

Public health and road safety in australia focus on nsw state



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Public Health and Road Safety in Australia Submitted Throughout the world, road traffic accidents have contributed to so many injuries and deaths, that they cannot be ignored as just another evil associated with progress and development. Countries all over the world strive to minimize and prevent the number of such incidents occurring within their domain. However, in many of these countries, the onus of implementing preventive measure falls on the law enforcement and road transport authorities. This document examines the validity of this approach with respect to the current situation in New South Wales, Australia and provides justification for the involvement of the public health department in this initiative. It raises points as to why road safety merits the interest of the public health department and is a necessity for the improvement of overall public health. Public health, as defined by the National Public Health Partnership (1998) is “ The organized response by society to protect and promote health and to prevent illness, injury and disability”. Considering that the main focus of the public health department is public health, it is apparent that road safety, which accounts for numerous injuries, disabilities and death in the population is also a point of concern for the public health department (PHD). Road traffic accidents are known to claim over 1. 3 million lives a year all over the world (WHO 2011). In Australia alone, 1507 fatal road traffic accidents were reported in 2009. New South Wales accounted for 453 of these (nearly one third) (RTA 2010). Considering that each of these incidents could have been prevented, it is obvious that there is a lot of scope for improvement of road safety. A review of the statistics reveals that alcohol and fatigue were quite often the cause of road accidents in the state. According to statistics provided by the RTA (2010) 94 of 453 fatal crashes in NSW involved alcohol and 1, 374 of 24, 105 <https://assignbuster.com/public-health-and-road-safety-in-australia-focus-on-nsw-state/>

injuries involved cases of driving under the influence of alcohol. Furthermore, statistics released by the Western Australian government (2009) indicate that around 16% of fatal crashes in 2009 involved motorists with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of at least three times the legal limit. Also, the age group between 25 and 39 was noted most likely to have an illegal BAC closely followed by the 17-24 age group. This clearly highlights the need of the public health department to spread awareness about the dangers of drunk driving in this age group. The South Australian police have already tried to tackle this with programs such as the Business Driver Awareness program and other education programs for the community and public groups (SA Police, 2007). Also, 78 of 453 fatalities involved fatigued drivers and 2,078 of 24,105 injuries in road traffic crashes in 2009 involved fatigued drivers according to figures in the South Australian Road Safety Strategy (2010). This accounts for a whopping 20% in fatal cases and approximately 10% in non-fatal incidents and is another area that the public health department can help address through awareness campaigns such as the ones already undertaken by the Albany RoadWise Committee (to spread awareness among drivers on the Albany highway during Easter) (Smithson and Fiander 2008). Promotion of awareness in workplaces, community centers and educational institutions as well as mass advertising and PR are some of the strategies that the public health department can employ. According to statistics released by the National Road Safety Council (2010), road crashes cost Australia \$27 billion every year. Considering that these could be prevented given enough time and effort, the money could be invested in bolstering the country's health or to tackle more crucial issues such as cancer or even strengthening basic medical infrastructure. To <https://assignbuster.com/public-health-and-road-safety-in-australia-focus-on-nsw-state/>

conclude, it is clear that the public health department has a crucial role to play in improving road safety in NSW or in any other state. The onus of this task cannot lie simply on the road transport authority or the police. A concrete effort by these bodies, with the cooperation of a vigilant community will definitely go a long way towards changing this scenario for the better.

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