

Parke, Forbes and Lachlan Shire Councils

Load Restraint Education Project

Introduction

The safe carriage of loads affects us all. Loose or incorrectly restrained loads became a growing area of concern within the Parke, Forbes and Lachlan Shire Council areas in 2020, with a 49 per cent increase in the number of load restraint breaches detected by NSW Police. In early 2020 there were three serious heavy vehicle load restraint incidents, one which resulted in a fatality and the other two being near misses. As a result, a local project was implemented to reduce these numbers.

Project overview

The 'Load Restraint Education Project' was developed to curb the above-mentioned figures. The project aimed to increase load restraint awareness and reduce load restraint breaches and incidents on local roads. The project focused on the safe transportation of hay bales, machinery and general freight. A multi-agency Project Steering Committee, comprised of members from Councils, NSW Police, NSW Farmers with Transport for NSW, overseeing the implementation of the project.

Project strategies

The project involved several strategies which included:

- ▶ Target commodities (hay bales, machinery and general freight) were chosen as they account for the majority of load types in the area.

Snapshot

- ▶ In 2020, there was a 49 per cent increase in the number of load restraint breaches issued by NSW Police in the local area. There were also three serious heavy vehicle load restraint incidents.
- ▶ The project targeted the safe transportation of hay bales, machinery and general freight as they account for the majority of load types in the area.
- ▶ A multi-agency Project Steering Committee oversaw all stages of the project's implementation.
- ▶ The project developed high quality collateral and saw grass roots community engagement.
- ▶ Results show that load restraint awareness has increased, load restraint breaches have decreased by 69 per cent and there were no load restraint incidents recorded on local roads during 2021.

- ▶ Pre and post online awareness quizzes were held to measure the current level of load restraint knowledge at the beginning of the project and whether there were any shifts in awareness by the end of the project.
- ▶ How to videos and fact sheets were developed that contained simple tips to ensure load restraint was done correctly and safely.
- ▶ Local case studies were promoted to demonstrate what happens when load restraint fails.
- ▶ A three-week Village Tour was undertaken in 12 locations to bring load restraint information directly to the farming community. The Project Steering Committee was joined on the tour by several other stakeholders, including NSW Rural Fire Service, Safework NSW and NSW Health's Rural Adversity Mental Health Program.

The project was developed in line with the 'safe system' approach to road safety and addressed elements of 'safe vehicles' and 'safe people'.

Project outcomes

The results showed

- ▶ The pre quiz had 452 entries and the post quiz had 363 entries. The two questions that saw improvement in knowledge were 'what is the most appropriate lashing for tying down a tractor' and 'what should you do if you notice that your load of hay bales had shifted during the trip'. Over 25 per cent of respondents were unsure where you could get a copy of the 'Load Restraint Guide 2018'.
- ▶ More than 100 farmers attended the Village Tour and all provided positive feedback.



- ▶ The how-to videos had more than 1,000 views.
- ▶ More than 1,000 load restraint packs, containing the 'Load Restraint Guide 2018', have been distributed to the local community.
- ▶ Over 300,000 people were reached through social media posts with more than 5,000 engagements. The engagement rate was 61 per cent.
- ▶ Police enforcement figures showed load restraint breaches have decreased 69 per cent with no load restraint incidents recorded on local roads during 2021.

Summary

Issues

- ▶ Heavy vehicle loading and load restraint is quite technical. There are performance standards to follow/meet and legislative loading requirements. To ensure the correct information was conveyed in the how to videos a subject matter expert was engaged.
- ▶ One of the findings of the project is that knowledge about the 'Load Restraint Guide 2018' is low and it needs to be more accessible.

Solutions

- ▶ Collaboration and grass roots community engagement were the keys to success for this project.
- ▶ The Village Tour saw several agencies working together to deliver relevant information to the target group. It was so much more effective than each agency working alone in its silo.