

# INTRODUCING THE ORGANIZATION OF TRAFFIC SAFETY CENTRE FOR ACCIDENT RESEARCH AND ROAD SAFETY

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## 1. MISSION AND GOALS

The Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q) is a joint initiative of the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC).

Established in November 1996, its mission is to decrease the burden of trauma-related harm in the community through collaborative research and education.

Our goals are to create an awareness and understanding of the circumstances, causes and costs of accident related death and injuries in the Australian community by:

- \* Providing high quality research conducted by recognised national and international experts focusing on at risk groups and activities.
- \* Develop and deliver road safety and accident prevention education programs at tertiary, industry and community levels.
- \* Maximising liaison opportunities between research institutions, government, industry organisations and community interest groups.

Road accidents and workplace injuries result in enormous economic, human and social costs to the community. CARRS-Q aims to work collaboratively with transport departments, emergency and health services, police, insurance corporations, businesses and the wider community to minimise these costs.

In addition to its distinctive research strength in the development, implementation and evaluation of interventions, CARRS-Q aims to stamp

its unique mark in Australia by promoting community ownership of road safety through the provision of specialised training, road safety awards and research support through the MAIC research grant scheme.

## 2. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Board of Management comprises the director and deputy of the centre plus representatives from the major organisations in Queensland that have a crucial role in safety. In addition, an International Advisory Committee, consisting of distinguished academics and policy makers from North America and Europe, provides valuable feedback to the centre.

Two additional committees, drawn from leading academics and policy makers in Queensland and Australia, were also formed to advise the centre on its core functions of research and training. The Professional Development and Training Advisory Committee provides valuable input into the centre's educational and training programs whereas the Research Advisory Committee provides input into the research activities in the centre and plays a major role in the administration of the MAIC research grant scheme.

## 3. MAIC RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME

CARRS-Q and MAIC actively encourage the development of innovative road accident prevention initiatives in Queensland through its research grant scheme, which aims

to stimulate the interest of researchers in developing well-designed and evaluated accident prevention programs for Queensland. The grant scheme provides funding for research projects that support and contribute to key priority areas that affect road safety morbidity and mortality and assist in the prevention of Australian accident involvement.

A sample of the projects funded include: a website for best practice in road safety; testing procedures for crash barriers; older drivers with dementia; effects of cataracts on driving performance; self-surrendering of driver's licence by older drivers; bulbars and injury; aboriginality and motor vehicle injury; joyriding by indigenous youth; drivers with attention deficit problems; 4WD crashes; Parkinson's disease and driving ability; and automated management of fatigue.

About A\$1.3 million in research grant has been awarded over the last three years to a total of 26 projects. Grants ranged from A\$10,000 to \$200,000 but most were around A\$50,000. The grant is currently administered under a competitive scheme that is open to the public except CARRS-Q staff. It may in the near future move towards a more collaborative scheme with greater involvement from CARRS-Q staff.

## 4. CENTRE RESEARCH

CARRS-Q aims to conduct quality, multi-disciplinary and statistically rigorous research in road safety across a number of areas. Examples of recent research projects include:

- \* National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnership in Injury Research – Youth and risk taking behaviour focusing on personality, deterrence and education, with the aim to develop, implement and evaluate appropriate interventions.
- \* Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant – Trial of Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device – a randomised control trial of court mandated breath alcohol ignition interlock devices.
- \* Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) research grant – issues related to unlicensed driving.
- \* Under the Limit – a drink driving rehabilitation program available through the Magistrates Courts.
- \* Plan A Safe Strategy Program – long term evaluation of a drink driving education program for high school students.
- \* Profiling the culture of drug driving within the context of drug use.
- \* Drug and alcohol education program for the police and rail services.
- \* Rural and Remote Road Safety Collaborative study – a large case control study of rural crashes.
- \* International Visitors and Road Safety – research into the problems experienced by international visitors and the development of road safety strategies to address these problems.
- \* Human Issues in Intelligent Transport System (ITS) – acceptability and social implications; equity and access; and expected safety benefits and risks compensation by drivers.
- \* Q-Ride – Evaluation of a competency-based training and assessment program for motorcycle riders.
- \* Headway – To assess the problem of vehicles following too closely, and to develop and evaluate appropriate countermeasures.
- \* Theories and methodologies related to fear-based public health campaigns and the evaluation of road

safety advertisements in Australia and New Zealand.

- \* Prisoners' dilemma and road safety – exploration of how consumers' choice of vehicle type and safety features may have an adverse effect on road safety.
- \* Fleet safety – Case studies designed to provide fleet managers with realistic and practical ways of evaluating work related road safety initiatives.

The centre acts as an advisor to government and industry in its area of expertise and our research has led to the coordination and implementation of a number of multi-faceted behaviour modification projects currently being undertaken within the community.

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## 5. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

One of the goals of CARRS-Q is to raise community awareness of the social, environmental and financial costs of road crashes by fostering expertise in road safety through specialist multi-disciplinary training thereby expanding the pool of highly skilled and educated road safety practitioners.

The main thrust of CARRS-Q tertiary training program consists of the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Road Safety. Units in these courses include Introduction to Road Safety, Traffic Psychology and Behaviour, Applying Traffic Psychology, Evaluation Models, Road Safety Audit, Traffic Engineering, and Theory to Practice. These courses are the only formal training programs that are currently available in Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to the above course work programs, CARRS-Q conducts training workshops and short courses for a variety of government agencies and private corporations. CARRS-Q also offers post-graduate research

degrees and financial assistance to students through bursaries and scholarships.

A sample of current post-graduate research topics include: the transferability of road safety countermeasures from developed to developing countries; restraint and rehabilitation of drunk drivers; social and legal issues in unlicensed driving; territoriality and driver behaviour; factors contributing to 4WD crashes; person-related and environmental factors in aggressive driving; personality and social factors in speeding; and trip purpose and driving behaviour.

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## 6. SERVICES AND AWARDS

CARRS-Q is currently the host for the Queensland chapter of the Australian College of Road Safety. The college aims to encourage community ownership and participation in road safety issues, which are promoted through its activities at both national and state levels.

CARRS-Q and the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland recently launched the Queensland Road Safety Awards scheme that is aimed at increasing community, industry and media involvement in the ongoing campaign to reduce road trauma. There are four award categories: community; industry and business; government; and media.

CARRS-Q provides regular inputs to various government bodies including the Parliamentary Travel-Safe Committee, the Department of Transport and Department Main Roads Road Safety Summit, the Queensland ITS Committee, the National Road Traffic Advisory Council, the International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety and (US) Transportation Research Board's Committee on Alcohol, Other Drugs and Transportation.