

# INSTITUTIONALISING COORDINATING STRUCTURES TO PROMOTE ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY

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## ABSTRACT

Road traffic safety is no longer the issue of only one discipline but rather requires a multi-faceted approach targeting law enforcement; education and communication; data and intelligence; engineering and legislation. The Western Cape Government took cognizance of this, and guided by its Provincial Strategic Objectives, established the Provincial Road Traffic Management Coordinating Committee (PRTMCC) in order to achieve its primary road traffic safety objective of reducing road crash fatalities by 50% by 2014. The PRTMCC serves as the case study in order to illustrate the benefits of institutionalising structures whilst highlighting the inefficiencies that arise as a result of bureaucratic issues that ensue, particularly in the public sector. Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, through a public perception survey, as well as an analysis of an international best practice model, serves to support this claim. This paper explores and interrogates how institutionalising these structures within the public; private and civil society sphere could promote road traffic safety.

## 1 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK – ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRTMCC

According to the National Land Transport Act (NLTA), 2009 (Act 5 of 2009) it is held that Provincial Government would be responsible for the provision of provincial land transport policy and strategy; planning and coordination of land transport functions; coordination between municipalities to ensure effective execution of land transport in the Province and liaising with other government departments and the coordination of prominent role-players.

As a result of this legislation, the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works was mandated to be the “lead agency” in the implementation of a road traffic safety programme for the Province, hence the establishment of the *Safely Home* programme.

The Western Cape Government, as part of its vision to move forward and become the world’s best-run regional Government, launched 12 Provincial Strategic Objectives (PSOs); with the third objective relating to road traffic safety namely *Increasing Access to Safe and Efficient Transport*. PSO3 served as the primary objective influencing the *Safely Home* programme and was approved by Cabinet on

the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 with the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works appointed as the custodian department.

The World Health Organisation’s *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* (2004) notes that in order to achieve success in reducing road traffic deaths, injuries and disabilities, governments should implement the following recommendations holistically, covering a wide range of disciplines and sectors of society:

*“...Identify a lead agency in government to guide the national road traffic safety effort; Assess the problem, policies and institutional settings relating to road traffic injury and the capacity for road traffic injury prevention in each country; Prepare a national road safety strategy and plan of action; Allocate financial and human resources to address the problem; Implement specific actions to prevent road traffic crashes, minimize injuries and their consequences and evaluate the impact of these actions and support the development of national capacity and international cooperation”.* (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2004, p.160)

These recommendations were supplemented by the Western Cape Government’s notion of “The 4 E’s Strategy” which is based on the principles of Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation. It is considered to be an international best practice example. The strategy is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: “The 4 E's Strategy”**

Due to the complex nature of the *Safely Home* programme, the Integrated Transport Steering Group (ITSG) sanctioned the establishment of the Provincial Road Traffic Management Coordinating Committee (PRTMCC), under the banner of the National Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), to serve as the Work Group that would manage the programme.

The Work Group is divided into two sets of sub-structures. Regions are currently divided according to their district municipal boundaries and sub-work groups for each region were established in order to ensure line functionality. These work groups are called District Road Traffic Management Coordinating Committee sub-work groups (DRTMCC SWGs). The second sub-structure is specialist sub-work groups that are

aligned to the fundamentals, as proposed in “The 4 E’s Strategy”, namely Law Enforcement; Education and Communication; Engineering and Safety Audits; Intelligence and Data Management and Legislation and Law Administration sub-work groups (SWGs).

What renders this Work Group so significant is its member composition as it includes representatives from various disciplines based within different sectors of society thereby adhering to the WHO principle recommendation of maintaining a holistic approach. The Work Group constituency is detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: PRTMCC Work Group Constituency**

Custodian Department	Department of Transport and Public Works	
Chair	Assistant Executive Manager: Transport Regulation	
Sub-Work Group Chair Members	West Coast DRTMCC SWG	
	Cape Winelands DRTMCC SWG	
	Central Karoo DRTMCC SWG	
	Eden DRTMCC SWG	
	Overberg DRTMCC SWG	
	Metro RTMCC SWG	
	Enforcement SWG	
	Education and Communication SWG	
	Engineering and Audits SWG	
	Intelligence and Data Management SWG	
Legislation and Law Administration SWG		
Internal Members	Assistant Executive Manager: Transport Operations	
External Members: National Department	Representative of the Departments of:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South African Police Service</li> <li>• National Prosecuting Authority</li> </ul>	
External Members: Provincial Departments	Chief Director: Traffic Safety Promotion	
	Chief Director: Strategy & Health Support: Department of Health	
	Director: Service Delivery Integration: Department of Local Government	
	Director: Office of the HoD: Western Cape Education Department	
Other Stakeholders	Representatives of:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SANRAL</li> <li>• Road Accident Fund Regional Office</li> <li>• Metro Rail Western Cape</li> <li>• Academic/Other Institutions as contracted or co-opted</li> <li>• Chair: Traffic Chiefs Forum</li> </ul>	
	Secretariat	Department of Transport and Public Works

Members are appointed by the respective Head of Department, Municipal Manager or Stakeholder CEO with representation restricted to senior and middle management. The Work Group is tasked to serve as a multi-functional, transversal platform allowing representatives to come together to discuss and plan in a cooperative manner to deal with the technical aspects of cross-cutting issues. The Work Group not only fosters partnerships within the public sector amongst the different departments but also enhances the concept of public-private partnerships (PPP). One of its core functions is to manage internal operational programmes and to ensure that projects across the spectrum are implemented.

## **2 BENEFITS AND BUREAUCRATIC INEFFICIENCIES**

### **2.1 Intergovernmental Relations**

The PRTMCC entrenches the notion of intergovernmental relations and promotes cooperation across a broad spectrum covering the public and private spheres. It allows for consultation regarding all matters relating to road traffic safety and allows members to not only raise their concerns and put forth their challenges but also recommend practical solutions. The PRTMCC ultimately becomes a best practice sharing community. Expert advice and the latest road traffic safety research are provided by academic institutions whilst many private institutions introduce innovative concepts and products. A critical component is that challenges can be resolved as a collective, combining not only ideas but also resources. In the instance that it cannot be resolved at this level, matters can be escalated to higher bodies such as the ITSG or Economic Sector Committee (ESC).

The notion of cooperation can be undermined if the representatives work in silos, particularly within the public sector. This is a common occurrence and results in duplication of efforts. If members fail to consult or provide feedback to the PRTMCC regarding operational programmes within their respective departments, it leads to a breakdown in project alignment and the most cost- and time-effective allocation of resources. As a result, members could be exposed to meeting fatigue as they have to attend meetings on different platforms discussing the same issues.

### **2.2 High-level Decision Making**

As noted above and in Table 1, the PRTMCC requires that members are either middle or senior management, which allows for high-level discussions and decision-making to take place. Due to their ranks within their respective departments and organisations, members have extensive and detailed knowledge of issues at hand. They are able to make practical recommendations as they have control over budgets as well as operational staff. They are also able to influence, alter and provide input to National and Provincial policy and strategy documents that affect road traffic safety.

The benefits of this decision-making process could be hampered if members fail to attend meetings or send junior representatives that are unable to make any decisions. It could render the PRTMCC as a mere “talk-shop” and ultimately ineffective. Bureaucracy within the public sector through over-regulation, strict procedures and hierarchies in the respective departments could also hamper efforts to promote road traffic safety.

Gaining access to funding, where available, could prove to be a tedious process. Obtaining support for the implementation of projects and programmes requires approval by many different units within a department and strict cost containment measures make it difficult to attend and cater for meetings out of office. Road traffic safety is a pertinent issue within the Province yet these bureaucratic challenges slow down the process.

High-level representation is also crucial in obtaining political support and funding, on both a Provincial and National level - two elements that are critical in enabling a reduction in road crashes and the subsequent fatalities and injuries.

### **2.3 Accountability**

One of the biggest advantages of institutionalising these coordinating structures is that it ensures accountability. Members are formally appointed; specific tasks are assigned and reflected in their individual work performance agreements and reviews. Members are therefore required to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

Institutionalising also affords credibility as the PRTMCC serves as a formal structure, housed within a Provincial Government, which reaffirms its ability to make high-level decisions and influence road traffic safety interventions. It also ensures that the mandate; scope of work and strategic directives are formalised.

Due to the formal nature of the structure, an annual meeting schedule allows for concrete planning to take place whilst ensuring that there are constant report-backs amongst the various regional and technical SWGs and the PRTMCC work group. This in essence creates a monitoring and evaluation mechanism which guarantees that members are on the correct trajectory in reaching a common goal.

In the absence of this mechanism, the PRTMCC work group and SWGs could be rendered as operationally ineffective. If it isn't monitored, it could become a "talk-shop" where issues are either not resolved timeously, tasks not completed or decisions are made but not filtered down to the operational level.

### **2.4 Commitment**

Due to the fact that issues are discussed on an operational level within each discipline, members and their regions; organisations; staff; etc. are directly affected and therefore committed to the goals put forth by the PRTMCC. Being a part of a structure of this nature brings about a passion for road traffic safety and achieving the ultimate goal of reducing road crash fatalities and injuries.

An incremental approach to entrench the notion of road traffic safety as a critical issue within the Western Cape requires constant commitment. There are no quick-wins – patience is required to achieve significant results and this at times could lower morale. Bureaucratic inefficiencies that plague the afore-mentioned aspects could undermine the commitment of the members.

### 3 INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE – THE AUSTRALIAN MODEL

#### 3.1 Safe Systems Approach

*“Each one of us has a role — whether we are road planners, designers or builders, vehicle engineers or fleet operators, policy makers or business professionals, or individual road users going about our everyday activity. Our collective task is to build a culture where safety is an inherent part of all decision-making that affects the road system, its operation and its use”. (Australia, Australian Transport Council, 2011, p.32*

This notion of building a national road traffic safety culture is captured in the *Australian National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* and serves as the basis for their internationally recognised *Safe System* approach, which is endorsed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The approach recognizes human fallibility and vulnerability and therefore accepts that the system needs to be more forgiving. Subsequently, the focus is on improving the safety of roads, vehicles and speeds whilst changing road user behaviour.

They state that their government is committed and takes responsibility for the critical issues regarding road traffic safety but that they cannot do it alone and require assistance from businesses, industry, organisations and the community. At this point one is clearly able to see the similarity between this system and the PRTMCC.

#### 3.2 Ambitious Targets

Australia’s road traffic safety targets are quite ambitious. Their long-term vision is to ensure that no individual is killed or seriously injured on their roads. In order to achieve this, they set out a 10-year plan to reduce the annual road crash fatalities and serious injuries by 30%; taking cognisance of the fact that it will be a challenge seeing as though they achieved a 23% reduction over the entire last decade. The Western Cape Government took up the same ambitious stance through PSO3. *Safely Home’s* primary objective was to reduce road crash fatalities by 50% by 2014 and it was the PRTMCC’s responsibility to ensure that the programme was managed in such a way that the target would be achieved.

In their previous *2001-2010 Strategy*, Australia had only set targets for road crash fatalities but moved to include serious injuries in their new strategy. Similarly within the Western Cape, the focus was primarily on reducing road crash fatalities but due to the working discussions within the PRTMCC, they are also moving towards including serious injuries. It is critical to note though that Australia, as a leading international example on road traffic safety, is plagued by the same issues relating to data collection and integrity as the Western Cape, and South Africa as a whole. Reliable data sets are crucial in target-setting and monitoring and evaluation processes, thus they are currently working towards establishing a consistent set of road crash classifications and improving their databases containing serious injury information.

### **3.3 Institutional Structure**

Within Australia, the different states maintain different institutional arrangements. The State of Victoria has three active and committed lead agencies, each with different responsibilities. Western Australia has consultative arrangements which are complex but do not have clear lines of accountability to ensure delivery. The State of New South Wales has one lead agency, which is well established, dominant and maintain good support from their respective stakeholders. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined thereby ensuring accountability. Currently the tasks of problem-solving and innovation are being undertaken by their operational staff.

Underpinning all three of these agencies is the concept of shared responsibility. The *2011-2020 Strategy* advocates that specific actions be developed and implemented, at a regional or local level, by the different stakeholders but that these actions should align to the system and its fundamental principles.

The PRTMCC has the same institutional arrangement as the Australian model with its work group and sub-work group structures where the tasks are divided two-fold. Critical matters are dealt with as a whole by the PRTMCC or escalated to a higher body; whilst district-specific issues are addressed by the regional SWGs in an operational manner and filtered down to the local municipal level. All these actions have to align to “The 4 E’s” which serve as the fundamental principles of the PRTMCC.

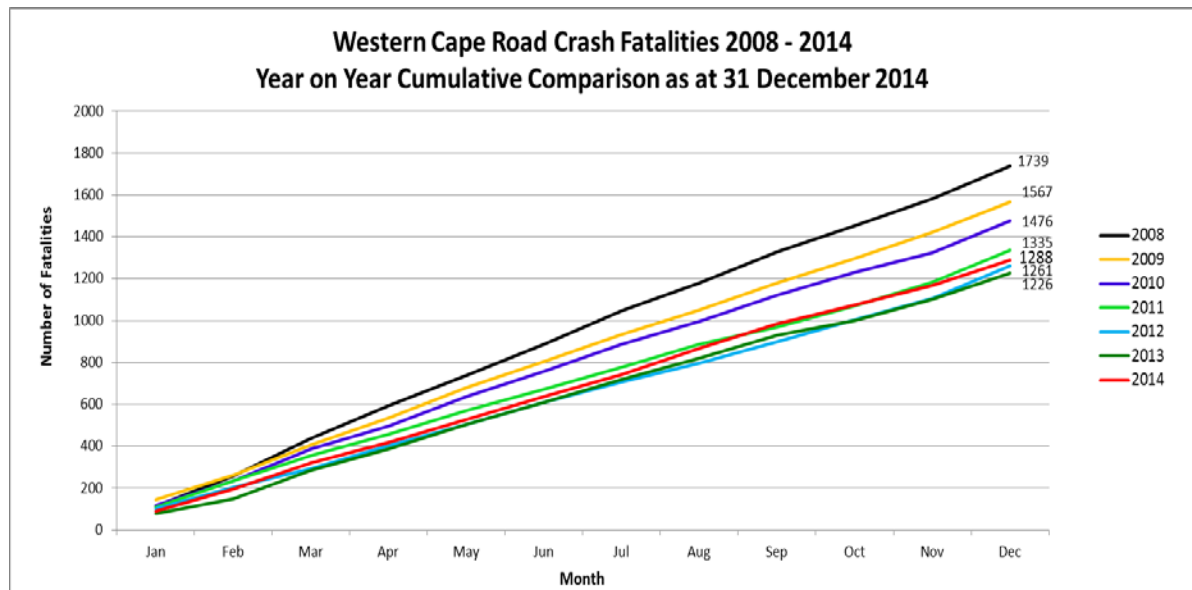
## **4 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ROAD TRAFFIC SAFETY IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

As a means of quantitative research, a survey was conducted to gage the public’s perception of the state of road traffic safety within the Province focusing on their knowledge of current road traffic safety structures. This provides insight into the manner in which road traffic safety interventions, as implemented by the institutionalised structures, reach communities on a practical level. Consequently, the structures’ effectiveness in achieving the common goal of promoting road traffic safety is assessed.

The target group was the Western Cape Government staff complement consisting of 20 000 individuals. This group was selected to be representative of the public as they are diverse in terms of demographics relating to race; gender; age; culture and level of income. They are located throughout the Province, working across 13 departments. They all make use of different means of transport – not only to travel to work but within their personal lives, and therefore represent different road user experiences. The survey was conducted over a period of five days in January 2015 and the sample size was made up of 2 097 respondents, which is a tenth of the target group.

In response to the question “*Do you think road safety in the Western Cape has improved over the last five (5) years?*” 42.82% said yes, 37.82% said no and 19.36% answered that they did not know. If one were to use the reduction in fatalities as the measure of success, the 42.82% were correct as the Province has seen a 26%

decline in road crash fatalities from 2008 to 2014. The graph below illustrates this feat.



**Figure 2: Western Cape Road Crash Fatalities 2008-2014**

Even though the majority are optimistic about the improvements, they indicated that road traffic safety should be further advocated within the Province. This was evident by the fact that 52.46% of the respondents answered no to “Do you think enough is being done in the Western Cape to promote road safety?”

The survey attempted to determine what the respondents’ awareness of current road traffic safety structures, namely the RTMC; the *Arrive Alive* campaign and the *Safely Home* programme are, in addition to their understanding of the respective aims and activities. The results showed that 46.16% have heard of and had a good understanding of the *Arrive Alive* campaign compared to the 8.58% shown for the RTMC. 42.39% were totally unaware of the RTMC.

The results were mixed for *Safely Home* with the majority of the respondents (33.91%) only having a fair understanding of the programme. This is concerning to note as *Safely Home* has been the dominant road traffic safety programme for the Province for the past five years. 17.50% of the respondents were not aware of the programme whilst 16.69% had a poor understanding. Out of the three questions regarding the structures, more respondents (6.06% compared to 4.63% for RTMC and 5.29% for *Arrive Alive*) had skipped the question on *Safely Home*. On average, 6.52% of the respondents opted to skip certain questions. One could deduce that this reluctance to answer could be equated to either a poor or no understanding of the structures, terminology and/or the issues as captured in the questions.

These mixed responses are a cause for concern considering that the target group was Western Cape Government employees – individuals that have been exposed to *Safely Home* via more than one platform. Within their work domain there are constant communications, media releases and service delivery accolades and within the public domain, there are various events and news items via all forms of electronic and print media. This raises the question whether the PRTMCC and



*Safely Home* is doing enough within the Province to promote their road traffic safety interventions and initiatives.

Furthermore, the respondents appeared to be misinformed when asked “*How many people do you think died on the roads in the Western Cape in 2014?*” as only 21.32% had answered correctly. Respondents were given a selection of the following five categories: “*0-500; 501-1000; 1001-1500; 1501-2000; 2001-2500*”. Figure 2 shows that there were in fact 1 288 road crash fatalities in 2014, yet 53.69% of the respondents indicated that the figure was below a 1 000. This suggests that the public is not fully aware of the seriousness of the situation.

A positive feature to note is that when asked “*Rank the following in terms of who you think is responsible for road safety in the Western Cape*”, the majority of the respondents selected the option “*I Am*” with “*Traffic Services*” and “*Metro Police*” ranking second and third place, respectively. The other options included “*Provincial Government*”; “*Municipality*” and the “*South African Police Service*”. This is encouraging because not only does this prove that individuals take responsibility for their own safety on the roads but also indicate that it needs to be a shared task amongst different entities.

Respondents were also asked to rank who they thought the most vulnerable road user groups were in the Province. These results differed to the current status quo. In the order of most vulnerable to least, the respondents’ selection was as follows: “*Pedestrians; Cyclists; Passengers; Drivers; Motorcyclists*”. 2014 road crash fatality statistics for the Province indicated that pedestrians, passengers and drivers ranked highest with cyclists being the least vulnerable. This links to whether current road traffic safety awareness campaigns are sufficient and reaching all communities in order to ensure that all citizens are informed.

The survey questioned respondents about the main causes for road crashes in the Western Cape. The respondents’ answers, in order of the greatest contributor to the least, were as follows: “*Speed and Drinking & Driving (same ranking); Reckless & Negligent Driving; Distracted Driving e.g. Use of Cellphones; Drinking & Walking and Fatigue*”. It is concerning that fatigue was ranked the lowest considering that it has been a significant contributing factor to crashes which have claimed the lives of so many drivers and passengers – two of the most vulnerable road user groups within the Province.

The Australian Government’s Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development conducted a survey in 2013 to monitor community attitudes towards road traffic safety. The results from the survey showed that their public’s perception with regards to the leading causes for road crashes corresponds to the aforementioned results, as their respondents’ also ranked speed and drinking and driving as the leading causes with driver fatigue as the least influential.

Conducting a survey of this nature proved to be a valuable tool in order to investigate the public’s views regarding the state of road traffic safety in the Province. Following the Australian example, it would be beneficial to repeat the survey on a regular basis to monitor changes in attitudes, evaluate successes and to suggest new

interventions. A set of quality control models should be developed and implemented to monitor the levels of public awareness more effectively.

## 5 WAY FORWARD AND CONCLUSION

The PRTMCC as an institutional structure, together with its *Safely Home* programme, illustrates how such arrangements on various levels can work together effectively, to deliver interventions in order to achieve a common goal. Despite the fact that the structure was only institutionalised in 2010, significant strides have already been made in raising awareness of road traffic safety within the Western Cape.

In order to build on these successes, the current challenges need to be addressed. The bureaucratic issues that hamper the progress of the PRTMCC should be escalated by the members and resolved via the correct procedures and line functions within the respective departments. In the interim, to ensure momentum, the allocation of resources should be prioritised and more partnerships need to be established with private entities to access supplementary funding sources. According to the WHO, "*Well-targeted investment of financial and human resources can reduce road traffic injuries and deaths considerably*" (2004, p.162).

Sufficient political will and buy-in is required to promote road traffic safety which will allow for the prioritisation of the necessary funds and resources. In terms of targets, it needs to be realistic and evidence-based but also ambitious so that the structure and its respective members can be challenged to think innovatively and also remain committed.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are crucial to ensure success as progress should be tracked within the allocated budgets; against the predetermined timelines; optimally using human resources and mitigating risks to ensure that targets are reached.

There needs to be constant research and development efforts – not only to stay abreast of technological advances within the field of road traffic safety but also to remain informed about changes in the socio-economic climate of the Province. There should be continuous efforts to work towards integrating road traffic safety statistics on a National level plus maintaining strong partnerships with tertiary institutions. Institutional structures are not able to predict nor control changing conditions and it should therefore be flexible and willing to adjust its approach to address these challenges, but to do this the *Australian National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* notes that the structure requires:

*"...a commitment to continuous environmental scanning; effective data collection, analysis and performance monitoring, periodic review of long-term directions and short-term actions; and a willingness to adjust priorities in response to new information"* (2011, p.18)

In order to augment the awareness efforts of the PRTMCC and the *Safely Home* programme, more time should be dedicated to focussing on specific road traffic safety issues for example speed; fatigue; drinking and driving; seatbelt enforcement

and distracted driving. Awareness requires constant education through media campaigns and visible enforcement efforts, both on a Provincial and National level. This would allow for positive changes in road user behaviour.

Michael R. Bloomberg, former New York Mayor said that “*Every life lost because of unsafe roads is a tragedy — and most of those tragedies could be avoided with better rules, better enforcement, and smarter infrastructure*” (Bloomberg, 2014). Road traffic safety is no longer the task of only one discipline but requires a multi-faceted approach, targeting law enforcement; education and communication; data and intelligence; engineering and legislation. This is the dominant school of thought in international practice and one that underlines the approach adopted by the PRTMCC. The structure has been successful in promoting road traffic safety but to further increase its potential for accelerated road traffic safety successes, it needs to address the inherent challenges and move beyond the stance of only targeting the road environment. The PRTMCC should establish a road traffic safety culture within the Province where all road users, government, the private sector and civil society have a shared responsibility.

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