ROAD SAFETY COLLABORATION DOCUMENT

The content in this collaboration document was worked on at the Rolleston Road Safety Leadership Day - June 20th, 2022. The students that attended were from Selwyn, Christchurch City, and Waimakariri Districts.

A massive thank you to the students that came along and worked hard getting their ideas, barriers, and solutions down, and presentations done!

Thank you to the Selwyn District Council for sponsoring students to attend, and organising the location, as well as Sam Broughton the Mayor of Selwyn for coming along and sharing some words of wisdom and inspiration. Thanks also the the Christchurch City Council for sponsoring students to attend, and to Jim from the NZ Police for coming along and spending time with the students, supporting their work.

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ROAD SAFETY LEADERSHIP DAY

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The road safety issue that the students that attended the Rolleston event focussed on was; Distractions (Distracted Driving). They spent time in small groups pulling this issue a part, and discussing a range of potential reasons, causes, barriers and solutions for this road safety issue. Below is some background information on this road safety issue, and following on from that you will see the collation of their work.

Distractions are a big issue when driving, and one that we know impacts young people. Often when we think about being distracted drivers, we think of cellphones, changing the music, or eating a big mac. These are all major distractions that need to be focussed on, as they can have really negative consequences.

However, there are other things that we do not always think about or associate with the distractions topic. Things like taking passengers when you do not have the experience (or correct licence) to drive passengers and not get distracted. Even when you can legally drive passengers, they can still be a major distraction. Let alone when you are still learning to drive and building your own skills.

Or what about your mental space - How much can that impact our ability to focus and not be distracted? People often get in the car to 'get some space' or go for a drive somewhere after a fight with a loved one. How much can your mental space distract you? Crying, anger, frustration, even a busy brain can all be so distracting. Just being caught up with lots on your mind is so easy to do, lots of us have driven somewhere, only to think "I can't really remember driving here"

The other element of distraction we sometimes do not think about, is how much distraction heightens/increases the danger of some of the other key road safety issues we see. Here's a couple of examples to get you thinking…You're going a bit fast, maybe 110km, but you are also looking at your phone regularly to pick a better song on spotify. Or, you've just got your restricted and you are out driving in a terrible storm. It's raining cats and dogs and you haven't really driven in this weather before…but you also just had a fight with your mum and you are very upset and can't stop thinking about some of the hurtful things said.

Distraction can be a difficult road safety issue to directly measure, as sometimes it is hard to prove that people were distracted, and they do not quickly admit to that. So it does not always measure as high as you would imagine in statistics.

Could put 'Distractions' into 3 categories:
1. Manual Distraction
2. Visual Distraction
3. Cognitive Distraction

https://www.selwyn.govt.nz/services/roads-And-transport/road-safety/driver-distraction

https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/what-waka-kotahi-is-doing/education-initiatives/driver-distraction/

https://www.sadd.org.nz/our-6-principles/no-distractions

https://www.stuff.co.nz/motoring/news/104964425/new-study-reveals-driving-is-anything-but-relaxing

https://www.aa.co.nz/cars/motoring-blog/dangers-of-distracted-driving/

https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10289/13860/CharltonStarkey2020_CoDriving.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=2 (Read pg1 for an interesting Introduction, talking about the impacts of driving with passengers)

Q#1

Why do you think this issue of distraction/distracted driving exists in your region?

"Bad habits are developed early, before people are taught about the issues/risks"

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- People being busy and rushing
- People trying to multitask
- Social Pressure
- Trying to be cool
- Companies (and people) fighting for our attention
- Background situations (what has happened before people get in the car)
- Lack of focus
- People's mental state of mind
- Scenery
- We won't think we will get hurt
- Natural instinct to pick up the phone
- Don't want to feel disconnected from our friends etc
- There's different distractions in rural areas vs town
- People have a difficult attitude towards taking passengers on their learners/restricted, and then this distracted them
- Peer pressure and societal pressure
- Driving is an easy way to escape a situation even when you are not in the right head-space
- Companies make it so easy and accessible to be on your phone
- Bad habits passed down from parents
- Being late/rushing

Rural Distractions

Driving faster usually so if you get distracted can be more serious consequences, long straight roads, easy to think you could check your phone, loud music, trucks, stock, distracted by the view.

Town Distractions

Lots more cars, busy intersections and other things on the side of the road to distract you, checking phone at lights, or being distracted while stuck in traffic, need to be aware of everything that is going on, especially when it's busy

KEY THEMES THAT CAME UP ABOUT WHY THIS IS AN ISSUE:

PEER PRESSURE
Not wanting to standout too much, wanting to be seen as cool, and to fit in. It's hard to stand up to your mates and let them know you are feeling distracted (or not to take them in the first place).

PEOPLE DRIVING IN AN EMOTIONAL STATE
Escaping situations, clearing their heads, not in the mental state to be able to 100% focus on the job of driving, people are not equipped with good ways to mentally and physically get out of a situation or clear their heads.

COMPANIES ENABLING PHONE USAGE
People are addicted to phones, and apps and companies want that to happen more. Cars are set up so you can use your phone, and even though they say it's safer it isn't necessarily. Apple car play etc

BAD HABITS
Passed down from parents, children/teenagers are always watching them, we need to prepare teens before they drive and have already developed the bad habits.

RUNNING LATE/RUSHING
People do not allow time, we are often doing things 'on the go', feel like checking our phone is urgent. Pressures at home or work can play into this too.

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- People not being held accountable
- People pass on the responsibility
- Wrong attitude, people assume it won't happen to them
- Sometimes there are not many spaces to stop while driving, or it is seen as inconvenient
- Behaviour is normalised
- Going on your phone while driving or biking etc. is considered acceptable
- People's mindsets on the issue are a huge barrier
- People just don't think it is an issue
- Peer pressure - young people don't want to seem uptight and they want to fit in
- Easy access to phones
- People do not know how to control their emotions or don't think that their mindset can actually be a distraction, and that you need to be in the right mindset to stay focused
- Normalised because of how common it is
- Typical Kiwi attitude
- Easy to dismiss when 'everyone' does it (shared attitude)
- Convenience is such a barrier, people always do what is convenient
- In regards to the distraction of young people driving their peers while on their learners/restricted licence, a barrier is that it is economically practical , especially in rural areas

KEY BARRIERS THAT STOP THE COMMUNITY MAKING PROGRESS ON DISTRACTED DRIVING:

GENERAL PUBLIC MINDSET ON THIS ISSUE

As a general rule people think they can handle the risk, and that it is not an issue. The behaviour is normalised and it is even portrayed as okay by public figures and people like social media influencers. It is normalised behaviour to be a bit distracted, and that isn't a big deal at all .

PEER/SOCIAL PRESSURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people want to impress their friends, fit in and not seem uptight or strict. You don't like to seem like an unconfident driver, you want to show that you can 'handle the distractions'. You want to be part of the conversation (FOMO). Even peer pressure to drive with passengers on your restricted and be a sober driver, with really rowdy people in the back. Competitions within friend groups to look cool! People don't think about how when you drive distracted is adds to the other risk factors you have as a young driver.

NOT RECOGNISING THE 'SOFT DISTRACTIONS'

When people get in the car they don't think about whether they are in the right mindset to drive and be focused. Mental health can impact your driving, if you are upset or angry it is very hard to focus on the task at hand and not have your emotions impact your driving ability and focus. You are focused on your emotions instead of the road. We do not talk about these soft distractions as much, and people might not even recognise them as distractions. Young males especially like to go for a drive to 'clear their head'. The wider issues caused by people's mental health and also attitudes around coping with mental health can be a major barrier.

"What do the general public think about the risks posed by distractions?"

Q#3

Do any of you have personal experiences related to this road safety issue that you feel comfortable sharing? Have you seen it happening or have experienced it?

"Driving home from school/meetings with a busy mind thinking about what happened that day, or things on the to-do list"

"Driving mates around and finding it distracting!"

"Friends sending me messages while they're driving"

"I've been distracted by my phone, and music"

"I see my parents on their phones while driving"

"Young people being competitive when driving in groups"

"I've seen people being the sober driver when on their learners or restricted because it's the lesser of two evils"

"Older siblings driving younger siblings for convenience"

"Hot girls"

"Conversations can be so distracting"

"My mental state - tiredness affects focus"

Personal experiences related to the distraction of taking passengers when you are not on your full licence:

"Particularly in rural areas, getting into town is expensive and time consuming, when parents are working it's easier to travel with friends and can become the only transport option.

Sober drivers on their restricted is seen as the lesser of 2 evils and on a spectrum of risk it's easier to justify what appears to be less significant violations. Majority rules mindset.

Economic impacts, one car households, working parents availability all contribute to older siblings driving younger siblings.

With inflation and fuel costs going up people can't afford to send 2 cars to the same place."

Q#4 What impacts (or consequences) does or can this issue have on young people or the wider community?

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- Leads to crashes, potential fatalities and/or injuries
- Crashes have such a large impact on small communities - everyone knows each other
- Distractions can mean that you have the inability to respond to another person's driving
- Can impact your confidence
- Impacts those that might have to drive past a crash
- Crashes
- Whiplash
- Fines and loss of demerits
- Death
- Repetition - not learning from mistakes
- Trauma
- Putting people off driving - PTSD
- Survivors guilt
- Impacts the people who hear stories of the victims
- Family
- Emotional/psychological distress
- Legal consequences - further impacts on employment
- If you loose your licence it can be socially limiting
- Harm in accidents - physical and mental

"Once you have been in a crash you can become nervous or get stressed when you get behind the wheel"

If you get into a crash (small or large) because of distraction, you could easily feel very remorseful and that can have longer term impacts on your wellbeing. Mistakes people make can lead them to things like drug and alcohol addiction.

People do not realise that although a lot of the common distractions when driving seem small and inconsequential, they actually can cause deaths. You are more likely to get into an crash if you are distracted, and crashes can cause death! But we often do not think of it that way.
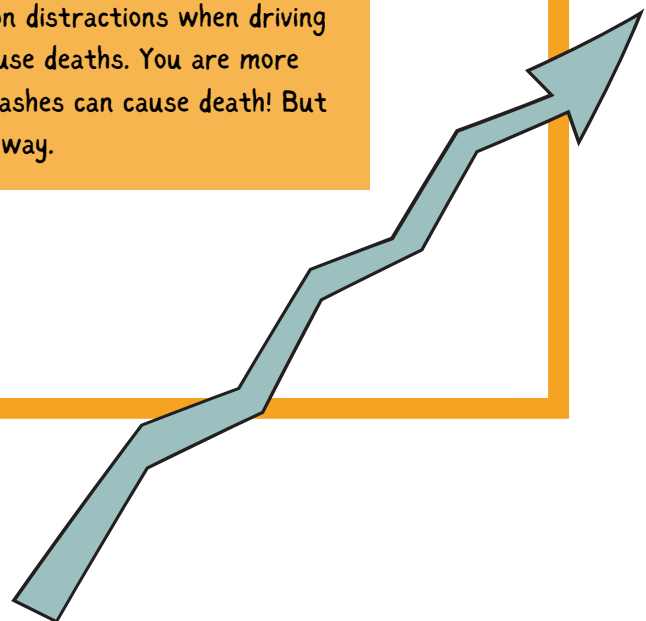
IMPACTS ON OTHERS?

- This issue impacts everyone! No one is safe and everyone is at risk
- Yes it affects all communities in different ways
- Affects everyone, children of victims etc
- The costs of crashes on taxpayers
- Impacts the media

BROADER SOCIETAL FACTORS?

- Social media contributes to this issue a lot, and is a broader issue
- Peer pressure is a big issue in lots of ways and impacts distracted driving a lot
- Employment pressure - the need people have to go on their phone for work or are forced to multitask or drive distracted
- Having to drive on learners/restricted due to cost or other barriers such as accessibility
- Social pressure is a broader societal issue - Can't leave friends on 'seen' etc
- Men trying to prove themselves and their masculinity
- Roads have changed over the years
- Testing requirements have changed since older generations sat their test
- 'She'll be right' mentality
- Some people are short on money to go towards licensing
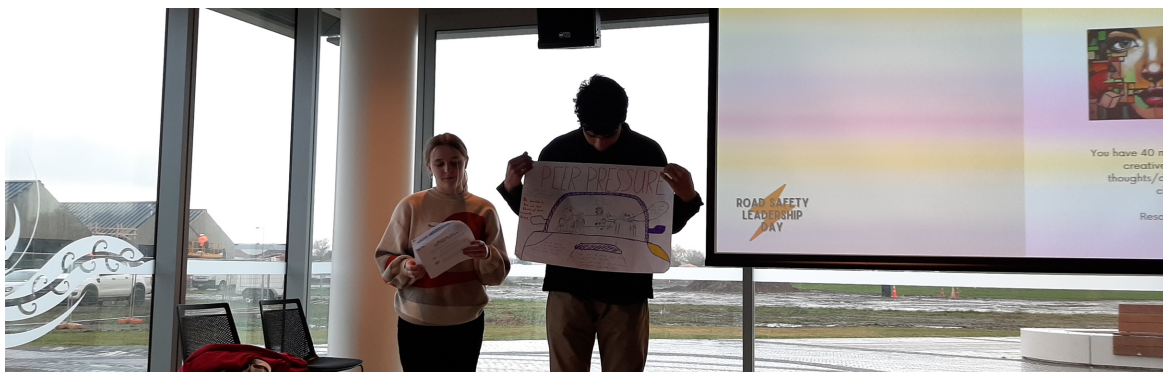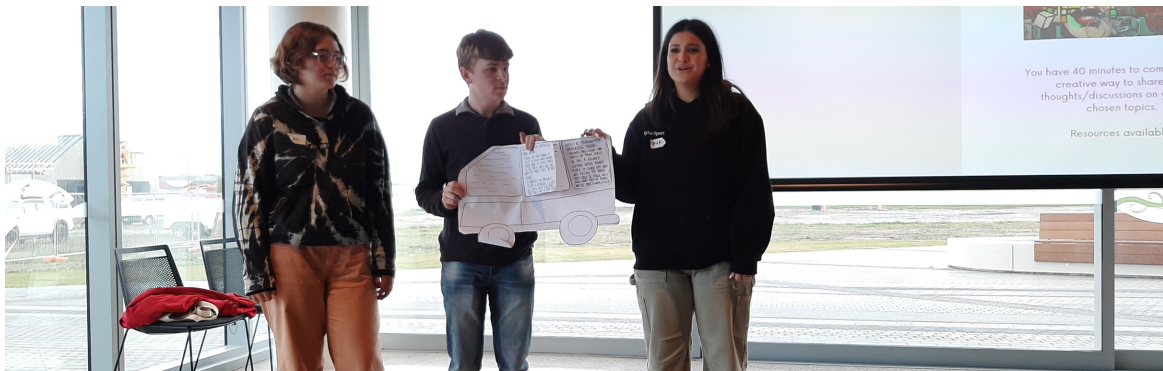
Q#6
What could community partners such as Police, Councils/Road Safety Coordinators, FENZ etc, be doing to help combat this issue?

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- Subsidised courses
- Awareness - reminders that have an impact on audience
- Relevant and new ways to tackle the problem
- Initiatives to help people get their licence e.g. volunteers that take you driving
- Community support and awareness - support for those involved in accidents
- Networking - putting people in contact with support groups that can help reintroduce them to safe driving
- Raising awareness for specific issues to do with distraction
- Ads!
- Making issues more detailed/personal
- Get more youth involved to motivate peers
- More practical and interactive experiences
- Campaigns on more than just phones
- More awareness on the effects of mental state on focus in the car
- Partners coming into the spotlight (being more visible)

Slides from student's presentation:

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community support is essential in combatting distracted driving on NZ roads, but there is also a great need for support after any dangerous driving incident. Even a close call could easily have a huge impact on mental readiness when driving, and distracted driving can result in a blow to confidence, and increased anxiety around driving.

This in turn can lead to putting other young drivers at further risk. For example, drivers who may become too anxious to drive themselves, may rely on friends or family who drive on their restriced or their learners for transport. This not only puts them as passengers at risk, but also introduces distraction to drivers.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT - STRATEGIES

Positive strategies for combatting distracted driving rely greatly on the community. For example, after a dangerous driving incident, networking with the impacted drivers is one way to rebuild safe habits. Putting people in touch with local support groups is essential, as it can help to reintroduce drivers to safe driving, and build confidence after a crash.

Safety courses such as Defensive Driving, or UDrive, can also be a significant strategy, and subsidizing otherwise expensive courses can be a good way to make them accessible for everyone. UDrive also works to help overcome cost barriers, providing a free course and the use of a UDrive vehicle for those who don't have access to a vehicle to learn in.

Q#7

What could SADD groups in this region do to help combat this issue? (collaboratively or individually)

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- Open conversations to get things flowing about consequences etc.
- Events reminding people about distractions e.g. games which demonstrate distractions, awareness of stopping distances, SADD expos etc.
- Coming together in regions to combat the issue
- Stronger social media presence
- Leaflets on people's windscreens
- Social media to normalise good behaviour:
- Pull over and take a picture of the sunset, rather than when driving
- Add your photo challenge - how are you staying safe and driving undistracted?
- Post a picture and tag your friends
- Problem groups to potentially focus on: bogans, dirt bike crowd, 4WD crew
- Community support/information
- Give free stuff out! Positive reinforcement
- Schools get more involved
- Social media to reach a wider audience
- Video campaigns
- Focusing on groups that are more difficult to reach
- SADD groups raise awareness of softer distractions other than phones or passengers e.g. music and mindset/head-space

How can SADD groups develop campaigns to reach the problem groups in our community, like boy racer culture or 4WD culture?

How can we help our peers to question the risk, the impacts on others and real world consequences?

How can SADD groups address the barriers on this issue?

"Th defensive driving course can have a positive psychological effect, which then changes attitudes. If we could perhaps change/develop these attitudes when people were even younger this could be an intervention before the bad habits kick in!"