

UnitingCare Queensland

Sustained safety focus and risk management reduces crashes, insurance premiums and fleet costs



Fleet size: 2200+
Vehicle type: 80% passenger cars;
20% buses, people movers and trucks

Case Study:

Safety example:

Proactive focus makes UnitingCare Queensland a fleet safety leader

Organisation: UnitingCare Queensland

No. of drivers: 3000+

Staff and volunteers: 26,600

Key outcomes

- Proactive road safety interventions pay their way when treated as an investment with improved fleet road safety performance flowing through to bottom line savings, for example, by reducing insurance claims and premiums, infringement rates and at-fault crashes
- Tailored driver education programs for passenger car, bus and truck fleet drivers and targeted training of identified at-risk drivers are valuable road safety initiatives
- Savings generated from improved fleet road safety, such as through reduced insurance premiums and claims, ensures both management support and sustained funding for a fleet road safety program
- Board and management support, along with continued engagement with an organisation's road safety performance, are critical to sustained improvement and building a safety culture
- A Fleet management team passionate about road safety, and that understands the connection between fleet safety and efficiency, is a powerful force for change and improvement
- Fleet road safety is a continuous journey and organisations prepared to share learnings contribute to improved safety performance across their industry and the wider community
- Impressive results demonstrate the value of a comprehensive and proactive road and vehicle safety program, which helps build a strong and continuing safety culture.



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Synopsis

Making vehicle and road safety a central focus of fleet management has delivered major bottom line savings, particularly in insurance costs, and significant crash reductions for not-for-profit UnitingCare. Driven by an inspired funding model that guaranteed management support and sustained improvement, impressive results have driven a strong, self-perpetuating safety culture.

Author: Mark Stephens

Mark Stephens has been UnitingCare's Fleet Operations Manager since 2005 after joining the organisation in the mid-1990s. Before that, Mark worked for 15 years in local government as a diesel fitter, giving him a thorough understanding of the daily challenges fleet drivers face. Mark's role has seen him develop fleet safety, fleet management and environmental fleet practices for UnitingCare Queensland as well as a lead for other UnitingCare agencies nationally and the fleet management sector.



Introduction

Despite being a not-for-profit with limited resources, a proactive and targeted road safety focus has seen UnitingCare Queensland become an example of how to implement and sustain a strong road safety culture.

A decision to move road safety under the management of Fleet, and give it an increased focus in the business, has underpinned a sustained program that has delivered a range of safety, sustainability and bottom line benefits.

Fleet road safety has driven savings in insurance claims and premiums, for example, and driven crash rates down. These savings have secured management support and continued funding for the safety program as well as providing the foundation for a strong and continuing safety culture.

Data has been a driving force behind improving safety performance, with risk analysis highlighting poor driving and potential driver or vehicle risks and informing risk mitigation strategies, including a coordinated staff education program in road safety.

Communication has been another key, with the organisation leveraging in-house developed resources and social media to spread road safety messages across its workforce and working with partners to actively contribute to road safety campaigns aimed at the wider community.

This case study will focus on the fleet road safety measures UnitingCare has introduced, the safety and financial benefits they have driven, and how its considered and persistent approach has seen the organisation become a community road safety leader.

Organisation overview

The UnitingCare story originated from one person's desire to serve Queenslanders and improve the lives of those in need of care.

This focus on individuals has helped UnitingCare become one of Queensland's largest and most trusted providers of in-home care, residential aged care, disability services, independent and supported retirement living, and allied health services.

The health and community arm of the Uniting Church of Queensland, UnitingCare operates more than 5200 residential aged care beds and provides the equivalent of 1.5 million days of care each year.

The UnitingCare team also make more than 3.3 million visits to Queenslanders each year, providing the same holistic care, service and companionship that's been its hallmark since the organisation began delivering community nursing services in 1953. The UnitingCare workforce is altruistic and community-minded; their focus is on helping others and supporting the vulnerable within the community they operate in.

In the early days, community nurses used public transport to travel to clients' homes. Today, UnitingCare's fleet has grown to more than 2,200 vehicles that travel 34 million kilometres each year.

The organisation services large geographic regions in metropolitan, regional and remote Queensland, and into the Northern Territory.

Safety's place at the table

Road safety at UnitingCare has progressed from an era where fleet was locally managed, there was no driver training for workers, and the focus on crash frequency and driver risk analysis was minimal.

Up until 2005, UnitingCare vehicles were managed at a local level using a spreadsheet or simple database. Vehicle management was then centralised on an outsourced fleet management database, with the physical management split between a contracted fleet management company and the Uniting Care Fleet Unit of four full-time staff.

At the start of 2012, UnitingCare Queensland consolidated its entire community fleet, bringing the total fleet under management to more than 2,200. This change included embedding fleet road safety as a core function of the Fleet Management Unit, with immediate results.

The new approach reduced the organisation's crash rates through comprehensive risk analysis, driver education, thoughtful vehicle selection, and developing industry partnerships to achieve desired outcomes.

It has also resulted in a road safety culture where workers understand they each have a role to play in, and a shared responsibility for, the organisation's safety outcomes.

Other hallmarks of UnitingCare's fleet road safety program include:

- In-house Driver Safety Awareness training, including tailored training programs for bus and truck fleet drivers and identified at-risk drivers
- Driver evaluations and rectification interventions
- Road safety and fuel efficient driving e-learning program to assess the skills of new staff and refresh those of existing staff, particularly those in remote areas
- Data analysis of all elements of fleet operations to identify efficient and inefficient vehicle operations
- Non-conformance training and assessment packages; non-conformance includes traffic infringements, crashes, confirmed complaints, and inefficient driving highlighted by data analysis
- Identifying efficient and inefficient vehicle operations, and
- Frequent communication through a range of mediums to actively promote fleet safety and sustainability; mediums include internal publications, email, poster campaigns, social media, driver handbooks and staff meetings.

UnitingCare's approach demonstrates the value of engaging your workforce in the conversation around road safety and why it matters. This contributes to a courteous driving culture, which influences drivers' attitudes, choices and behaviours behind the wheel.

Immediate and sustained results

UnitingCare's proactive and comprehensive approach to fleet road safety generated immediate improvements in the organisation's safety performance, such as significant reductions in infringements and at-fault crashes, which translated into a more efficient fleet and savings in insurance premiums and other bottom line benefits.

Early successes provided the impetus to continue along the road safety path and the organisation has now, for example, staged 600 Driver Safety Awareness workshops for more than 6,000 UnitingCare staff and volunteers across Queensland and the Northern Territory.

This sustained focus on road safety has continued to generate safety and bottom line benefits across the organisation, including at fault crashes dropping by almost one-fifth (19 per cent) over three years to the end of 2019.

The benefits of improved fleet road safety performance have also flowed through to sustainability, with emissions reduced by more than 10 per cent over the same period, despite kilometres travelled increasing.

Savings, in insurance premiums and claims and vehicle purchases, have contributed to sustained funding for the fleet road safety program, as well as ensuring management support.

And the impressive results have also demonstrated the value of a road and vehicle safety focus, contributing to building a strong and continuing safety culture.

The organisation's approach has been recognised externally, in the Queensland Road Safety and AFMA fleet safety awards. UnitingCare has also been awarded the organisation category three times in the Vero RM Advancer Awards, which recognise and reward excellent risk management. In 2018, the award judges noted that "they lead the way in fleet risk management and safety [and] are well respected across all sectors".

A partnership approach

Across the organisation

A key foundation of UnitingCare's success in its road safety journey has been a coordinated approach that has drawn on internal support and external expertise, ranging from reporting on and responding to risks to ensuring road safety resources developed are effective and meaningful for audiences inside and outside the organisation.

At a parent organisation level, UnitingCare Queensland has comprehensive and coordinated systems and support in place to protect the safety of workers, vehicle drivers and passengers, and the public.

Dedicated Workplace Health and Safety officers are guided by clear internal policies and monitor and respond to reports on the organisation's incident, hazards and risk management system Riskman.

Training programs, including in-house developed road safety videos (see next page), are loaded onto SABA, the company's learning and development portal.

The organisation regularly updates its fleet to maximise the benefits of new vehicle technologies, safety features and fuel efficiencies. A modern fleet helps keep drivers, and the rest of the motoring community, safe as well as delivery sustainability and economic benefits by reducing fuel dependency. About 60 per cent of the organisation's passenger fleet are hybrid vehicles.

Vehicle servicing and maintenance is managed through Smartfleet, with a comprehensive glovebox kit informing drivers on how and when vehicles must be serviced. The system uses the latest odometer reading as at the end of each month and the three-month average monthly kilometres travelled to calculate when the vehicle is due for service. UnitingCare Fleet has also developed an automated process that analyses all fleet operational costs and reports whole of life per kilometre costs to all managers monthly.

Supporting fleet

The Fleet team has dedicated staff responsible for ensuring all vehicles are serviced by the due date and Certificate of Inspections are completed where required. It is working with Smartfleet to develop a 'digital worker' to streamline the due date process and to make it easier for drivers to get vehicles serviced.

The Fleet team investigates all vehicle related incidents, including traffic infringements and reported near misses, and provides one-on-one training if poor driving skills are identified as the cause.



Fleet also uses Riskman to record vehicle risks, and all risks identified in Riskman are reconciled monthly by the team against reported insurance claims. Any vehicle crashes where a claim has been generated but are not reported in Riskman are followed up through health and safety officers to the service manager to ensure it is addressed through Riskman.

Where a risk is reported that is fleet related, the health and safety team also work with Fleet to identify a solution, and the resulting action is communicated to all stakeholders. If risks are related to property, such as vehicle security, parking or lighting for workers who finish late or start early, Fleet will work with Property Services towards similar outcomes.

An accepted safety program

UnitingCare's road and vehicle safety program was designed and delivered in consultation with internal stakeholders and peak bodies, ensuring acceptance by staff and embedding in organisational culture from the top level of management to drivers at the coalface.

UnitingCare's approach demonstrates the value of engaging your workforce in the conversation around road safety and why it matters. This contributes to a courteous driving culture, which influences drivers' attitudes, choices and behaviours behind the wheel.

It became obvious that the acceptability of and compliance with the program would be more likely if key external partners were associated with it. To add credibility to the program, external collaborators were selected because they were icons that drivers recognised and respected for their contribution to driver safety.

Both [CARRS-Q](#) and the [RACQ](#) have had long relationships with UnitingCare and were obvious partners in designing, developing and implementing a fleet road safety program.

In particular, CARRS-Q provided research expertise to inform effective measures as well as technical assistance in the development and review of resources and messaging.

In addition to a longstanding roadside assistance relationship with RACQ, UnitingCare utilised several RACQ services to develop and review road safety and operation of fleet vehicles, with the club's road safety education unit proving pivotal in providing technical support to develop internal education resources and deliver education sessions.

Since 2009, more than 6,000 UnitingCare staff and volunteers have attended two hour driver safety awareness sessions delivered by the RACQ and, more recently, by Fleet Driver Training (FDT), with more than 600 driver safety sessions being delivered across metropolitan and regional centres. In addition, more than 600 individual drivers have received individual instruction and assessment.

The development of resources to support the education program and provide continuing reminders to staff was essential and the first task completed before the rollout of the regional training program.

Developing effective resources

The two road safety agencies also helped the organisation develop a range of posters aimed at protecting the driver and reminding them of their responsibilities to their family and the public – and asking drivers to drive safe. The posters were designed from the driver view of the road reinforcing that, as drivers, people are depending on them.

A later addition to the poster campaign, which depicts a person missing at the meal table, outlines six road safety messages to reinforce the 'Zero Harm at Work' and 'Decade of Action' messages.

More than 2,000 posters have been distributed to UnitingCare facilities and provided to community groups to promote road safety.



UnitingCare has also developed several short animated road safety videos, with the assistance of Queensland company Babbblewire.

The videos were also peer reviewed by fleet safety experts from Monash University and the National Road Safety Partnership Program as well as FDT, who deliver road safety training and one on one interventions and assessments to UnitingCare's drivers.

As well as the 13 videos, FDT are provided posters, stickers and crash and infringement statistics so trainers can tailor content to specific requirements.



The road safety videos, which took more than 12 months to produce, address a range of subjects for metropolitan, regional and remote drivers, including fatigue, remote driving, reversing, distraction, navigating roundabouts and sharing the road with other users, including heavy vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists (pictured, see Appendix 1 for a summary of each video).

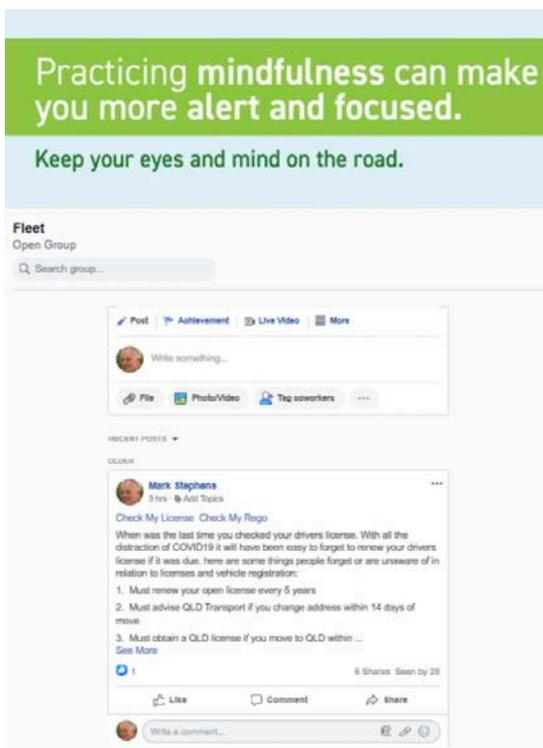
The videos are loaded on SABA as part of pre-employment and transport drivers' compliance with Operator Accreditation and are also provided on the organisation's intranet.

The road safety videos are already being used by large external organisations, including UnitingCare's insurer Suncorp, who has shared the videos with local government clients. Fleet is also planning to produce a combined 8-minute fleet road safety video as part of taking the company's orientation package online.

Taking the extra step

These developments underscore another tenet of the UnitingCare Fleet team's approach to road safety: generate as much value as possible from what you have learned and produced by sharing resources and education.

To that end, the team has begun utilising social media to promote road and vehicle safety. The initiative has allowed fleet to access more than 4000 staff and to get instant messaging out to its managers and drivers via the Workspace Facebook platform (pictured).



Fleet posts are shared across multiple groups for maximum impact and topics are themed around topical issues and current events, such as new mobile phone laws, flooding and crash statistics. During Road Safety Week, for example, Fleet ran a daily road safety quiz with fuel cards as prizes. The quiz attracted more than 2000 views and responses in a fortnight.

Other communication and dissemination strategies include stickers, messaged logbooks, and driver safety handbooks and brochures.

To ensure that the road safety message was communicated to all staff, volunteers and their families, 20,000 copies of the road safety manual were distributed. Copies were made available for visitors to UnitingCare centres.

- Have You...**
1. Walked around the vehicle to visually check tyres and number plates
 2. Checked for any obstructions that could be hit when reversing
 3. Secured any objects. These items are not just a distraction but also can cause injury in a crash
 4. Planned where you are going, including entering any map locations if you are using navigation
 5. Put your mobile device on silent (airplane mode) or activate 'do not disturb' in phone settings
 6. Filled out this log book
 7. Used your mirror's to check surroundings before reversing or driving off

UnitingCare Motor Vehicle Log Book

Type of Vehicle:

Vehicle Make and Model:

Vehicle Registration Number:

Start Date: / /

Closing Date: / /



With all communications to drivers or managers, Fleet staff provide a range of print material including a driver safety brochure, Federal Government-sponsored safe reversing brochure, and the Queensland Government "Be Street Smart Road Rules Refresher" pamphlet.

Vehicle log books (above) include messaging aimed at reducing reversing or parking crashes and ensuring compliance with mobile device legislation. This was trialled as a sticker before going to print.

In addition, the organisation's internal Connect electronic magazine updates workers on new or reviewed policies, and Fleet also attends regional meetings and uses Workspace to update managers on changes to operational policies or legislation, such as changes to mobile phone penalties in Queensland.

All these avenues come together to ensure the road safety message is constantly being promoted.

Comes from the top

Any attempt at change relies on the support of the executive leadership team and line managers. In the case of UnitingCare's road safety program, the first step in gaining executive support was relatively easy as the program aligned with a principle value: to value staff and volunteers.

Integral to gaining this support was that the program would be funded out of rebates from vehicle purchases and insurance premiums. Committing these funds and removing the financial burden from the cost centres' operational budgets guaranteed management support.

High-level commitment starts at the Board level and cascades through the executive leadership team. Various departments are involved in the development, implementation and governance of fleet operations and road safety.

Ongoing support has been just as important as the Fleet Management Unit introduces new resources and tools to grow the program and maintain the focus on road safety. The board and leadership team, for example, receive monthly reports that include qualitative and quantitative data on fleet crash statistics, traffic infringements and driver training numbers.

They, like the general manager, service managers and team coordinators, follow Fleet on the organisation's internal social media platform Workspace, where the focus is on keeping drivers safe on the roads.

The Workplace Health and Safety, Learning and Development, People and Culture, Probity, and Risk and Compliance teams are also actively involved. Examples include delivering road safety messages through support and training, investigations of incidents, and workplace risk reporting and management.

The improvement loop

UnitingCare, through its Fleet team, regularly reviews its road safety strategies to ensure all drivers regardless of location are informed and educated on road safety.

New resources are considered and developed to, among other reasons, address any gaps in its driver safety program, especially for regional and remote drivers, address regulatory requirements around fatigue and journey management and risks associated with reversing and parking, and to maintain or improve a crash history that has been achieved over many years.

Other fleet road safety initiatives under consideration include enhancing the use of data, introducing new technologies, and developing new training methods and policies to further reduce road crashes.

More specifically, the organisation hopes to develop a 'digital worker' that can analyse all data to provide a risk profile against individuals, vehicles and cost centres, and it is examining options for telematics focussed on identified high-risk vehicles or individual roles.

The lessons learned (see over page) in the delivery of its road safety program may inform similar organisations.

Through continued engagement and input of internal and external stakeholders, UnitingCare will continue to take a leadership role in the proactive delivery of road safety education to its workers, the community and other industry fleets.





Lessons along the way

While the UnitingCare Fleet team is focussed on continuous improvement in its road safety performance, it believes it has achieved a level of best practice in operating a safe and efficient fleet.

To be effective in road safety, it believes fleets need to address such factors as:

- Providing drivers with all current knowledge in road and vehicle safety as well as any traffic regulation changes
- Multimedia education strategies that include print materials, e-learning and structured training sessions
- Comprehensive data collection on all facets of vehicle operation that will enable the analysis and identification of 'at-risk' drivers or centres of operation
- Intervention strategies and policies that address drivers who have at-fault crashes, traffic infringements or who have been identified as inefficient drivers
- Use of data analysis to determine the effectiveness of interventions to improve vehicle operations and driver safety, e.g. training, HR intervention
- Where possible, the use of GPRS technology as an additional means of ensuring policy compliance and providing data to improve vehicle and driver optimisation and safety
- Near-miss reporting on a 'no consequence' basis that ensures staff confidence in actions to reduce risks
- Procurement policies for the selection of safe and sustainable vehicles that will lead to reductions in vehicle incidents, carbon emissions and improvements in vehicle operating costs, and
- Organisational policies and procedures that provide clear direction on the operation of vehicles.

Appendix 1

UnitingCare Road safety videos



The Cockpit Drill

Awkward driving posture can cause long-term health issues or prevent critical safety features from protecting you. The cockpit drill outlines the steps you take every time you sit in your car before you begin driving.



Am I Ready to Drive (Fatigue)?

You may have driven the same journey many times before unfatigued, but one day something could change that puts you in danger. It is important to be aware and to self-regulate.



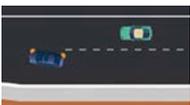
Remote Driving

If you are planning a rural, remote or long distance trip, there are planning and precautionary measures you should put in place to ensure you arrive safely at your destination.



Reversing Safely

Many accidents occur due to reversing, which indicates that reversing in a vehicle is regularly done incorrectly. Here are some ways you can improve your ability to reverse.



Merging Safely

Merging accounts for many of the accidents on our roads and is a source of frustration for many drivers. Here are some important rules to help you merge safely.



Entering and Exiting Roundabouts

Roundabouts can be confusing to some drivers – when to indicate, when to give way and which lane to use may seem intimidating. Let's look at how to drive through a roundabout correctly.



Driver Distraction

Driving while distracted can reduce reaction times, just like driving fatigued or under the influence. Avoid these common sources of distraction while driving.



Driving Near Pedestrians

As a driver, there are rules and guidelines you need to follow when driving near pedestrians. The onus is on you to be aware of those around you and give way to pedestrians when appropriate.



Sharing the Road with Cyclists

Cyclists are often at great personal risk when on our roads. As a fellow road user, it is important to respect cyclists and do what you can to keep them safe.



Passing Heavy Vehicles

Sharing the road with larger vehicles poses specific risks compared to smaller vehicles and pedestrians. The most common accidents involving larger vehicles are due to stopping distances, blind spots and overtaking.



Road Courtesy

When you are driving, being courteous is about more than just manners. Courteous drivers are more likely to avoid accidents thanks to their patience and care for other drivers and their respect for the law.



Wet Weather Driving

Wet weather driving presents some unique hazards for even the most experienced driver. This video looks at how you should adjust your driving behaviour to keep you safe in wet weather.



The Most Common Accidents on the Road

Being an informed driver on our roads means being a safe driver. If you understand the actions and situations most likely to cause harm to you or others, you can take steps to avoid them.