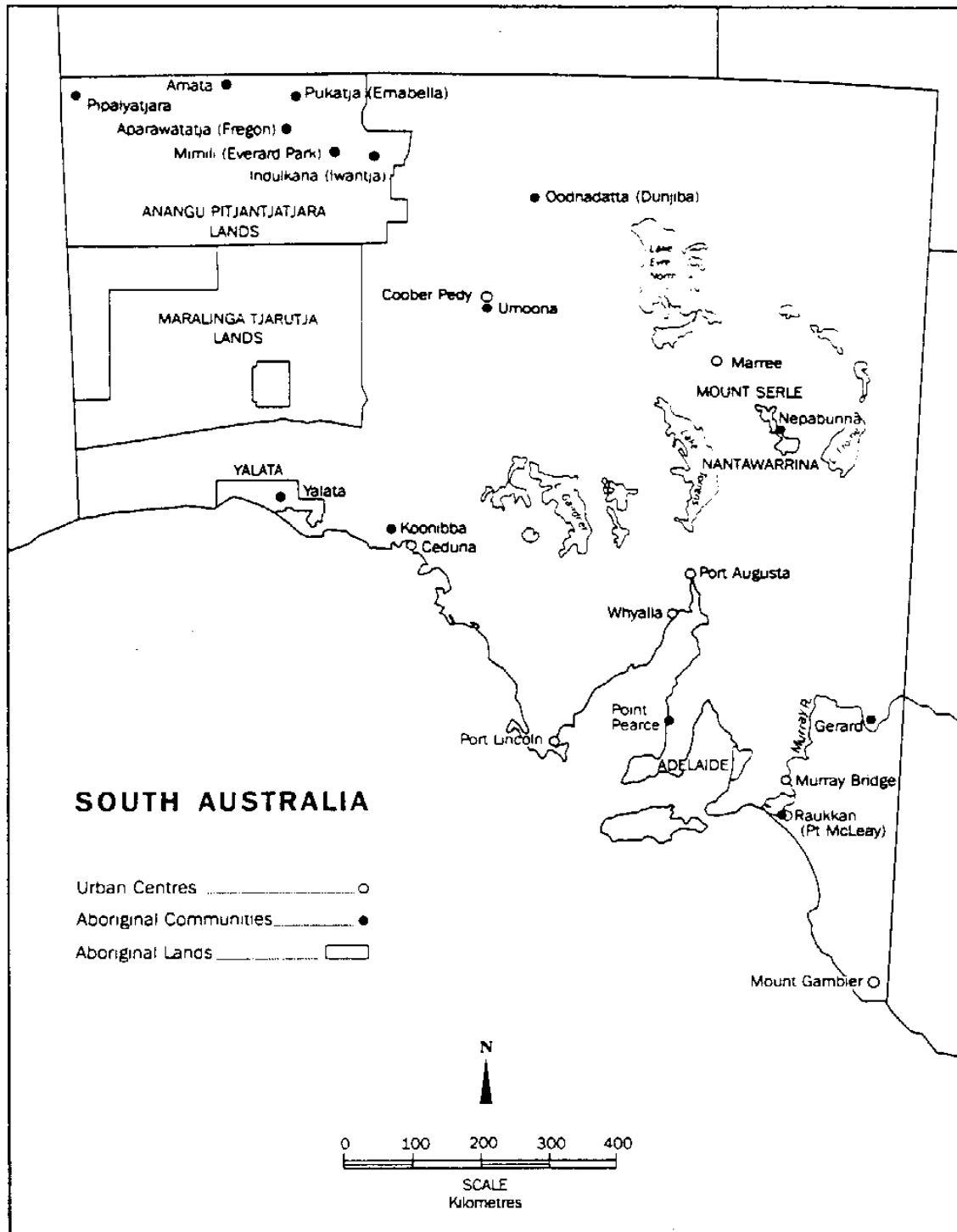


Figure 1: Location Map

Source: ABS (1997) South Australian Year Book

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1996, the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc. (ADAC) was commissioned by the Office of Road Safety to research the over representation of Aboriginal people in South Australian road toll statistics in the Murat Bay District.

In compiling the necessary information for this report, a number of steps were undertaken. These included a literature review, community consultations, the correlation of information from key stake holders and the gathering of available statistical information. During the research process it became evident that information on South Australian Aboriginal road safety is scant.

Aboriginal community members described a number of interrelated issues that are associated with Aboriginal road safety in the far west of the State. These include the distances being travelled to access entertainment and shopping facilities, the lack of transport alternatives (for example a bus service) and the high incidence of drink driving. Community members also noted that trucks travelling at high speeds posed a threat to road safety, as did the overloading of vehicles. Additionally, the community consultants thought there should be a greater police presence on the roads in the region.

Consultations with key stakeholders also identified the distances involved in accessing entertainment, the lack of transport alternatives and the high incidence of drink driving as having an impact on Aboriginal road safety in the region. In addition they indicated that the age and condition of many of the vehicles in use by Aboriginal people in the far west

is impacting on the seriousness of injuries sustained by Aboriginal people in road accidents in the Murat Bay District.

The literature review indicates that alcohol plays a major role in road fatalities and reveals that a combination of interventions such as community education and development, legislation and regulation, and treatment services can ameliorate the consequences of alcohol misuse as it relates to road safety. In particular, the literature review suggests that it is the combination of such interventions, rather than the individual interventions themselves, that leads to the success of intervention campaigns.

Summary of Recommendations

A number of recommendations for actions have arisen out of the information gathered for this report. Importantly, many of the recommendations have been developed from information gathered from the Aboriginal community itself. Combined with the expert knowledge of the identified key stakeholders, the recommendations herein attempt to provide a outline for improved road safety in the far west of South Australia.

They are as follows:

Transport - Public/ Private

Recommendation 1: (p28)

That the availability of community transport is ensured - the distances being travelled by people for entertainment, shopping and other recreational activities is an obvious road safety issue.

Recommendation 2: (p28)

That any necessary funding be provided to repair the community bus at Yalata and that training be provided at the local CDEP to ensure the regular maintenance of the bus.

Recommendation 3: (p29)

That one or more local people be trained to drive the bus. This would ensure that a licensed driver is always available.

Community Awareness/ Education

Recommendation 4: (p30)

That driver education and training be made more accessible for people in remote areas.

Recommendation 5: (p30)

That Aboriginal community members be encouraged to obtain driver's licences through better communication and consultation with local Police Officers and Police Aides.

Recommendation 6: (p32)

To develop and implement a culturally appropriate education package that focuses on the following:

- use of alcohol and/or other drugs as they relate to road use
- responsible use of alcohol
- first aid training
- driver training
- vehicle roadworthiness and on-going maintenance
- the use and availability of seat belts.

Recommendation 7: (p32)

That Aboriginal community members be closely involved in the development of any education/ training programs to be implemented in the region.

Road Environment

Recommendation 8: (p34)

That speeds be lowered along a section of the Eyre Highway from the Yalata turn-off to the Yalata Road-House.

Policing Concerns

Recommendation 9: (p35)

That after an education period, the South Australian Police (both local and with possible assistance from outside the region) be encouraged to enforce rules associated with safe motoring. This should include, for example, increased random breath testing in the area, a 'blitz' on road worthiness, licence checks and stopping overloaded vehicles.

Regulation of Alcohol Consumption/ Sales

Recommendation 10: (p36)

That laws surrounding the issue of responsible serving be enforced.

That, as part of the education process already discussed, coin-operated Breath Analysis Units be installed in Licensed premises in the region.

Recommendation 12: (p36)

That any changes to the 'dry area' status of Yalata Aboriginal Community be directed by the community itself.

Need for Future Research

Recommendation 13: (p37)

That further research is conducted into remote Aboriginal community road safety issues.

INTRODUCTION

In 1996 the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc (ADAC) was approached by the South Australian Department of Transport Office of Road Safety, and later commissioned, to research the over-representation of Aboriginal people in South Australian road toll statistics, with specific reference to the Murat Bay District (Ceduna/Yalata).

At present, information on South Australian Aboriginal road safety is scant, however, existing statistics reveal that among the rural South Australian Aboriginal population the majority of road crash casualties are from the Eyre (which includes Murat Bay District) and Northern Regions.¹ The Office of Road Safety asked ADAC to investigate some of the reasons for this and to offer recommendations, based on community consultations, in order to improve road safety in the far west of South Australia. (See Location Map, page iv.)

This project was directed by a Steering Committee that was formed to ensure the aims and objectives of the project would be fulfilled. This committee has also provided advice and assistance to ADAC in establishing the project's activities. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members for their time and advice. A list of committee participants is included in the Appendices.

METHODOLOGY

¹ Tiong, F., (1996) Involvement of South Australian Aboriginal People in Road Traffic Crashes, Executive Summary, Department of Transport, South Australia.

The nature of this project required that a number of steps be undertaken to compile the necessary information. These are listed below, together with details of each component:

1. Best Practice Review.

This involved a literature review concerning Aboriginal Community road safety with assistance from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Road Accident Research Centre Unit based in Adelaide.

Included in the literature reviewed are papers and reports that present findings from the South Australian Coroner's investigations into alcohol's role in road fatalities, details of alcohol involvement in non-fatal crashes in South Australia, through to a comprehensive overview of the Northern Territory's 'Living with Alcohol' campaign.

2. Community Consultations

It was felt that by visiting and talking to community members at Koonibba, Yalata and Ceduna, information could be gathered in an informal and non-threatening manner. To encourage participation from the community at Yalata a barbecue was arranged. This provided an excellent opportunity to meet and talk with community members - a task that can often prove difficult when researchers are not well known to the respective community.

During the visits, a simple survey was also conducted. Apart from gathering information on age, gender and employment status, the survey asked questions about licence status, distances travelled, and the reasons for travelling. It also asked about driving under the

influence of alcohol and other drugs, use of seat belts, and whether people had been passengers in a vehicle where the driver was under the influence of alcohol and/ or other drugs. In addition, a section of the survey was reserved for people to document their thoughts on the dangers associated with travelling on the roads in the Murat Bay area, and driving under the influence of alcohol and/ or other drugs.

Filling out the survey forms often formed part of the direct consultations, however a number of different community and government services were also contacted and interviewed.

A sample of the survey form is included in the Appendices. This survey has provided us with a database of information that forms the basis of the needs analysis. This is discussed in some detail later in the report.

Services visited during the field trip included:

- Ceduna/ Koonibba Health Service
- Ceduna Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)
- Yalata/ Maralinga Health Service - Oak Valley Community
- Yalata/ Maralinga Health Service - Yalata Community
- Weena Gu Gudba Inc. (An Aboriginal women's' group based in Ceduna.)
- Department of Education Employment and Training and Youth Affairs, Ceduna Office
- Koonibba Health Service
- Department for Family and Community Services, Ceduna Office
- Wareavilla Community Council

- Yalata Road House
- Ceduna Police Station
- Penong Police Station
- other private community agencies and groups.

In all, 92 people were surveyed and/or interviewed throughout the region.

3. Collected information from identified Key Stakeholders

The following government departments and organisations were contacted and asked for their expert input:

- The South Australian Attorney General's Department
- The South Australian Police Force
- South Australian Ambulance Service
- The Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia, South Australian Branch
- The South Australian Liquor Licensing Commission
- The Department of State Aboriginal Affairs
- Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, South Australian Branch
- Murat Bay District Council
- Yalata Community Council
- SA Aboriginal Housing Advisory Council
- The Department of Transport, South Australia
- Department of Technical and Further Education (DETAFE), Ceduna Office, South Australia
- The South Australian Health Commission

- Yalata/Maralinga Health Service.

4. Gather relevant available statistical information

Details of traffic accidents in the Murat Bay area during 1995 and 1996 were provided by the Department of Transport's Office of Road Safety, together with details of the licence status of drivers in South Australia generally.

The recorded statistics regarding road accidents in the Murat Bay area do not detail the involvement of alcohol for injured drivers/ riders, or the Aboriginality of persons involved in road accidents in the region, hence there has been some difficulty in applying the statistics in the preparation of this report.

We can however, draw on Fred Tiong's 1996 paper, 'Involvement of South Australian Aboriginal People in Road Traffic Accidents'. This details the regional distribution of SA road crash casualties from 1989 to September 1994. There is clearly an over-representation of Aboriginal casualties in the Eyre region, with Aboriginal people representing 13.7 % of casualties in that region. See Figure 2 below.

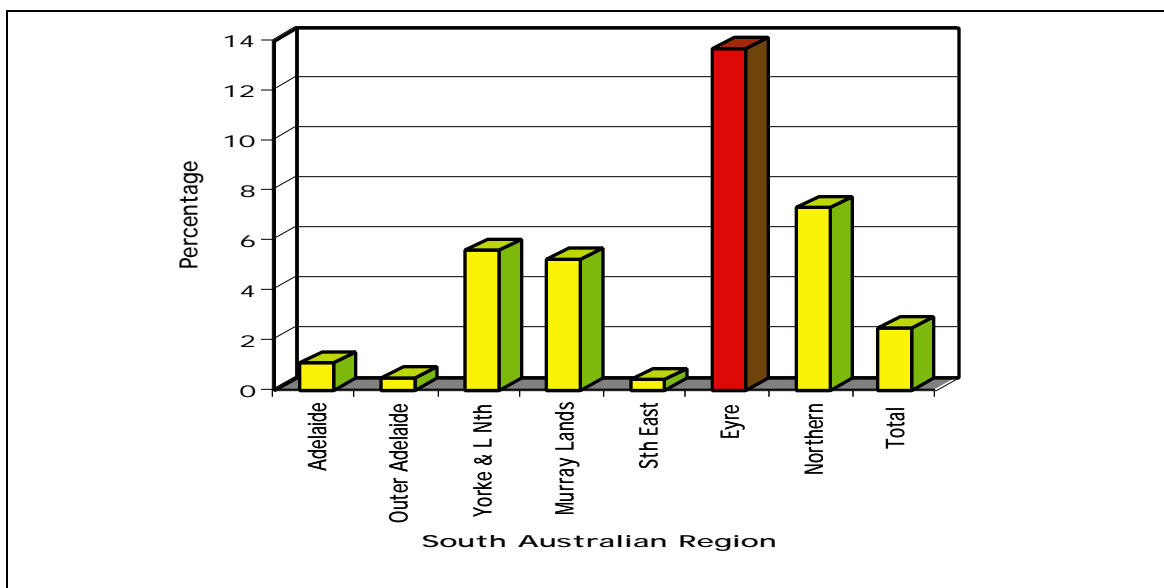


Figure 2: Regional Distribution of Aboriginal South Australian Road Accident Casualties - as a Percentage of Total Regional Road Accident Casualties, 1989 to September 1994.

Source: Tiong, F., (1996) Involvement of South Australian Aboriginal People in Road Traffic Crashes, p5.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevention Campaigns

Crundall, I., The Northern Territory Living with Alcohol Program: A Public Health Approach to Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm, Paper presented at the Drink Driving Recidivism Summit, Adelaide, Australia, November 26-27, 1996.

This paper describes the Northern Territory's Living with Alcohol Program, and how the program works through a variety of strategies that are integrated across three principal domains of influence. These include:

- Culture - which refers to alcohol related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours,
- Care - which concentrates on treatment and intervention services, and
- Control - which relates to regulation, legislation and policy.

This paper identifies community education as being critical for communities to be able to identify their own particular needs and to find suitable solutions. Details are given of a sub-program that has been developed specifically for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. The Aboriginal Living with Alcohol Team consists of specially trained Aboriginal workers who work according to the principles of community development. This team visits communities over a period of months and works with the communities to conduct education and information sessions and help the community clarify the alcohol related problems they face. In the following stage the team facilitates the process by which the community identifies and develops strategies to address priority local concerns.

Drinking and road use is another component of the Living with Alcohol Program. According to this paper, three specific goals were set for the program at the outset. One of those was to halve the number of alcohol-related road accidents. As a response to this the program has pursued a number of strategies designed to impact on drink driving. These include:

- Community education - through mass media, education sessions with various community and interest groups, advising people not to drink alcohol when driving long distances, Operation Drink Sense and Sober Driver campaigns.
- Legislation - which has lowered the legal blood alcohol level (BAL) to 0.05mg/ 100 gm, increased penalties for drink driving offences, and brought in mandatory user-pays education and treatment courses for drink drivers wanting to regain their licenses.
- Research - which has identified the training needs of staff and licensees in delivering patron care and introduced breathalysers to the Northern Territory.

The impact from this extensive program has seen an average reduction of 28% in the number of fatal alcohol-related accidents occurring each year and a 38% decrease in the number of persons arrested for exceeding the legal blood alcohol limit while driving.

This paper identifies the major strength of the Living with Alcohol program as being its broad and integrated approach - tackling drinking as a lifestyle issue rather than isolating drinking as an issue only when a person is driving.

Fitzpatrick, J., & Manderson, L., 'Health at the margins: providing services in remote areas and for marginal populations', in Australian Journal of Public Health, (1995) vol.19, no. 6, pp 547 - 548.

This article summarises a series of articles in a special issue of the Australian Journal of Public Health that focuses on the provision of health services to geographically isolated, culturally distinct and socioeconomically peripheral groups of people within our community. In particular it makes the point that even when funds are made available to provide health services in remote areas, health problems are not necessarily resolved for a number of reasons. These include: that resources are poorly aimed, that there is a lack of community control over the allocation of funds or the identification of priority in services, inappropriate and/or unacceptable programs, or that there is a lack of staff to meet community and state needs.

Gray, D., Saggars, S., Drandich, M., Wallam, D., & Plowright, P., 'Evaluating government health and substance abuse programs for indigenous peoples: a comparative review', in Australian Journal of Public Health, (1995) vol.19, no.6, pp 567 -572.

This paper examines the evaluation of government funded health and substance misuse programs for indigenous communities within the context of increasing demands for accountability in the conduct of these programs. It also aims to identify culturally appropriate models for the monitoring and evaluation of government health and substance misuse programs for indigenous peoples.

It makes the important point that for indigenous peoples, a key consideration in monitoring government agency programs is the cultural appropriateness of the programs themselves. It is suggested that as with program development, the best way of ensuring that program evaluation is culturally appropriate is to involve indigenous stakeholders in the process.

Another important point is the question of representativeness. If evaluation is to include indigenous stakeholders, evaluators have to include questions about democratic representation. Whether setting program objectives, deciding upon data collection techniques or interpreting data, unequal positions of power within indigenous communities must be acknowledged.

Finally, this article stresses that there is a “chasm” between the expectations of funding agencies and indigenous peoples about health and substance misuse program evaluation. Given that there are no ideal culturally appropriate models, principles for evaluation must be developed within a framework of self-determination, in which indigenous peoples negotiate with government agencies to decide what programs they need, how the programs might be implemented, the outcomes they believe are desirable, and how those outcomes can be evaluated.

McGuire, W. J., ‘Designing a Persuasion Campaign to Reduce Substance Abuse’, in White, J. et. al., (1992) Drug Problems in Society: Dimensions and Perspectives, Drug and Alcohol Services Council, Adelaide, pp 168-183.

Describes and discusses a seven step procedure for developing a campaign against drug misuse. The seven steps include the following:

- identifying a target group for suitable drug misuse campaigns,
- ethical examination of the campaign,
- identifying situational conditions that contribute to substance misuse,
- identifying the psychological make-up of persons that affect their vulnerability to substance misuse,
- identifying possible options generated by the proceeding steps in order to highlight the most promising themes for the campaign,
- constructing communications, and
- evaluating effectiveness.

Essentially, this is a guide to assist campaign designers in developing effective campaigns for reducing substance misuse. It emphasises the importance of utilising all of the above steps in designing any substance misuse campaign.

Pirie, P., 'Evaluating Health Promotion Programs: Basic Questions and Approaches', in Bracht, N. (1990) Health Promotion at the Community Level, Sage Publications, London, pp 201 -209.

This document asks some useful questions about what makes community health promotion programs successful. Included are questions for the planning stages: for example, should the program be developed at all; and are the educational materials useful? Program operation questions include asking whether the program is being implemented as planned; whether the program is reaching its target audience; and who is

the program failing to reach, and why? Finally it is proposed that questions about program outcomes ask whether the program is having the effect it is designed to have and suggests that community health programs can be evaluated on a number of levels.

Sexton, M, (1996) 'International Indigenous Training Course on Community Injury Prevention', Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp 37 - 39.

Describes a two day course held at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) for indigenous health workers. Run by a team of Native Americans, the course is aimed at reducing injury in indigenous communities.

The course focuses on injury as a public health problem, and as such, uses a public health approach to minimising the risk and harm caused through injury. That is: identifying the problem, identifying the risk factors and looking at ways of dealing with them (interventions), planning a program, implementation and evaluation.

A number of programs developed by Native Americans are also described. Included among these is a program that saw a dramatic reduction of pedestrian injuries on the White Mountain Apache Indian reservation by installing street lighting in the cluster area where pedestrian injuries were occurring. In the two years since the completion of the project no deaths or severe injuries had occurred.

Another example discussed is the promotion of seat belt and car seat use. Through the development and promotion of educational materials such as videos made by accident victims (one in particular made by a young person with spinal cord injury) and increased

law enforcement, there has been a 30% reduction in hospitalisation for motor vehicle crash injuries.

Sheenan, M., Schonfeld, C., & Davey, J. (1995) A Community Based Prevention/Rehabilitation Programme for Drink Drivers in a Rural Region: "Under the Limit". The Drink Driving Project Research Team and Steering Committee, AGPS.

Describes 'Under the Limit', a community based intervention programme, which has particular relevance to small rural communities.

Key issues in the development and implementation of the programme are discussed, as well as the content of the course itself, the community change strategies, and the evaluations conducted.

The programme itself uses an intersectoral approach which entails the coordination and collaboration between all the identified agencies who have a connection to the issue of drink driving. The programme is directed towards 'at risk' persons in the community, including persons convicted of drink driving offences.

The report concludes that 'Under the Limit' is an important rehabilitation programme which has been accepted well. It is well received by magistrates, has low breach rates and has the potential to promote attitudinal change in rural communities. Its effectiveness in reducing rates of recidivism and drink driving offending is being monitored.

Research Techniques

Donovan, R., J. & Spark, R. 'Towards guidelines for survey research in remote Aboriginal communities', in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 1997, vol. 21, no. 1.

This report is basically a set of guidelines for non-Indigenous researchers who wish to gather information from Indigenous communities in remote situations. It discusses both structured and unstructured interviewing procedures and questionnaires, and stresses the importance of face to face consultation in Aboriginal communities.

The guidelines cover issues including the inappropriateness of direct questioning, the importance of privacy in communities without walls, language and the concepts of numeracy, intensity and specificity, and the concept of time.

Also highlighted is that many communities are sceptical about non-Aboriginal people researching their communities with no apparent benefits to the community and very little feedback of findings.

Also stressed is that this set of guidelines is culture-related and may vary from community to community depending on the strength of traditional orientation.

Miller, P. & Rainbow, S. 'Commentary: Don't forget the plumber: research in remote Aboriginal Communities', in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 1997, vol. 21, no. 1.

Discusses a number of issues related to conducting research in remote Aboriginal communities. Included in the discussion is that remote area qualitative research poses particular methodological challenges. These include the linguistic, cultural, geographical and demographic variables of communities.

Also acknowledged is the importance of confidentiality, the responsibility of reporting back to communities and ethical considerations re who retains ownership of any data gathered.

Road Accident Research

Federal Office of Road Safety, Alcohol and Road Fatalities, Monograph 10, 1996.

This report summarises material from 1992 Coronial investigations into alcohol's role in road fatalities.

Of the fatal crashes for which BACs (Blood Alcohol Concentrations) were recorded, intoxication was implicated in 47% of adult and youth pedestrians, 43% of single vehicle crashes not involving pedestrians and 27% of deaths in multiple vehicle crashes.

'High alcohol' crashes (BAC above 0.15 gm/ 100ml) accounted for 67 percent of the total number of fatal accidents involving intoxicated persons, with the average BAC of those intoxicated being 0.18 gm/ 100ml.

This report identifies a number of groups as being of particular risk. They include:

- intoxicated pedestrians,
- young male motorists, particularly those in country regions,
- blue collar or unemployed male motorists,
- middle aged male motorists with extreme BACs, potentially alcohol dependent, and
- motorists in regions with a pattern of excess drinking.

It is suggested that particular emphasis needs to be directed towards these groups, and that this need be recognised in the 1996 National Road Safety Action Plan.

Federal Office of Road Safety, Road Fatality Trends In Australia: 1995 Summary, Monograph 11, 1996.

This report analyses current, short and long-term trends in road fatalities in each Australian State, and in Australia as a whole. It details the differences between the various States and Territories and compares the performance of each State and Territory against Australia as a whole.

It identifies issues such as size of population, degree of motorisation, economic activity and rate of urbanisation as having an influence on the road toll. Also identified is the effect of one off events such as extremes in weather and large numbers of tourists for special events.

Garrow, S., C. 'Vehicle crash mortality in the Kimberley Region, 1990 to 1994: the role of open-load-space passengers in utility trucks', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 1997, vol.21, no.3, pp 341-342.

This report investigates the significant mortality attributable to the unrestrained carriage of passengers in the rear open load space of utility trucks in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. This study also notes that statistics fail to recognise the extent of off road travel and its dangers. For example, the pastoral, tourism and mining industries and the Aboriginal communities are reliant on extensive off road travel, however statistics are not collected for accidents on ungazetted roads.

Longo, M., Hunter, c., & Lokan, R., South Australian Drivers Involved in Non-Fatal Crashes: How Many Are Drink-Driving Recidivists? Transcript of paper presented by Marie Longo at the Drink Driving Recidivism Summit , Adelaide, Australia, November 26-27, 1996.

Examines the drink driving history of 830 South Australian motor vehicle users who were involved in non-fatal crashes between April 1995 and March 1996.

Of the 111 drivers who tested positive at the time of the crash, almost 90% had an illegal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) over 0.05 g/100 ml. Alcohol positive drivers were more likely to be male (78.4%), and under 35 years of age (70%). Of these 111 drivers, 49.5% had a BAC of 0.15 g/100 ml or above.

The driving histories of the 111 drivers who tested positive are compared according to the level of alcohol in their blood at the time of the crash. Out of this emerges an interesting picture, with 34.2% of the 111 drivers having had at least one other drink-driving offence. Those drivers with a high BAC at the time of the crash were most likely to be recidivists, with 43.6% of drivers with a BAC over 0.149% having at least one prior drink driving offence, compared to only 6.9% of drivers with a zero blood alcohol concentration

at the time of the crash. Males represented 92.1% of recidivist drivers and nearly two thirds of recidivists had either never had a licence or had a disqualified or cancelled license.

Ryan, G. A., Ferrante, A., Loh, N., & Cercarelli, L. R. (1996) Repeat Drink-Driving Offenders in Western Australia, 1984 to 1994, Road Accident Prevention Research Unit & Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, for The Federal Office of Road Safety.

The principle aim of this report was to determine patterns of drink-driving arrests in Western Australia and identify characteristics of repeat drink-drivers. According to this report the best predictors of drink-driving arrests are being male, under 20 years of age, having prior arrests, and being Aboriginal.

For Aboriginal people in particular, the findings of this report were quite alarming. For example, of all Aboriginal males arrested for a drink-driving offence, almost two thirds will be re-arrested for a repeat drink driving offence. This risk is more than twice that faced by non-Aboriginal males. Similarly for Aboriginal women, more than half will be

re-arrested for drink-driving offences. Also, that for Aboriginal people the age of first arrest was lower than for non-Aboriginal people.

It must be noted that the risk of arrest and re-arrest for any offence is alarmingly high for Indigenous people in Western Australia, however, according to the findings of this report, Aboriginal people had a proportionally larger number of offences with one half having two or more drink-driving offences and 10% having four or more.

Smythe, M., & Morris, J. Background Paper: Recidivist Drink Drivers, Australian Advisory Committee on Road Trauma, Drink Driving Recidivism Summit, Adelaide, Australia, November 26-27, 1996.

Besides describing issues such as, target populations and the likely magnitude of the problem of recidivist drink drivers, this paper outlines a range of potential countermeasures to the drink driving currently being considered in Australia. They include the following.

- Ignition Interlocks - essentially a breath alcohol test device installed in an offender's vehicle. It prevents the vehicle from being started if the driver has a BAC in excess of the legal limit. Evaluations of the effectiveness of ignition interlocks suggest they are successful in the short-term, however they can easily be circumvented by a number of methods, not the least of which is driving another vehicle.
- Mandatory overnight jailing at the time of apprehension - recommendations have been made to give police the power to apprehend and detain those drivers who are severely affected by alcohol and have them subject to a mandatory overnight stay in jail.

- Intensive monitoring of recidivist alcohol-impaired drivers - includes home detention as an alternative to imprisonment.
 - Vehicle impoundment - includes impounding vehicles for set periods of time, clamping vehicles or deregistration of the vehicle. There have been various implementation problems encountered with this measure. Other disadvantages include that the vehicle cannot be used by anyone else.
 - Administrative license suspension - drivers breath tested at twice the legal limit would incur on the spot licence suspension at the time of apprehension without the need for court hearings and conviction.
 - Heavier fines/ increased penalties - studies indicate a need to develop a more uniform system of drink driving penalties, perhaps with a view to an increase in fines and penalties.
 - Enhancement of random breath testing - maintenance and enhancement of existing high level random breath testing. this should be well publicised, as should be the certainty of punitive sanctions.
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Aboriginal/ Rural Road Safety Issues

Goodin, B. (1993) The Aboriginal Grog and Driving Course: A group alcohol education course for big drinkers. (Adapted for Aboriginal Inmates by Bursill, L., & Kelaher, B. 1995.) Department of Behavioural and Social Sciences in Nursing, University of Sydney.

As the name suggests, this is a course facilitators' manual for use in the correctional setting. The course has been specifically tailored for Aboriginal inmates and addresses issues such as the relationship between BAC and changes in driving behaviour, the action of alcohol on the central nervous system, the rationale behind drink driving legislation and key factors influencing blood alcohol level.

National Road Safety Strategy Implementation Task Force (1996) Australia's Rural Road Safety Action Plan : "Focus for the Future" Federal Office of Road Safety & Department of Transport and Regional Development..

Details the significant issue of rural and remote road safety. This report highlights the fact that nearly 50% of fatal crashes in Australia occur on rural open roads. Of those crashes, most involve rural drivers, and a higher proportion are related to alcohol, excessive speed, not wearing seat belts and fatigue. In addition to the social costs of road trauma, rural open road crashes cost the Australian community about \$3 billion per year.

Being an Action Plan, this document also highlights pertinent rural road safety initiatives. Included are issues such as education and training, vehicle fitness, road improvements, increased enforcement and the direction of resources to rural areas with high crash rates.

San Roque, C., & Cook, B., (1996) The Trouble Story - Report on the Intjartnama Outstation Workshop - Road Traffic, Petrol Sniffing and Rites of Passage, Intjartnama Consultancy Group, Alice Springs.

This report looks at the process of adapting 'The Trouble Story' and aspects of the 'Sugar Man Story' for use in a NSW Aboriginal road safety initiative.

'The Trouble Story' is an introduction to the concept of teaching stories or parables. It is also a map of the events and issues that occur as the result of young people getting into trouble. It links 'rites of passage' to the process of theoretical and practical education a young person must undertake in order to acquire competency in a given set of skills. (In this case driving a motor vehicle.) At the end of this process they are legally recognised as

someone who is permitted to drive on the roads, and as such have undergone a legal and publicly recognised change in status.

Essentially then, 'The Trouble Story' aims to broaden the existing driver education process in order to locate the new driver within their community and the relationship framework that operates within that community.

FINDINGS

Community Consultations

Data gathered on two field visits to the Murat Bay District forms the basis of the information discussed herein. As already mentioned, information was collected by way of a simple survey, and by direct consultation with community members.

The information has subsequently been analysed and a 'Top Ten' has been compiled to give us the ten most popular suggestions that people thought would improve road safety in the Murat Bay District. They are in order from the most common response top:

1. People shouldn't drink drive.
2. More police presence on the road.
3. Road safety education.
4. A bus service to and from the hotel.
5. Community Drug & Substance Education.
6. Public transport be made available.
7. Signs to slow down drivers in the community.
8. Cars to have regular safety checks.
9. Signs to caution motorists to slow down on the highway.
10. Bus trips to Ceduna.

A better understanding of the areas in which people thought there was a need for improvement can be gained from the answers people gave to the question "can you think of any ways road accidents can be reduced in your area?". Most of the given responses

can be categorised into one or more of five groups. They are listed below, together with the percentage of people who gave the individual responses.

Community Awareness/ Education	39.1%
Road Safety Education/ Driver Education	36.1%
Community Drug & Substance Education	47.2%
Community to teach Values & Responsibilities	08.3%
Community Watch to deal with problems	08.3%
Total	100%
 Policing the Area	 23.9%
More police presence on the Road	50.0%
Cars to have regular safety checks	22.7%
Licence checks	09.1%
Everyone has a seat belt in the car	09.1%
People didn't overload vehicles	09.1%
Total	100%
 Transport - Private/ Public	 20.7%
Community Bus trips to Ceduna	63.2%
Public Transport be made available	36.8%
Total	100%
 Road Environment	 25.0%
Signs to caution motorists to slow down	47.8%

The roads in better condition	17.4%
Speed Humps in and around the community	08.7%
Make trucks their own roads	13.0%
Road trains slowed down	13.0%
Total	100%

Alcohol Consumption/Sales Regulation	13.0%
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Breath Analysis Units in Pubs	16.7%
Breath Analysis Units to prevent ignition in cars	16.7%
Responsible serving practices in hotels	41.7%
A place to drink closer to home (wet camp or Social Club)	25.0%
Total	100%

Some discussion of the above serves to highlight the wide range of measures the Community have suggested to ameliorate the road toll statistics in the Murat Bay area.

Community Awareness/ Education

Answers from the survey reveal that Community Awareness/ Education was one of the preferred ways of attempting to reduce accidents in the area. There are clear examples of the type of education being suggested; they are:

- Community Alcohol and Other Drug Education.
- Road Safety Education.
- Education that includes Community Values & Responsibilities. (Culturally Appropriate Education.)

Education about alcohol and other drug use as it relates to driving may prove to be necessary given that 41.4% of those surveyed responded that they had driven a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, and 10.9% admitted driving while under the influence of other drugs. While some said that this driving behaviour had been in the past, most believed that they had no choice but to drive under the influence due to the lack of public transport.

When the statistics for driving under the influence of alcohol are split into three different age groups, it becomes clear that it is those in the survey group who are aged from 26 to 40 that are the main offenders. (See Figure 3, over page.) Interestingly, as noted later in this report, it is this group of respondents who also display the highest percentage of actually being licensed to drive a motor vehicle. (See Figure 4, p 21.)

The percentage of people that admitted having travelled in a vehicle where the driver was intoxicated was also high, at 55.4%. Additionally, 22.8% of respondents admitted having travelled in a vehicle when the driver was under the influence of drugs other than alcohol, and 21.7% had travelled in a vehicle when the driver had been under the influence of both alcohol and other drugs. Most acknowledged how dangerous this was, but still took the risk because they felt they had little choice when going out for whatever purpose.

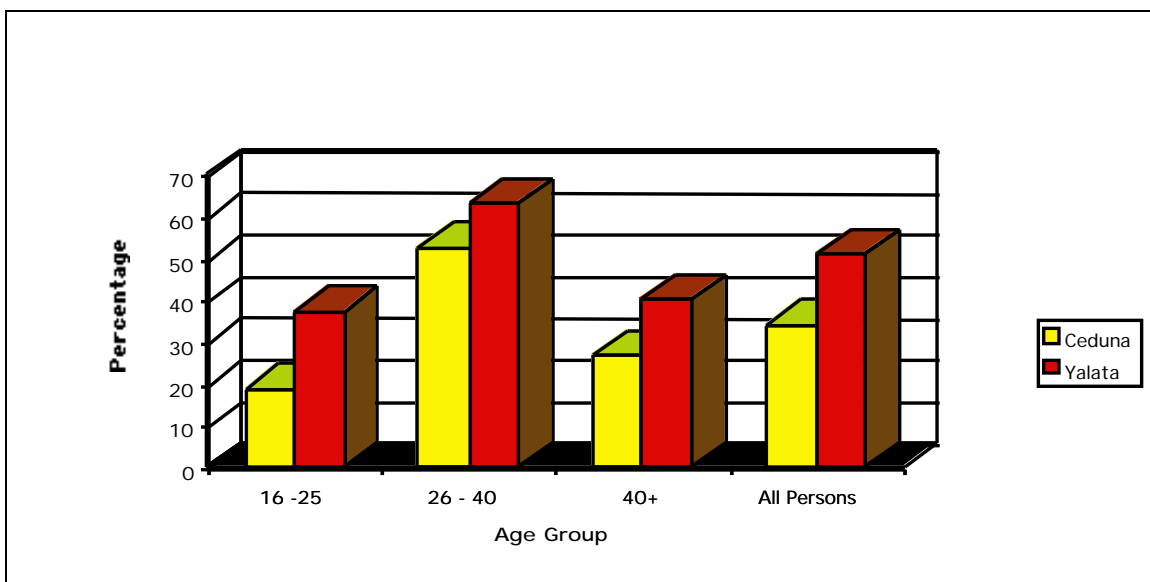


Figure 3. Surveyed Persons Aged 16 and Over, Who Admitted to Having Driven Under the Influence of Alcohol.

Source: ADAC Survey 1997.

Note: Statistics include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents.

Policing Concerns

There was a considerable concern shown by respondents that a greater police presence should be seen on the roads. Respondents thought local police were not visibly active enough on the roads and were, therefore, not acting as a deterrent for law breakers. Suggestions for police action included:

- Regular vehicle safety checks,
- Licence status checks,
- Maximum capacity of vehicles be adhered to, and occupants to wear fitted restraints.

In addition to the above, respondents ranked drink driving as the greatest cause of vehicle accidents in the Murat Bay area. They felt very strongly that intoxicated drivers should be removed from the roads. This is clearly a policing matter, however an education program about the dangers of drink driving would assist in preventing drink drivers from being on the roads in the first place.

Transport - Private/ Public

More accessible public transport, or a Community Bus Service, would provide people with an alternative for travelling to and from Ceduna. It would also assist in preventing drink driving, the overloading of vehicles and pedestrian injury.

In consultation with community members many reasons were given for the need to travel between Yalata and Ceduna. Among these, shopping and entertainment were the most frequent. Many of the problems relating to road use in the Murat Bay area can be directly related to the need to travel long distances to access entertainment venues and shopping facilities.

Yalata is two hundred kilometres from Ceduna, with the nearest licensed venue being some 50 kilometres away. This venue is only allowed to sell light beer and hence, many of the Yalata community members are willing to travel the 200 kms or more for full strength beer and entertainment at the hotel. Because of a lack of public transport many respondents believed they had little or no choice but to 'jump into' whatever vehicles going and/ or returning to make the journey. Most of those consulted felt that for road safety reasons there should be a bus service of some type operating so that people have an opportunity to go out and enjoy themselves and get home safely.

Consultations with local police officers reveal strong support for a bus service of some description between Yalata and Ceduna. At present, public transport from Yalata to Ceduna consists of an interstate bus line that will stop to pick people up only if seats are available. The local Taxi service will generally only take people home from Ceduna

when the fare is calculated with the return cost to Ceduna. This fare is estimated at approximately \$200.

The survey asked that, if public transport was provided would people be prepared to pay a small fee to use the service? Of the 96 possible respondents, only 60 chose to answer this question stating that they didn't think the question applied to them as they lived in Ceduna. Of those that did respond, 75.0% indicated that they *would* be willing to pay a small fee (for example, \$5.00 for a return journey for adults) to use the transport service.

Road Environment

Road signs and speed humps that restrict speed assist to make the community and road environment a safer place. Community members believed the following ideas would make the roads safer:

- Signs that caution drivers to slow down in Yalata itself.
- Signs to caution motorists to slow down on the highway past Yalata Road House and the Yalata turn off.
- Speed Humps to be installed on the main road in Yalata Community.

Heavy Vehicles

Community members also revealed a fear of the driving antics of some semi & road train drivers. It appears that a common practice is for long-haul drivers to follow vehicles driven by community members very closely and at high speed while blowing their air horns. This literally scares many drivers off the road and often causes accidents when the drivers lose control of their vehicles on the dirt verges.

Regulation of Alcohol Consumption/ Sales

The people surveyed were asked how often they travelled distances greater than 100 kms. In reply we found that 17.4% travel distances greater than 100 kms more than once a week, and 21.7% travel that distance more than once a month.

Reasons for travelling distances greater than 100 kms included shopping, visiting friends and relatives, entertainment, and hunting and fishing. While there is no reason to assume that alcohol plays a significant part in any of these activities, the odds of having a road accident while travelling greater distances so often are certainly increased.

The Yalata community displays a general feeling against a liquor outlet operating within the town limits despite the distances people are forced to travel to obtain alcohol. This is because, in the past, intoxicated people have caused much trouble for the community and upset the status quo for those in the community who have chosen to live a drug free lifestyle.

Despite these concerns there were also people from the Yalata area who raised the issue that the community had nowhere close to home to drink. They were of the opinion that if they had a place closer to home, like a wet camp or their own social club, this would reduce accidents by reducing the risks associated with travelling long distances.

Also of relevance is that a number of respondents thought hotel owners and staff have a legal responsibility to refuse to sell liquor to intoxicated persons. They suggested that that hotels should have breath analysis units available for patrons to check their blood alcohol levels.

Other Contributing Factors

One other possible significant contributing factors is the licence status of those surveyed. Out of those surveyed for this report, a much higher percentage of persons aged 16 years and over were not licensed to drive a motor vehicle than that age group in South Australia

as a whole. Of all of those surveyed in Yalata and Ceduna, some 34.8% did not have a driver's licence. This figure rose to 47.1% in Yalata itself, with the 16 to 25 year old age group displaying the highest percentage of 41.7% with no driver's licence.

In Ceduna, a total of 36.8 % of those surveyed were not licensed to drive a motor vehicle, with some 59.1 % of the 41 years and over age group having no driver's licence. In the 16 to 25 years age group, 37.5% were not licensed. Compared to the same figures for South Australia as a whole there is an important difference in the licence status of those surveyed in the Ceduna/ Yalata area. (See Figure 4, over page.)

Aboriginal people identified a number of reasons for not obtaining driver's licences. These included the actual financial cost of obtaining a learner's permit and driver's licence; a certain reluctance on the Aboriginal people's behalf of approaching and dealing with the police, and the necessity of having a road worthy vehicle to sit the test. In a few cases people were not concerned with obtaining a driver's licence, because they mainly drove on back roads. This reveals a degree of naivety about the legal and social consequences of driving without a licence. Also of note was that several people were not interested in obtaining a licence at all, stating it was too dangerous to drive on the roads.

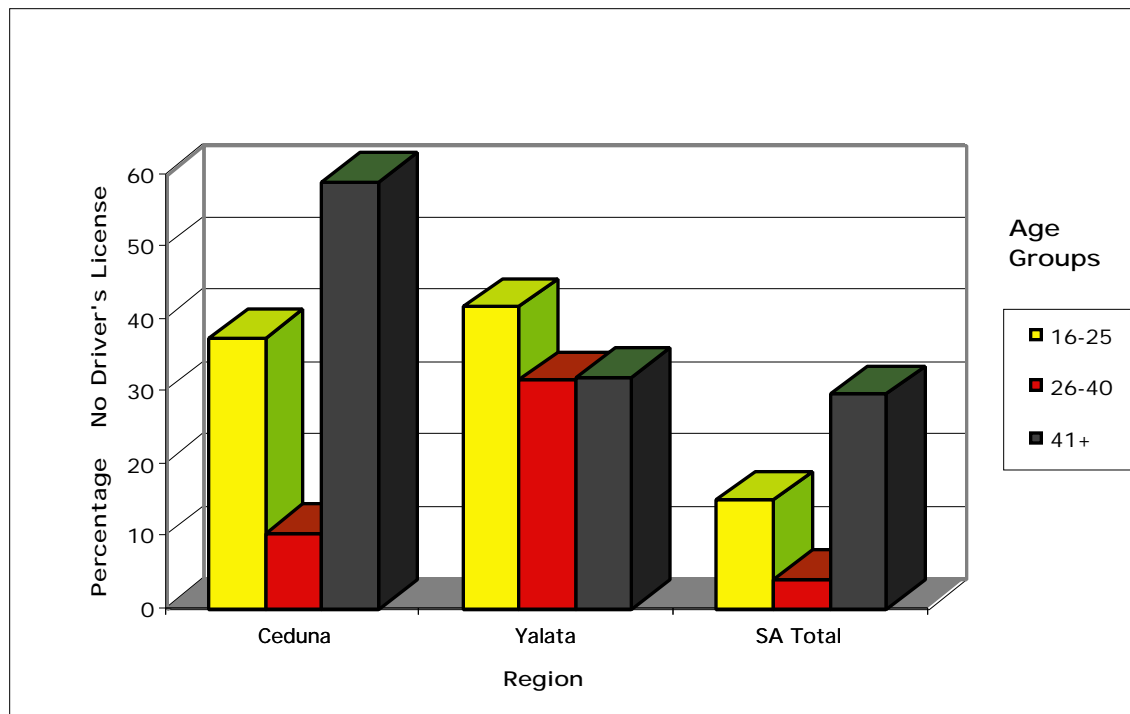


Figure 4: Comparison of Persons Over the Age of 16 Without Driver's License - by Region and Age Group

Sources: ABS (1996) 'Estimated Resident Population by Sex and Age: States & Territories of Australia', cat.no. 3201.0, Registration and Licensing, SA Department of Transport, and ADAC Survey, 1997.

Consultation with Local Police Officers

Local police officers fully supported the idea of a bus service to transport people to and from Yalata and Ceduna. They also thought that the old Eyre Highway (which is a dirt road) should be used more for local traffic because there had not been a serious accident on the road for some time. They did acknowledge some problems associated with this however. The Local Council is concerned that if they upgrade the road to encourage greater use and an accident occurs, that the Council will be held liable for compensation.

The officers suggested that Ceduna doesn't have a consistent problem with drink driving compared to Penong and Yalata. They also mentioned that ceremonies and funerals attract a large number of people into Ceduna from out of town. In general these people remain in the town for the period of a week or two, during which time they indulge in drinking sessions. The officers contend that it is these people, not the residents of Ceduna itself, that cause the problems associated with the misuse of alcohol.

Of concern was the story they related about drinking patterns at the Nundroo Hotel Roadhouse. One of the officers had witnessed people consuming 'six-packs' of light beer quickly so that they become intoxicated from the light beer. He feels that the low alcohol policy, which restricts the sale of full strength beer and other alcohol, is not working. He acknowledges that the policy has shifted the problems associated with the misuse of alcohol out of the Community but has increased the risk of road accidents, and reduced the level of safety for themselves and other road users by compelling people to travel long distances for entertainment and full strength alcoholic drinks.

This 'shifting' of the problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption was reiterated by another consultant Police Officer who had been stationed in the region for a period of some ten years. He implied that the principal problem area was the main highway between Ceduna, Nundroo, Penong and the Yalata Road House, rather than within the Yalata community itself. In relating accounts of fatal road accidents he attended as part of his regular duties, including those involving pedestrians, this Officer reported that excessive alcohol consumption was almost always involved.

While neither condemning or condoning the 'dry area' status of the Yalata Aboriginal community, the Officer suggested that it was this situation that forced those from the

Yalata community who wanted to consume alcohol to travel long distances on the main roads to obtain the alcohol. He suggested that it was up to the community to take some responsibility for the consequences of this situation.

Consultation with Key Stakeholders

As detailed earlier in the report, a number of key stake holders were contacted as part of the consultative process. (See page 3 for a list of agencies and departments contacted.) Because of their expertise in their various fields they were asked for their thoughts and advice on the interests of this report in its draft stages. While not wanting to identify the individual persons and departments who answered, we include a brief discussion of their responses below.

Interestingly, all of those who have replied to date have described a range of problems and possible solutions that can be directly associated with the information gathered from the Aboriginal community itself. Overwhelmingly, they reinforce the need for a strong focus on education and information about alcohol and other drug misuse as it relates to road use.

Given the distances many community members are travelling to obtain and consume alcohol, one consultant also suggested that a drug and alcohol education program include the establishment of a licensed venue on community lands. In the interests of self-determination, any such change to existing dry communities would have to be controlled by the communities themselves however.

Other useful suggestions for education relating to road safety included the following:

- Defensive driving courses - and indeed, an increase in the number of licensed drivers.
- Encouraging seat belt use and availability - which can be directly associated with the dangers associated with the overcrowding of vehicles.
- Vehicle maintenance courses.
- First aid courses - given the distances ambulances are forced to travel in the Murat Bay district, knowledge of first aid may save lives in the event of a motor vehicle accident.

In addition to the above, those consulted suggest a number of other factors that directly relate to the safe use of roads in the Murat Bay area. Among these, and interestingly not noted by community members, was the issue of the age and the reliability of many the vehicles in use in the area. It was noted that a large percentage of the vehicles involved in serious accidents throughout the region show little evidence of any ongoing maintenance to brakes, shock absorbers and the like. Given the age of many of the vehicles, and that they do not have the safety features now an ordinary part of modern vehicles, for example extensive crumple zones, the vehicles themselves are a major factor in the seriousness of injuries sustained in the event of an accident.

Directly related to the above issue is the practice noted by one consultant, where unscrupulous dealers are selling “cheap, dangerous vehicles” to Aboriginal people in the area. As this person noted, one or two prosecutions for failure in ‘duty of care’ may have a beneficial effect.

Also frequently noted in these consultations was the idea of a bus service. In particular, this service could provide after hours transport within and between communities. An

added set of benefits may also stem from such a service. These might include a reduction in the quantity of road traffic in the area, an increase in the quality and hence safety of road traffic, and the dispersal of unruly people from centres where alcohol and/or other drugs are being consumed.

Further to the above, is the issue of intoxicated people walking/ hitch-hiking home. One consultant noted that it is “not uncommon for intoxicated Aboriginal people to ... be struck and killed by vehicles while crossing or walking along a road”. Also mentioned was an incident where an Aboriginal person who was sleeping on a major road was run-over and killed. An alternative form of transport, such as a bus service, would assist in preventing people walking the often great distances home.

In relation to the issues of safety and distance, it has been suggested that Aboriginal community members or representatives could liaise with the Department of Transport North Western Regional Office (Port Augusta) with regard to any necessary road repairs, maintenance and alterations within the communities themselves and along the main roads and highways. This may assist in preventing accidents caused by unsafe road conditions. A similar liaison could be established with the Murat Bay District Council where local roads are concerned.

Finally it must be noted that while an increase in police presence was mentioned, it becomes evident that this on its own will not provide any long term solutions to the problems at hand. Clearly an intersectoral approach must be implemented to ameliorate the circumstances that affect road safety for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Eyre Region.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above information closely relates to the advice collected from community members in a number of key areas, including the provision of an alternative form of transport, the need for community education about alcohol and/ or other drugs as they relate to driving, and the enforcement of laws that govern the way the road environment is used as well as the responsible serving of alcohol.

Of immediate concern among these is the need for some form of public/ community transport for people living in outlying communities. Consultation with Aboriginal community members outlined the need to regularly travel long distances for a variety of reasons including shopping, medical appointments, visiting family and friends and entertainment. Research corroborates the link between transport patterns and drink driving behaviours, with those people who frequently drink at locations further than easy walking distance from home displaying an increased risk of drink driving.² Additionally, advice from key stakeholders suggests that the vehicles being used for travelling are often less than road worthy and regularly overcrowded with few vehicle occupants making use of fitted restraints. These factors in combination with the high incidence of driving under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs revealed by the survey sample must certainly have an influence on the number of Aboriginal people injured or killed in road accidents in the far west of South Australia.

Recommendations : Transport - Public/ Private

² Discussed in Brown, S. L. (Undated) Associations Between Peer Attitudes and Behaviour, Random Breath Testing Experience and Drink Driving in a Population - Representative Sample of South Australians, Department of Psychology, Monash University, Victoria.

The provision of a community bus service would ensure a safer alternative mode of transport for people living in outlying communities to travel into Ceduna and other regional centres in order to access medical, shopping, entertainment and other facilities not available in the remote communities. Such a service may also prevent intoxicated pedestrians from being hit by passing motor vehicles while attempting to walk home along major roads and reduce the need for community members to purchase the cheap vehicles that are so often unroadworthy.

Recommendation 1:

That the availability of community transport is ensured - the distance being travelled by people for entertainment, shopping and other recreational activities is an obvious road safety issue.

Recommendation 2:

That any necessary funding be provided to repair the community bus at Yalata and that training be provided at the local CDEP to ensure the regular maintenance of the bus.

Recommendation 3:

That one or more local people be trained to drive the bus. This would ensure that a licensed driver is always available.

Survey results and the information collected by consultation concurs with the literature reviewed for this report in a number of key areas. Firstly, it must be made clear that the number of existing documents on Aboriginal road safety in South Australia illustrates a paucity of literature on the topic in hand, however related documents from other states

reveal a number of other pertinent points. Research in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia has shown a significant relationship between the carriage of unrestrained passengers and the frequency of death in the event of a road accident.³ As far as we know there is currently no similar research available in South Australia.

The Federal Office of Road Safety report entitled 'Alcohol and Road Fatalities' identifies a number of groups of people who are at particular risk of alcohol related road fatalities. Significantly, the groups identified in that report are strongly represented in the survey group for this report. Of particular importance in the contexts of this report are intoxicated pedestrians, young males - particularly in country regions and motorists in regions with a pattern of excess drinking. This paper also stresses that an emphasis needs to be directed towards these groups of people in future road safety campaigns.⁴

Recommendations: Community Awareness/ Education

Given the high percentage of Aboriginal persons without driver's licences identified by the survey (for example 41.7% of the 16 to 25 year old age group in Yalata), and the reasons they identified for not obtaining drivers licences, it would seem appropriate to encourage Aboriginal people to participate in driver training and education, emphasising the importance of obtaining drivers licences. This may assist in preventing road accidents caused through untrained and inexperienced drivers using the Eyre Highway and other roads in the region.

³ Garrow, S., C. 'Vehicle crash mortality in the Kimberley Region, 1990 to 1994: the role of open-load-space passengers in utility trucks', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 1997, vol.21, no.3, pp 341-342.

⁴ Federal Office of Road Safety, Alcohol and Road Fatalities, Monograph 10, 1996.

Recommendation 4:

That driver education and training be made more accessible for people in remote areas.

Recommendation 5:

That Aboriginal community members be encouraged to obtain driver's licences through better communication and consultation with local Police Officers and Police Aides.

Interrelated with the above recommendations is the issue of the development and provision of an integrated education package that investigates and details the dangers of alcohol and other drugs as they relate to road use. Such a package could reinforce the importance of driver training and education, obtaining a drivers licence and the proper maintenance of vehicles.

It is essential that any education campaign specifically targets remote communities so that their particular issues are addressed. Also crucial is that the communities themselves are involved in the development of any education campaign. The recent success of the 'Kimberley Road Safety Project' underlines the need for local communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to be involved with community awareness/ education projects.⁵

Sheenan, M., et.al., also discuss the significance of community based intervention programs and community involvement and ownership of programs directed at better road

⁵ See: Nixon, S., Mak, D., & Cercarelli, R., (1997) A Report of the Kimberley Road Safety Project.

safety.⁶ Indeed, this has been identified as a major contributing factor to the overall success of said programs, with community participation offering added benefits such as the opportunity to identify and prioritise local safety issues, communicate information, increase awareness of road safety issues and to promote road safety programs. Community managed road safety programs also help to ensure that planning processes are inclusive of community members, and that any interventions are acceptable to the community and hence, are more effective.⁷

Similarly, the Northern Territory's 'Living with Alcohol Campaign' stresses the need for "community education to enable the communities to be able to identify their own particular needs".⁸ As has already been identified by the far west community and key stake holders, there is a need for education about alcohol and other drug use as it relates to road use, as well as other specific rural road safety messages relating to speeding, use of seat belts and child restraints, the dangers of driving when fatigued, the importance of vehicle maintenance and wandering livestock and kangaroos.

An integrated education/ training package could also offer first aid training, and driver training and education that emphasises the importance of vehicle road worthiness and on-going vehicle maintenance.

Research from Queensland underlines the need to recognise that effectual behavioural and attitudinal change in indigenous communities often relies on community members

⁶ Sheenan, M., Schonfeld, C., & Davey, J. (1995) A Community Based Prevention/ Rehabilitation Programme for Drink Drivers in a Rural Region: "Under the Limit".

⁷ Brownlow, D., et.al., (1997) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Road Safety Strategy: Remote Communities (Draft Report), Queensland Department of Transport, Land Transport and Safety Division.

⁸ See: Crundall, I., (1996) The Northern Territory Living with Alcohol Program: A Public Health Approach to Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm.

developing and implementing their own intervention strategies. Also, that in order that these tasks can be accomplished a certain level of training and skills development may be required.⁹ This important point has implications for any future project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Queensland research also suggests that:

it takes time for any community to become aware of, and accept a role in addressing, its own problems and future development. To participate in local road safety planning, local communities need time to gain the knowledge and skills to interpret information on road use and the impacts of unsafe road use behaviour and determine priorities and appropriate interventions.¹⁰

Recommendation 6:

To develop and implement a culturally appropriate education package that focuses on the following:

- ***use of alcohol and/or other drugs as they relate to road use***
- ***responsible use of alcohol***
- ***First Aid training***
- ***driver training***
- ***vehicle roadworthiness and on-going maintenance***
- ***the use and availability of seat belts.***

⁹ See Brownlow, D., et.al., Op.Cit.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Recommendation 7:

That Aboriginal community members be closely involved in the development of any education/ training programs to be implemented in the region.

In order to ensure community involvement and input into this education package it will be necessary to allow sufficient time for consultation and negotiation to take place throughout the Yalata community. This process is consistent with Recommendation 204 from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which states:

The preparation of community development plans should be a participative process involving all members of the community, and should draw upon the knowledge and expertise of a wide range of professionals as well as upon the views and aspirations of Aboriginal people in the local area. It is critical that the process by which plans are developed are culturally sensitive, unhurried and holistic in approach, and that adequate information on the following matters is made available to participants:

- a) the range of Aboriginal needs and aspirations;
- b) the opportunities created by Government policies and programs;
- c) the opportunities and constraints in the local economy; and
- d) the political opportunities to influence the local arena.¹¹

The importance of community involvement at all levels of intervention programs is stressed by Gray et.al..¹² Indeed, they go as far as to suggest that there is “a chasm

between the expectations of funding agencies and indigenous peoples about health and substance abuse programs”¹³, and that while there are no ideal culturally appropriate models, programs must be developed “within a framework of self-determination, in which indigenous peoples negotiate with government agencies to decide what programs they need, how the programs might be implemented, the outcomes they believe are desirable, and how those outcomes can be evaluated.”¹⁴

Another essential element to consider is the long-term sustainability of community involvement and management in relation to the program. A number of factors have been identified as successful contributors to project sustainability. In particular, local project sponsorship by local government authorities or community councils.¹⁵ It would therefore be beneficial to arrange for consultation with relevant local government officers, transport police, community council members, and regional offices of relevant federal and state government departments in relation to funding the above education strategy.

Inherently connected to the issue of sustainability is the development of a competent skills base within the community to allow the road safety education program to continue beyond an initial funding period. It is possible that the community may already possess a set of skills that will assist this to happen, however, it may also be necessary to provide some form of theoretical training for community members. A skills audit may therefore also be necessary. (It should be noted that any necessary training and support can be provided by the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc.)

¹¹ RCIADIC, Volume 4, p44.

¹² Gray, D., et.al., ‘Evaluating government health and substance abuse programs for indigenous peoples: a comparative view’, Australian Journal of Public Health, (1995) vol.19, no.6, pp 567 - 572.

¹³ Ibid, p 571.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Brownlow, D., et al, Op.cit.

Recommendations : Road Environment

The 'Living with Alcohol Campaign' also emphasises the concurrent need for legislation, research and ongoing evaluation in any education/ intervention campaign. Legislative changes appear to be unnecessary in the case of the far west of South Australia, however, it may be necessary to make certain practical changes to the road environment in question. It is of concern that no lowering of speed is required by motorists when passing the Yalata Road House. Given that speeds are generally reduced when passing through any country town along major highways, we would ask why this is not the case when passing the Yalata Road House? This is a popular meeting place for community members, with families and children regularly gathering around the road house. Intra and inter-state traffic, including road trains and other heavy vehicles travelling at potentially hazardous speeds, are regular users of this section of highway. These vehicles in particular are seen by community members as menacing - it has already been noted that heavy vehicles have been known to harass Aboriginal road users on this section of road by tail-gaiting vehicles. It would therefore seem appropriate that traffic speed is lowered to 80 kilometres per hour for a 3 km section of the Eyre Highway that extends between the Yalata turn off and the road house.

Research has shown that signs designed to restrict speed have a limited effect without enforcement, consequently any restriction of speed on this section of the Eyre Highway would have to be enforced by local police.

Recommendation 8:

That speeds be lowered along a section of the Eyre Highway from the Yalata turn-off to the Yalata Road-House.

Recommendation: Policing

While not wanting to target Aboriginal people for specific attention by the SA Police, it would seem appropriate to reinforce the importance of obtaining drivers licences and using the roads in the region in a safe manner. As was emphasised by one of our consultants, speed restrictions and/or education campaigns by themselves will not prevent road accidents. Following the development, introduction and evaluation of an education/awareness campaign, South Australian Police should be involved in enforcing the road rules designed to protect all road users.

Recommendation 9:

That after an education period, police (both local and with possible assistance from outside the region) be encouraged to enforce rules associated with safe motoring. This should include, for example, enforcing speed limits, random breath testing, a 'blitz' on road worthiness, licence checks and stopping overloaded vehicles.

Clearly this applies to all road users in the far west region of South Australia. Any such 'blitz' should not single out Aboriginal drivers.

Recommendations: Alcohol Consumption/ Sales

A number of other pertinent points were raised through the consultative stage of this report. In particular they relate to the serving of alcohol to intoxicated persons. Under the Liquor Licensing Bill, 1997, it is an offence to sell liquor to a person who is intoxicated.¹⁶ Consultants raised an important point in relation to this. They stressed that responsible

serving practices should be observed in licensed venues throughout the region, suggesting that this is not the case at present. It is perhaps appropriate at this point to reproduce Recommendation 272 from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody:

That governments review the level of resources allocated to the function of ensuring that the holders of liquor licences meet their legal obligations (in particular laws relating to serving intoxicated persons), and allocate additional resources if needed.¹⁷

Also suggested by community members was the installation of coin operated breath analysis units in licensed venues in the region. While breath analysis units will not identify intoxicated persons for purposes defined under the Liquor Licensing Bill, 1997,¹⁸ they would assist hotel patrons to identify their Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) for the purposes of operating a motor vehicle. Combined with an educative process this may assist in the reduction in the incidence of drink driving and of road accidents.

Frequently mentioned by a number of key stake holders was the 'dry area' status of the Yalata community. It is an important point to consider that declaring a community 'dry' is a community decision and as such, any changes to that status should remain the responsibility of the community in question. Members of the community must have the right to influence the decisions that affect their quality of life and controls on the availability of alcohol within the community must certainly fall into this category.

¹⁶ Liquor Licensing Bill 1997, Part 6, 108 (1).

¹⁷ RCIADIC, Volume 4, p281.

¹⁸ Liquor Licensing Bill 1997., 'Draft Indicators of Intoxication'

Recommendation 10:

That laws surrounding the issue of responsible serving be enforced.

Recommendation 11:

That, as part of the education process already discussed, coin operated Breath Analysis Units be installed in Licensed premises in the region.

Recommendation 12:

That any changes to the 'dry area' status of Yalata Aboriginal Community be directed by the community itself.

Recommendation: Further Research

Clearly there are a number of recommendations for actions that should be part of any future road safety campaign, however it remains to be asked whether or not the road safety problems experienced by the Aboriginal people in the far west of South Australia may be considered representative of other remote communities in the state. It is true that many people living in remote communities regularly travel long distances to access facilities, visit family and enjoy entertainment. Also true is that Yalata has substance misuse problems not unlike many other remote Aboriginal communities; it is a 'dry' community and has a similar socio-economic profile. We do not know however, if other remote Aboriginal communities in South Australia have road safety initiatives in place, and whether these initiatives have been evaluated or are successful.

There is an inherent problem in assuming that what might be a solution for one group of Aboriginal peoples' road safety problems is the correct answer for another. Too often, government departments and other service providers assume that Aboriginal people are an homogeneous group of people - they are not. Therefore it is unsafe to assume that what might work in one remote community will work in another. Any program designed to ameliorate the problems associated with road safety must take into account the unique geographical, social, cultural and political influences that have shaped those communities. Consequently, similar research projects could be needed in other areas of South Australia where Aboriginal communities are located, eg: the North West Lands, to investigate the particular reasons for their road safety problems.

It appears from the availability of literature on Aboriginal road safety in South Australia that little research has been conducted into the issue. While this paper attempts to describe reasons identified by local Aboriginal people and key stakeholders for the particular road safety problems of Aboriginal people in the Ceduna/ Yalata region, it does not attempt to be a 'blueprint' for solutions to all Aboriginal road safety problems throughout South Australia. For reasons already discussed it is important that each rural region's specific road safety needs are taken into consideration before any resolution can be attempted.

Recommendation 13:

That further research is conducted into remote Aboriginal community road safety issues.

Of equal relevance to the concerns of this report is the responsibility of researchers to report back to the Aboriginal communities from which information is collected. Too

often Aboriginal people have shared information with researchers and have seen no apparent benefits for their communities and/or received very little feedback on findings.¹⁹ This report would not have been possible without those who gave their time in answering questions. It is important therefore that the findings of this report are shared with the community concerned, and that their feedback is sought. Fundamental to the success of any of the above strategies is the support of the local Aboriginal community, without such support, few of the above recommendations will provide any long term benefit.

In conclusion we must emphasise that no single intervention will provide a solution by itself. It is essential that the recommended interventions take place as a series of steps in order that they be most effective. Sheenan and others also stress the importance of using an intersectoral approach to intervention campaigns.²⁰ Essentially such an approach has the capacity to maximise benefits such as the sharing of knowledge, resources and skills as well as encouraging efficiency in the use of resources. This is an important point to consider given the expense of servicing remote communities.

¹⁹ See: Miller, P. & Rainbow, S. 'Commentary: Don't forget the plumber: research in remote Aboriginal Communities', in Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 1997, vol. 21, no. 1.

²⁰ Sheenan, et.al., Op.Cit.

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Appendix A

Steering Committee Members

&

Terms of Reference

Aboriginal Road Safety Issues

Steering Committee Members

Alan O'Connor - Senior Project Officer - Department of State Aboriginal Affairs

Trevor Bailey - Office of Road Safety

Graham Bryce - Research Officer - Aboriginal Health Council

Eric Millera - Project Officer - Division of Aboriginal Health

Scott Wilson - State Co-ordinator - Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc.

Paul Elliott - Education/Training Officer - Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA)

Inc.

Steering Committee Terms of Reference

- To ensure that the aims and objectives of the program are being carried out;
- To provide advice to program staff on any issues pertaining to the successful completion of the project;
- To provide advice and assistance to ADAC in the establishment of the programs activities;
- The committee has the right to invite other persons to address the committee as it sees fit;
- The committee shall meet monthly unless otherwise negotiated;

- Representation by proxies will be allowed;
- The day to day management of the project rests with the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc.

Appendix B

Survey Form

Appendix C

Key Stakeholders Contact Letter

To the Chief Executive Officer,

As part of the Federal Government's National Road Safety Action Plan the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc. have been commissioned by the Office of Road Safety to study the over representation of Aboriginal people in road toll statistics in the Murat Bay District (Ceduna/Yalata).

As part of this project we are asking identified key stake holders for their advice and opinions on this topic and would ask your office to take the time to respond to the following questions:

- (1) What do you see as the main cause/s of the over representation of Aboriginal people in the road toll statistics in this area? For example, lack of driver education, dry areas, lack of drug and alcohol education.
- (2) In what ways is it possible to ameliorate the problems as you see them? For example, better driver education, greater police presence.
- (3) Is there any other information you would like to include?

With this information we will devise strategies that can be used to assist in the reduction of road trauma in the Murat Bay area.

I take the opportunity to thank you for your time in advance.

Yours Sincerely,