Development of a truck driver public health project: Mental and Physical Safety (MaPS) on our Roads.

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Abstract

Individual, environmental and organisational factors can contribute to poor physical and mental health outcomes among truck drivers. The Injury Matters project, *Mental and Physical Safety (MaPS) on our Roads,* targets health issues facing Western Australian (WA) truck drivers and keeping them safe on our roads. A co-design approach has been applied to inform the *MaPS on our Roads* strategies.

During the consultation phase, surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted with WA's heavy vehicle industry. Overall results indicate that WA truck drivers frequently witness road traffic incidents while at work and are aware further actions are needed to improve their health status. However they experience a number of barriers to engaging in existing health and wellbeing initiatives.

Consultation results have been used to inform the *MaPS* project focus areas, engagement strategies and future work that aims to improve the mental and physical safety of WA's heavy vehicle operators.

Background

A range of individual, environmental and organisational factors can contribute to poor physical and mental health outcomes among truck drivers (Hill et al., 2015; National Transport Commission, 2019).

Additionally, due to Western Australia's (WA's) vast and remote road network, truck drivers are often the first to come across the scene of a road traffic incident. This has potential for long-term mental health consequences, with Australian research indicating that up to 29% of road traffic crash survivors develop post-traumatic stress disorder (Heron-Delaney et al., 2013).

With the support of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, Injury Matters aims to improve the mental and physical safety of WA's heavy vehicle operators through the *Mental and Physical Safety* (MaPS) on our Roads project.

Purpose of project

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of formative consulation with heavy vehicle drivers to inform the *MaPS on our Roads* project.

Project methods

To guide the direction of the *MaPS on our Roads* project, consultations were conducted with; WA truck drivers, the WA heavy vehicle industry and family members of WA truck drivers. These consultations aimed to provide project staff with an understanding of;

1. The profile of WA's heavy vehicle industry
2. Truck drivers involvement in road traffic incidents
3. Health status, issues and behaviours of truck drivers
4. Enablers and reinforcers of truck driver health behaviours
5. Existing heavy vehicle industry health and wellbeing initiatives
6. What additional health and wellbeing initiatives are needed.

The five-month consultation process involved the development and implementation of an online truck driver survey and industry survey, in-depth interviews and focus groups with 233 of the project's target audience. The four consultation tools were informed by existing validated tools and aligned to the project's aims.

Individuals from WA's heavy vehicle industry were invited to participate in the consultations via targeted communication strategies, including; social media posts, industry publications and direct contact with heavy vehicle organisations in WA.

All quantitative results gathered through the online truck driver and industry surveys were analysed and reported as frequencies using Jamovi (Version 0.9) data analysis software. All open-ended responses were analysed and reported through themes.

Lessons learned

Consultation results indicate that WA's heavy vehicle industry; is ageing, self-identify as having a suboptimal health status and frequently witness road traffic incidents while at work. Despite being aware of the importance of conducting activities for their physical and mental health, participants identified; social isolation, dictated work schedules, restricted access to health services and family commitments as significant barriers from participating in health and wellbeing strategies.

Truck drivers who engaged in the consultation process were able to recall some health and wellbeing initiatives provided by their organisation, however, they acknowledged that they did not regularly engage in them.

To improve WA truck driver's engagement in health and wellbeing initiatives, consultation participants highlighted the need for *MaPS on our Roads* project activities to; be endorsed by WA truck drivers, acknowledge local seasonal challenges, include reference to statistics and complement existing organisational strategies.

Implications and next steps

Consultation results have been used to inform the *MaPS on our Roads* project campaign topics and engagement strategies, and will continue to inform future work that aims to improve the mental and physical safety of WA's heavy vehicle operators.

References

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