Local Public Health Units (PHUs) can have a role in applying the strategies of the "new public health" to help improve road safety in their areas.

In NSW motor vehicle fatalities are the single most common cause of death in males and females until the middle decades of life, while serious injury reduction has rightly been identified as a health priority at both national and State levels. Attempts at road injury reduction have tended to follow traditional approaches including engineering solutions (better roads, safer cars) and enforcement (speed limits, compulsory seat belt wearing and random breath testing). These approaches have undoubtedly been successful. Total road deaths in NSW have fallen from a peak of 1,400 in the late 1970s to fewer than 800 on the most recent figures, at a time when the number of registered vehicles and total kilometres travelled have been steadily rising. However, it has been suggested that the potential for improvement using traditional approaches is now decreasing, and that new strategies will be required if the gains are to be maintained.

The approaches proposed in the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion are well accepted in public health circles, and principles such as "healthy public policy", "intersectoral collaboration" and "community participation" have become popular terms among exponents.

**ROAD SAFETY 2000 AND BEYOND**

In an interesting example of concept transference across sectors, the Road Safety Bureau of the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has obviously been influenced by sectors, the Road Safety Bureau of the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, November 1991; (unpublished).

From the phone-in, several concerns such as the proper use of roundabouts, and pedestrian safety, were identified as future areas for collaborative action by the JRSG.

**CONCLUSIONS**

For many health issues, responsibility is shared between a number of other organisations and instrumentalities, while identification, participation and support by the local community is essential if longer-term wins are sought.

Community consultation and needs analysis are recognised in the health promotion literature as an essential component of enlisting this support.

Taking a joint role in the recent road safety phone-in is believed to have had a range of advantages for the Illawarra Public Health Unit:

- it has raised the profile of the Unit and promoted links with the media;
- it has strengthened working relationships with other government and non-government organisations; and
- the community response has identified a number of areas where future collaborative work is likely to bring results in terms of improved road safety.

Such an approach is commended to other Public Health Units as a way of putting into practice the concepts of the Ottawa Charter and of ensuring the broad-based support essential to improved road safety.

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