

INDIGENOUS UNLICENSED/DRINK DRIVING PROJECT

PROJECT BRIEF

Introduction

The Indigenous Unlicensed/Drink Driving Project (IUDDP) has been established by the Office of Road Safety (ORS) to identify and progress initiatives to reduce the incidence of drink driving and unlicensed driving amongst Indigenous Western Australians, particularly those living in rural and remote areas.

Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented amongst drink driving offenders and the proportion of Aboriginal drink driving offenders increases with the number and severity of offence. While Aboriginal people represent about 3 percent of the Western Australian population, they represent about 15 percent of all drink driving arrests, increasing to 28 percent of third time arrests and 35 percent of drink drivers disqualified from driving for life.

The over-representation of Aboriginal people in drink-driving statistics is concerning. They are about three times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be arrested for drink driving and over 25 times more likely to be imprisoned for driving under the influence (DUI) offences. In addition, they are three times more likely to be injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes and the road trauma costs are, on a per capita basis, about three times as much as for non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people are also over-represented in other driving offences, in particular unlicensed driving. In Western Australia in 1999, the most frequent reason for imprisonment was driving offences, with 53 percent of those imprisoned identified as being Aboriginal and the two most common offences resulting in imprisonment being drink driving and unlicensed driving.

Aboriginal drink driving and licensing convictions have risen by around 80 percent from 2002 to 2004 and more than doubled for more serious drink driving convictions. Around half of the prison population in Western Australia is Aboriginal, of these about 30 percent are related to drink driving or licensing offences. In 2003, Aboriginal people were 28 times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to have DUI as the main offence for imprisonment and 40 percent of those with licensing offences as the main offence for imprisonment were Aboriginal.

The issues related to drink driving and unlicensed driving amongst Aboriginal people need careful consideration, particularly in relation to rural and remote communities. The nature of drink driving and unlicensed driving in Aboriginal communities and the factors associated with them are likely to be very different from those associated with these behaviours in the general population. Similarly, the participation of Aboriginal offenders in drink driving and licensing programs is likely to be maximised if initiatives incorporate the cultural and social factors necessary to decrease barriers to participation. The response is therefore likely to require an approach characterised by community initiation, community participation and community ownership.

Background and context

The need for the Indigenous Unlicensed/Drink Driving Project has emerged out of the development the Repeat Drink Driving Strategy (RDDS). The RDDS is in the final stages of

development and the required legislative amendments to the *Road Traffic Act 1974* are planned to be introduced to Parliament in early 2007, after which the Strategy will be rolled out across the State. The RDDS is a comprehensive road safety initiative that will be implemented across a number of government and private sector agencies and comprise a range of measures to reduce the incidence of repeat drink driving and unlicensed driving in WA. It includes a state-wide alcohol interlock scheme, compulsory carriage of driver's licence for all drivers, vehicle sanctions (impoundment and confiscation) as new penalties for repeated drink driving and unlicensed driving and compulsory blood analysis for all drivers involved in fatal and serious injury crashes.

The development of the RDDS was extremely sensitive to the particular issues concerning Aboriginal people and much consideration was given to the possible impact that may result from the new countermeasures being proposed. While the underlying principles contained in the RDDS apply equally to all groups, it is acknowledged that some aspects may impact differently on Aboriginal people, particularly those in rural and remote areas. The over representation of Aboriginal people amongst drink drivers, unlicensed drivers and those in prison for these offences and the specific issues faced by Aboriginal people in rural and remote areas highlights the need for more to be done.

As such, a specialist advisory group was established (the Aboriginal Advisory Group), whose role is to facilitate consultation with stakeholders, to facilitate community participation and community ownership and identify practical and local initiatives to reduce drink driving in Aboriginal communities and develop and progress demonstration projects.

The Aboriginal Advisory Group comprises representatives from a broad range of agencies that work with Aboriginal people and community groups. The AAG have met regularly over the past year to consider and comment on outputs of the RDDS. To date, the group has not had the necessary resources to undertake all of the work detailed under its Terms of Reference, which are to:

- Review and comment on key RDDS WG outputs as required.
- Negotiate and facilitate consultation with Aboriginal people, communities and groups affected by the RDDS.
- Identify practical and local initiatives to reduce drink driving in Aboriginal communities.
- Develop and progress demonstration projects within Aboriginal communities.
- Negotiate and facilitate the implementation of the RDDS in a way which is both culturally relevant and capable of practical implementation in remote, regional and urban communities across the State.

A full time Senior Project Officer is being appointed to lead the IUDDP and the position will initially be located at ORS, where administrative resources are available. It is anticipated that the Senior Project Officer will work with the Aboriginal Advisory Group to prepare a report, the scope of which is detailed below. Initiatives emerging from the report will be progressed collaboratively with the AAG, including those agencies and networks that are represented by AAG members.

Developmental Phase of the Project

The IUDDP will be developed over a six month period.

This developmental phase will focus on the preparation of a project report, which will:

- provide detailed information on the extent and nature of drink driving and unlicensed driving amongst Indigenous people in WA;
- outline existing measures in WA that deal specifically with drink driving and unlicensed driving amongst Indigenous people and consider their effectiveness;
- outline what other Australian and international jurisdictions are doing to counter drink driving and unlicensed driving amongst Indigenous people and where possible detail their effectiveness;
- identify new measures to reduce the incidence of Indigenous drink driving and unlicensed driving (including primary, secondary and tertiary prevention) that could be considered for WA and the systems within which they might best be established ; and
- recommend a package of measures for implementation over time including a timeline for roll-out and identification of associated resources.

Timeline for developmental phase of the IUDDP

October 2006	Establish position within ORS and appoint Senior Project Officer.
October 2006 – March 2007	Prepare IUDDP report in consultation with the AAG.
March 2007	Table report for endorsement by the AAG and Indigenous Unlicensed/Drink Driving Plan for Western Australia.