

Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Inquiry into Road Safety – Public hearing 29 September 2021

Road Safety Education Limited

Committee Question Number: RSQN010

Proof Hansard Page: p. 15 (29 September 2021)

Ms O'Donnell: Our advisory council, all the evidence and, in fact, all of the guidelines for best practice in road safety education in all of the states and jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand actually confirmed that... [shock tactics] don't work and that they shouldn't be used by schools.

...

Mr THISTLETHWAITE: You refer to evidence that it doesn't work. Can you perhaps take that on notice and supply to the committee journal articles or whatever it is that would assist us.



WHY RSE DOESN'T SUPPORT FEAR (SHOCK) TACTICS

Using fear-based strategies is an ineffective form of road safety education. This is contrary to widespread community perception, often fuelled by the media.

Below we summarise the reasons fear appeals don't work, and the justification for RSE rejecting fear and shock tactics in its programs.

The context

Road safety education experts are unanimous in their rejection of fear-based tactics (as opposed to emotional engagement). **The main reaction to fear, say the psychologists, is to block it out, as opposed to other effective emotional techniques such as shame, guilt and responsibility** (Senserrick, UNSW).

Many government road safety education guidelines advise schools against fear-based programs. VicRoads, Queensland TMR and NZTA are particularly strong in their position (although some governments with guidelines against fear tactics still and inconsistently fund fear-based events).

Fear-based programs commonly use either crash re-enactment, video/ images of horrific injuries (see overpage for a list of programs that adopt this approach) or strong emotional content focussing on long term consequences.

The research

The role of fear appeals in improving driver safety: A review of the effectiveness of fear-arousing (threat) appeals in road safety advertising
Lewis, I., Watson, B., Tay, R. & White, K. M. 2007

Evidence suggests that the frequent use of physical threats in road safety advertising may be problematic given that such appeals may not be regarded relevant, and hence persuasive, by those road users most commonly targeted; namely, males and young males.

The fact that so many other intervening factors influence the fear-persuasion relationship has lead some to suggest that the use of such appeals is too risky and complicated (Elliott, 2003). The most consistent and definitive conclusions appear to be in relation to the importance, not of fear arousal but, of relevance (i.e, vulnerability) and provision of coping strategies and recommendations that an individual can effectively enact to avoid or prevent a threat from occurring (i.e., efficacy).

Victoria's position

Vic Roads publication: Use of fear and shock tactics with young people

Research indicates that messages that are intended to arouse a high level of fear or anxiety are unlikely to actually do so. One of the problems associated with the use of fear/threat to effectively bring about a behaviour change is that there is no one measure of fear. What is a 'high' fear level in one situation for one person could be judged as 'moderate' or 'low' by another. **Even if a fear response is aroused, or is highly motivating, intentions to change rarely ever result in real world behaviour change.**

Any behaviour change approach needs to focus on modelling the desired behaviour and, where possible, use positive reinforcement and be easy to carry out.

Appeals to adolescents should be norm based, and should convey severe social disapproval of the risky behaviour.

Advice From the NSW Government - Education Website

Fear and shock tactics are least effective in those who most need to change their behaviour. Others will reject the messages by denying, ridiculing, neutralising or minimising them.

We do not recommend the use of shock or fear tactics with students in our schools.

Further references:

[Good Practice in Road Safety - Research Summary: Effective Community & School Based Road Safety for Young People. NZTA](#)

[A Resilience Approach to Road Safety Education, SDERA](#)

[Best Practice in Road Safety, Road Safety Education Limited](#)

The main programs that use fear tactics are:

Crash dramatisation

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| NSW, SA, WA | bstreetsmart |
| QLD | Docudrama |
| NZ (Auckland) | Road Safety Expo |

All jurisdictions: Many smaller community-based programs
eg Roadwhyz, You Choose Youth Road Safety

Hospital exposure

NSW, QLD, VIC, WA P.A.R.T.Y program

P.A.R.T.Y is a graphic exposure combined with a crash survivor interaction.

Local amateur school presentations

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| NZ | Just another Saturday night http://www.jaredsmmessage.co.nz/ featuring one man's moving account |
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This document, produced by Road Safety Education Limited (2021) collates information from a number of research papers and government guidelines referenced within.

