

International Road Federation
Nomination for 2007 Road Safety Award

Title: Creating Safer Highways: using low cost, multi-disciplinary approaches to improve road safety

Co-Authors: Dr Soames Job, A/ Director, NSW Centre for Road Safety, Roads and Traffic Authority, New South Wales, Australia
Andrew Graham, Manager, Trends Analysis and Reporting
Steve Levett, A/ Manager, Policy, Standards and Research, Safer Roads

Project Summary

The Pacific Highway in New South Wales (NSW) is a 700km interstate freight corridor running north from Sydney to the Queensland border. In NSW the highway carries between 2.9 million vehicles per year near Grafton to over 12 million vehicles per year at Tweed Heads and Raymond Terrace, making it one of the most heavily used interstate road corridors in Australia. The older undivided lengths of the highway comprise about two thirds of the route. The highway is substantially over-represented in terms of fatal and injury crashes. The 430km Princes Highway runs south from Sydney to the Victorian border is mostly a two-way undivided road. Traffic volumes change markedly along the length of the highway from 45,000 vehicles per day in the north to 1,200 at the southern end near the Victorian border.

A multi-disciplinary (safe-systems based) approach was used to conduct safety reviews of each highway, resulting in a two year \$35 million *integrated road engineering, behavioural and enforcement program* for the Pacific Highway and \$30 million for a similar three year program on the Princes Highway. Key elements of the programs included shoulder widening, improved delineation, shoulder and median wire rope barriers, speed limit reviews, extra police enforcement, and education.

The program roll out resulted in dramatic road safety improvements: on the Pacific Highway fatalities decreasing from 55 in 2003, the year the review began, to 25 in 2006 while injuries dropped from 617 to 483 over the same period. On the Princes Highway fatalities dropped from 24 in 2004 the year the review began, to 4 in 2006 with injuries decreasing from 324 to 294 over the same period. Benefit cost ratios for the works are estimated to be up to 11 to 1.

The methodology has since become the blueprint for subsequent route reviews. For example, the Newell Highway, which is 1,180km long and runs north / south from Victoria to the Queensland border, is currently under similar review.