



Road Safety Strategic Plan 2009-2012

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Introduction

Crashes on our roads affect our community both socially and economically. Great Lakes Council, in its commitment to Road Safety appointed a Road Safety Officer funded jointly by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) and Council. One of the primary objectives of the Road Safety Officer was to develop a Road Safety Strategic Plan. In the past this had been done in conjunction with Greater Taree and Gloucester Councils. This plan identifies priorities for the Great Lakes locality only.

Why a Road Safety Strategic Plan?

The Council's Plan outlines a coordinated approach to making roads safer and reducing costs of crashes to the community.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- establish clear road safety goals for Council and the community;
- reduce road trauma and associated costs to Council and the community;
- ensure road safety is a priority in the planning and management of land use;
- develop community support, awareness, ownership and participation in road safety.

The Plan is intended to be a flexible document that can be changed as road safety issues and priorities within the community change.

Road Safety Strategic Plans in Context

The reduction of trauma on Australia's roads is a goal of both Federal and State Governments.

To meet our goal of having the safest roads in the world, the State Government has outlined a new target in the State Plan released in November 2006:

“reducing road fatalities to 0.7 per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) by 2016.”

Road Safety 2010 is the current Road Safety Strategic Plan for New South Wales. The plan provides an integrated framework for the road safety of all sectors of the NSW community. This strategy aims to not only decrease the road toll but to promote community understanding and involvement in road safety initiatives and strategies.

In 2007 the NSW Centre for Road Safety was established to oversee a safe systems approach to road safety in NSW.

Great Lakes Commitment to Road Safety

Council's commitment to road safety is reflected through corporate vision and goals. This strategy recognises the importance of linking road safety strategies to Council's corporate objectives. Likewise linkages to State Government (RTA) objectives are equally as important.

Council's vision

A leader in the provision of infrastructure and services which sustain and enhance the natural environment and achieve a quality lifestyle for residents and visitors.

Council's mission:

Providing governance which is:

- Effective
- Efficient
- Socially Just
- Transparent
- Visionary

Engineering Division

The Road Safety position sits within the Engineering Division, Design and Investigation team and aims through behavioural programs to complement engineering and enforcement solutions to local road safety problems.

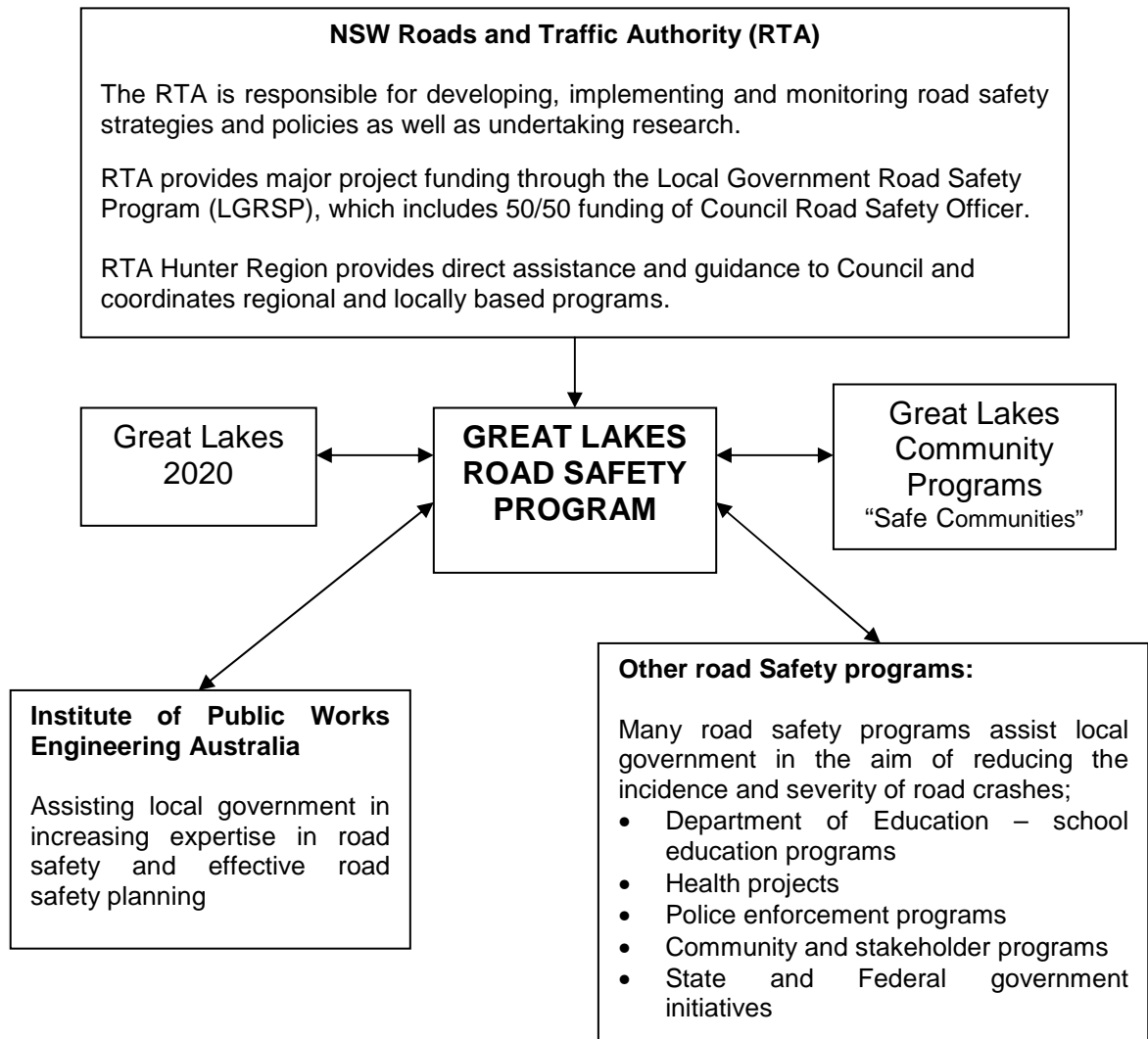
Community Priorities

In the 2008 Community Survey "promoting safety and prevention of crime" was ranked as the 5th most important priority for Council, out of 38 priorities. Council's current performance in addressing safety however, was ranked 33rd.

This strategy will assist Council and the RTA in addressing this need by establishing a clear way forward to implement road safety actions. This document is designed to meet the requirements of the new Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework being compiled by the Department of Local Government.

A General overview of the Great Lakes Council Road Safety program

Council's Road Safety Program is an important component of the state and nationwide effort to reduce the incidence and severity of crashes. The following table details a number of the key components involved with road safety:



Area Profile

The Great Lakes Council area is located on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. The Great Lakes area is considered to be part of the Hunter Region, about 320 kilometres north of Sydney and 168 kilometres north of Newcastle.

The Great Lakes Council area is bounded by Gloucester Shire and Greater Taree City in the North, the Tasman Sea in the East, North Arm Cove and the Port Stephens Council area in the South and Dungog Shire in the West.

The Great Lakes has a population of 34,571. Tourism is a major part of the area's industry. Anecdotally, the area's population is said to double in size during the December-January holiday period.

A large number of residents are retired. Approximately one third (35%) of the population is in paid employment. 94% of the population mostly speak English at home (ABS, 2006).

Vehicle Use

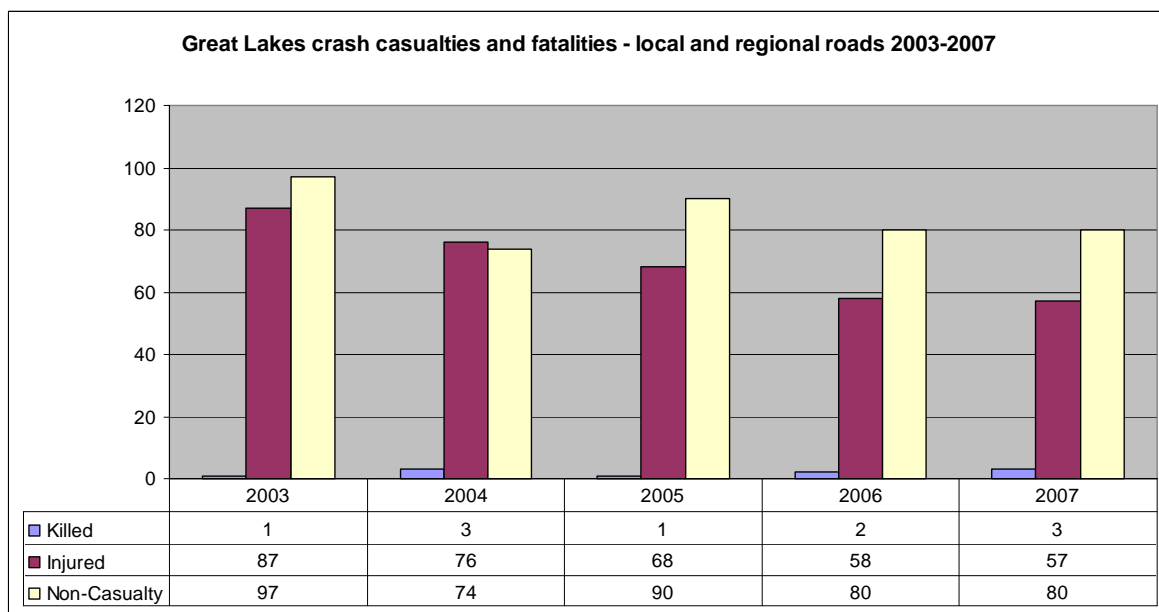
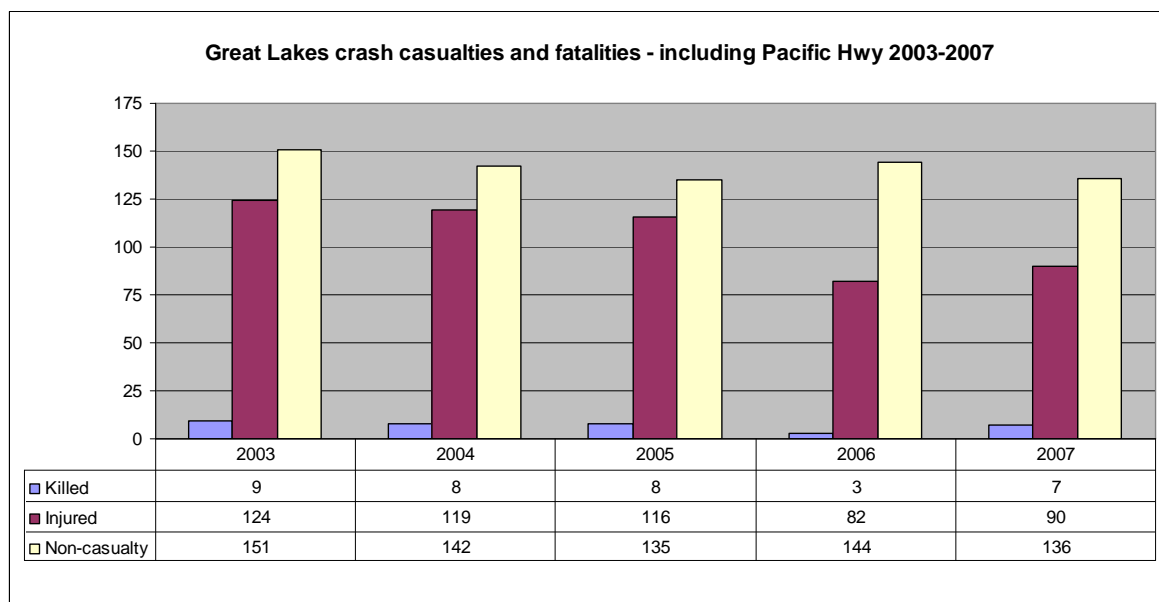
There are 24,880 registered vehicles in Great Lakes LGA. The car is the most used form of transport by residents with 85.3% of the households in the Great Lakes owning at least one car. Approximately 67% of residents use their cars to travel to work with 0.6% using public transport and a further 0.6% and 1.2% travelling by motorcycle and pedal cycle respectively (ABS, 2006).

Road Crash Data

Analysing data from crashes helps in identifying road safety issues in Great Lakes. Crash data provide information about when, where, why and how crashes occur. Council uses this information to guide planning activities. Analysis of 2003-2007 crash data as supplied by the NSW RTA will be presented in the following sections.

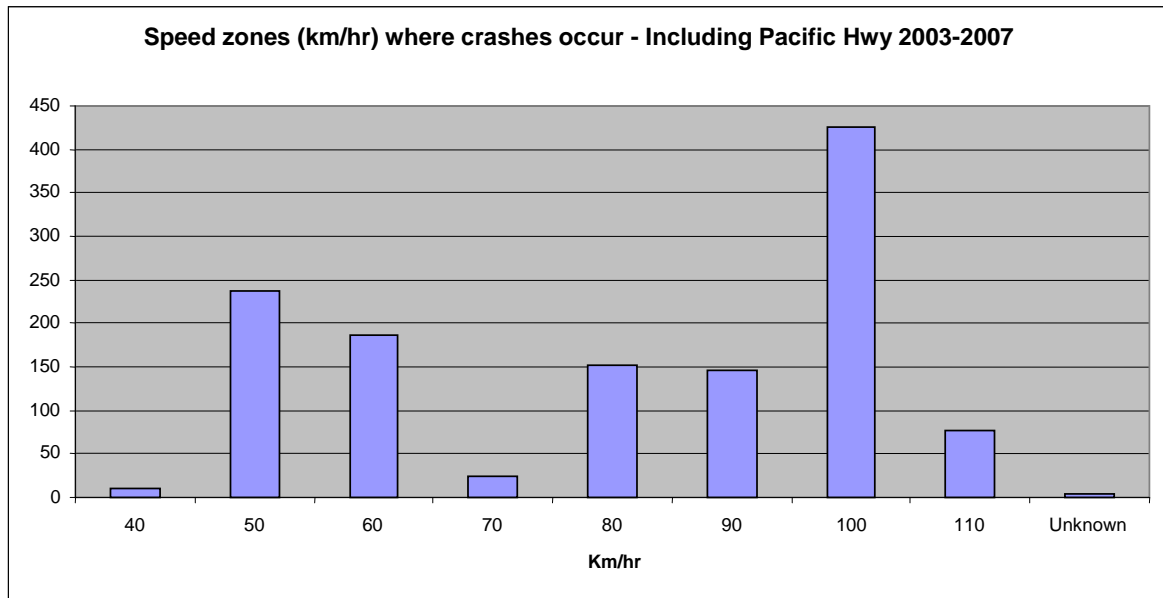
Total Crashes

Between 2003 and 2007, there were 1274 crashes on roads within Great Lakes Council. Of these 35 (2%) were fatal, 531 (42%) involved injury and 708 (56%) were tow away.

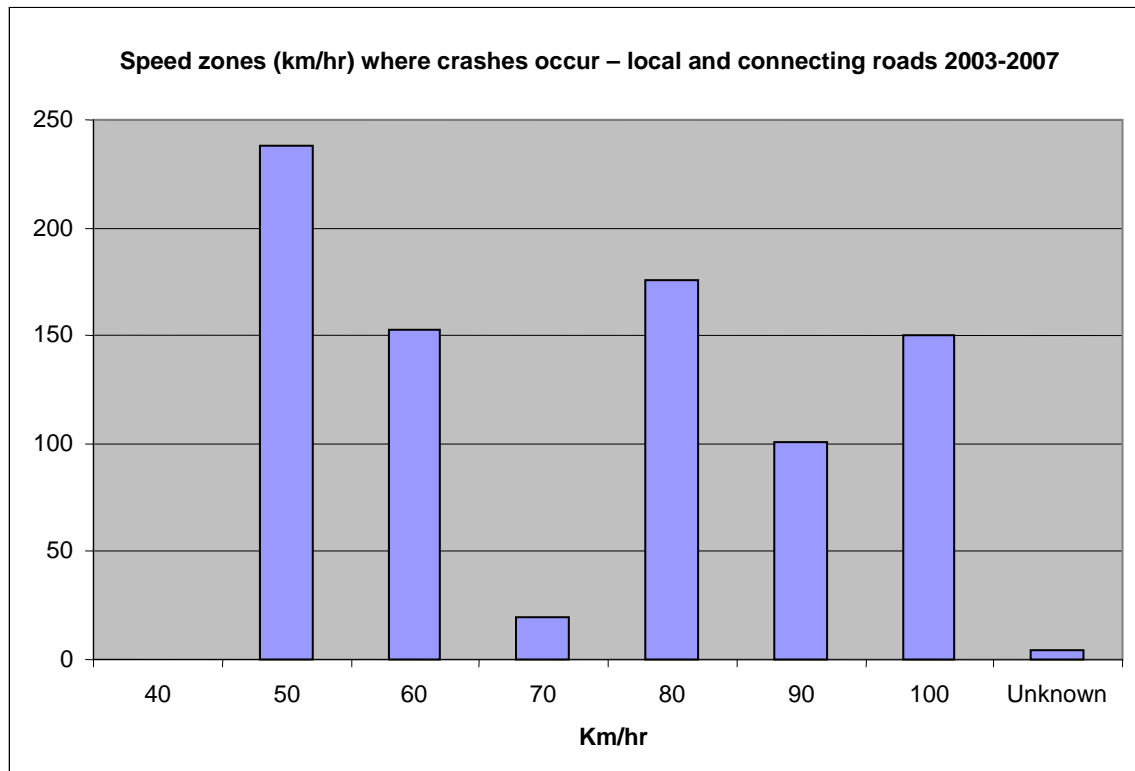


Where do crashes occur?

Of all road crashes 37% occurred along the Pacific Highway, 32% crashes occurred on a state or regional road and 31% on Council roads. This is reflected in the high occurrence of crashes in the 100km/hr zone.



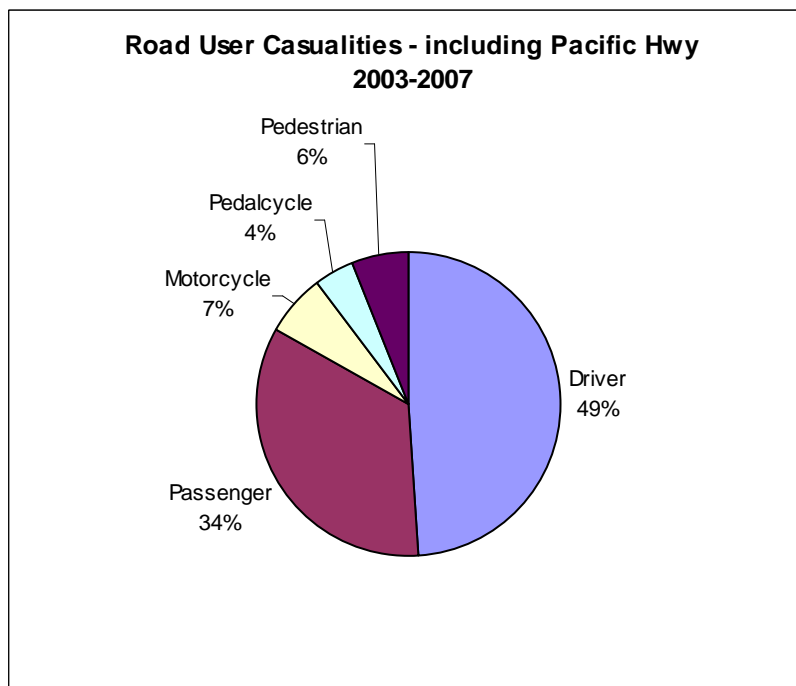
However, when further analysing the statistics without the Pacific Highway, it shows a high occurrence of road crashes within the 50-60km/hr zone.



Who is involved?

The following figure indicates the majority of casualties are vehicle drivers and passengers (83%). Although other road users (motorcyclists, cyclists, pedestrians etc.) do not feature as highly, they are more vulnerable in the event of a crash and therefore their needs should be addressed, for example of the 35 pedestrian incidents over the last 5 years along local roads all have resulted in an injury and in one case death.

The Great Lakes area anecdotally is reported as having a high proportion of pedestrian traffic within the CBD areas, especially during peak holiday times. The pedestrian casualties when reviewing crash data including the



Pacific Highway data is 6% of the total. This decreases to 4% when analysing local roads and is comparable with the Hunter Region average of 3.7%, ensuring that pedestrian safety is not 'statistically' significant. However, pedestrian safety must be considered as a key part of the Great Lakes road safety program due to the high proportion of vulnerable pedestrians such as the elderly and school children (50% of the population is aged over 50 years old, with a further 15% attending local schools).

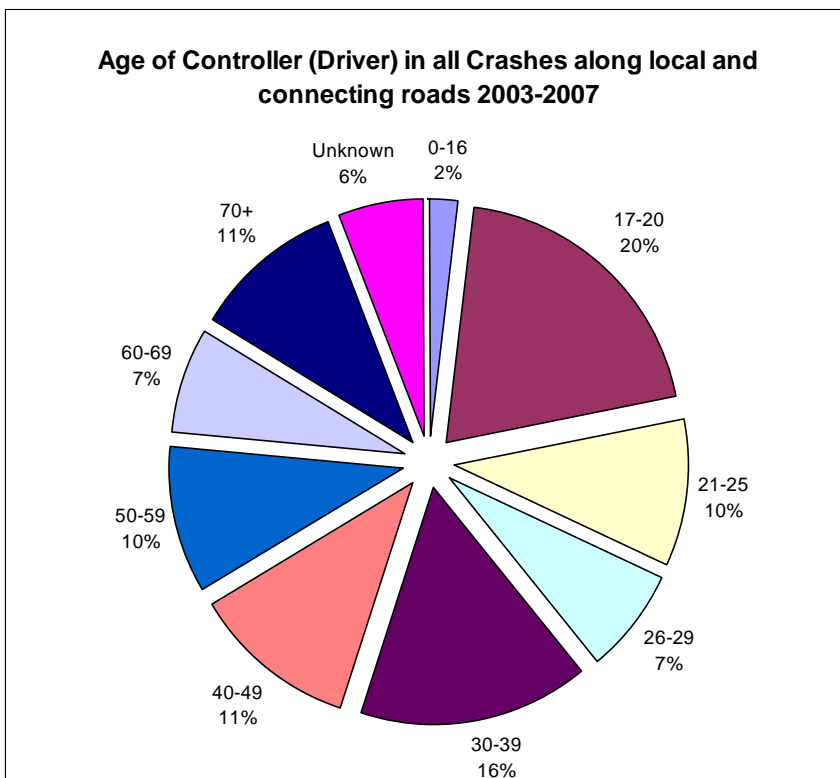
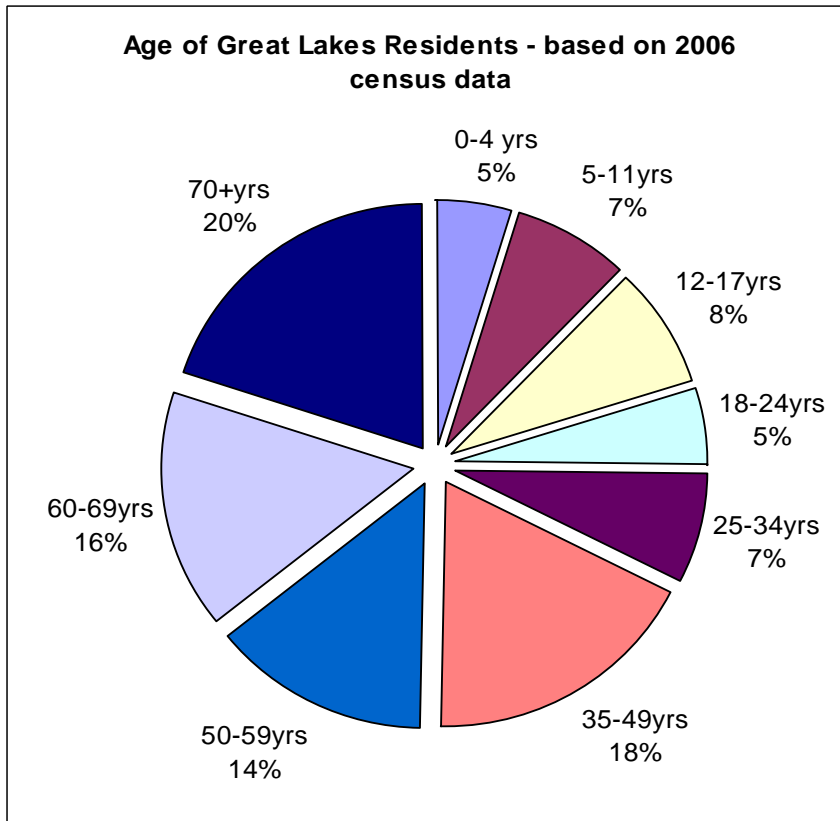
Driver Postcode

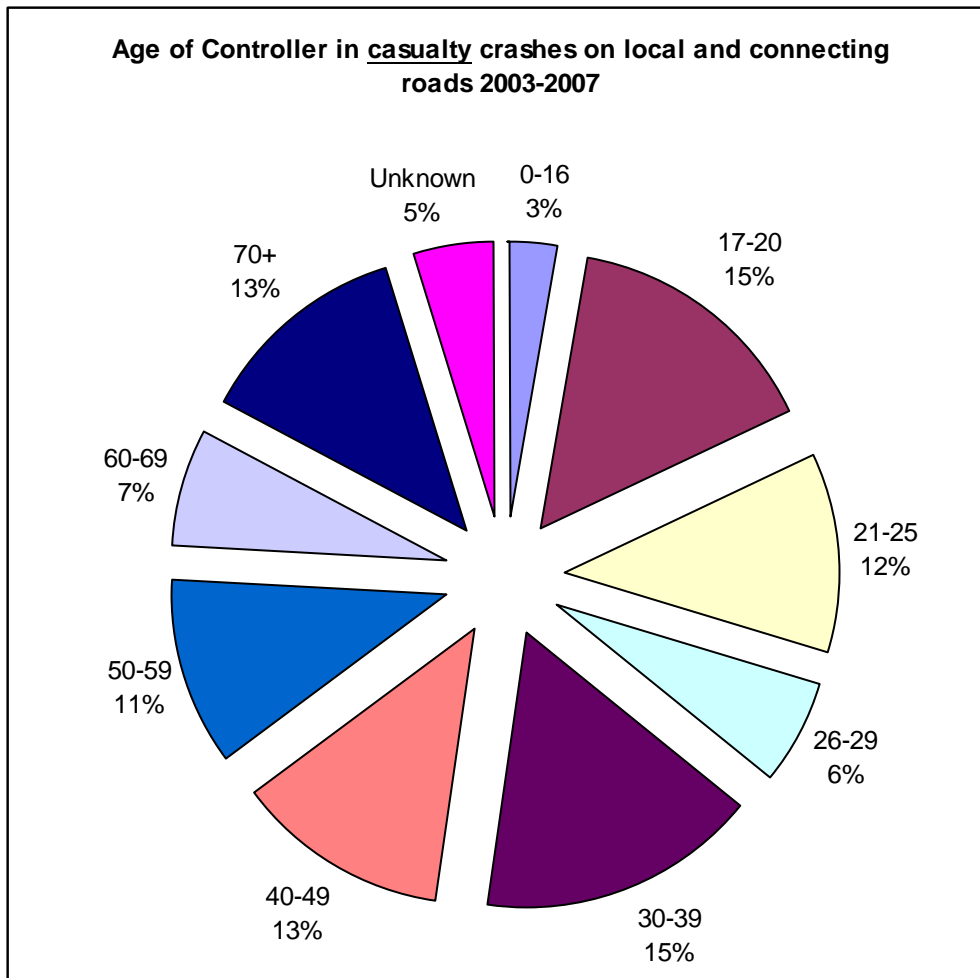
When analysing statistics without Pacific Highway crashes (that is along connecting and local roads only), 61% of all crashes over the last five years (2003-2007) involve local residents of the Great Lakes and Greater Taree areas.

This demonstrates that although there are a number of tourists and traffic travelling through the area having crashes, there is also significant representation of local residents in the local crash area.

Age Group

As the 2006 census data in the figure below shows, 50% of our population is over the age of 50 years old, with smaller proportions of the population making up the driving community.





When analysing the age of drivers involved in road crashes including the Pacific Highway data, there are several peaks in age groups. The most dominant being the 17-20 age bracket followed by the 30-39 year olds. This age involvement is repeated in a similar pattern for road crashes on local and connecting roads. Of all crashes that occurred in the five year period 68% involved male drivers.

The involvement of younger drivers in road crashes is an area where state government has made significant changes in legislation with a view to reducing this statistic. Greater restrictions on P plate licences, together with greater commitment to the supervision and required learning for L plate drivers has led to the involvement of P1 drivers in fatal crashes declining by 35% across New South Wales from 2006 to 2007 (Youthsafe 2009).

Children

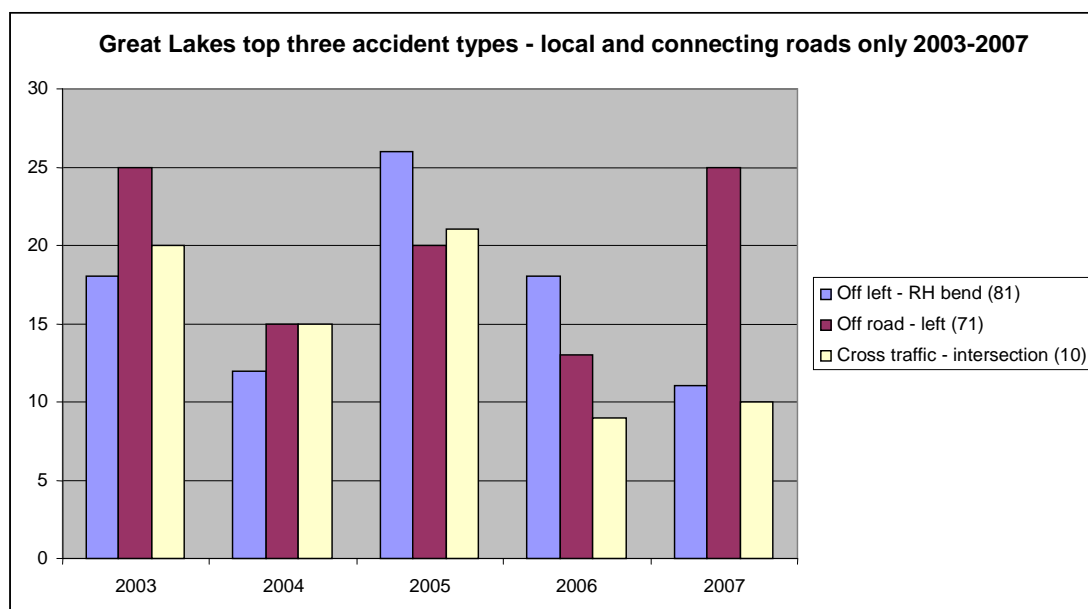
4% (52) of casualties over the last five years included children under the age of 12. In the 0-4 year's age category, 3 crashes involved a child wearing an approved restraint and 3 involved a child wearing an adult belt. In the 5-12 year's of age category, 3

crashes involved a child wearing an approved restraint and 23 involved a child wearing an adult belt.

Type of Accidents

The most dominant type of accident that occurs in the Great Lakes involves loss of control on a straight road or slight bend. Further, accidents are found to occur at intersections. This maybe due to high concentrations of traffic but also due to a failure to give way.

The graph below shows in 2007 a steep increase in accidents involving vehicles leaving straight sections of road.



Potential causes for these accident types are numerous and consideration should be given to other factors aside from speed, such as road design, weather, drink driving, driver error or distraction. The following section will examine these in greater detail.

What causes road crashes?

Three factors have been identified as major causes of traffic crashes.

Human factors: The behaviour of road users, including fatigue, speed, alcohol, incorrect use of occupant restraints, inexperience and driver error.

Vehicular factors: Mechanical and/or design faults

Road environment factors: Road conditions that include poor design, obstacles, road damage and weather conditions.

The Road Safety Strategic Plan will primarily be focusing on human behavioural issues that cause road crashes such as drink driving, speeding, fatigue and use of occupant restraints.

Drink Driving

Alcohol is an important factor in serious casualty crashes. The chance of having a crash at .05 is double that of a zero Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). According to RTA research, drink driving behaviour is one of the highest risk behaviours associated with road crashes. Alcohol and other drugs seriously reduce the capacity to judge speed and distance.

The introduction of Random Breath Testing has had a significant impact on the level of drink driving. However, alcohol is still a factor in approximately one in five fatal crashes in New South Wales.

In the Great Lakes area during 2003-2007, 6.5% of all crashes were identified as having alcohol as a contributing factor; this is comparable with the Hunter Region average of 5.7%.

Speed

Speed is the major behavioural road safety problem in New South Wales One in three fatal crashes is speeding-related. Around 200 people die on New South Wales roads each year as a result of a speeding-related crash. Speeding increases the risk of crashing and the severity of the crash. Speeding is also the biggest single cause of injury crashes. (NSW Centre for Road Safety, 2008).

In the Great Lakes area during 2003-2007 on average 33% of all crashes were identified as being a direct result of speeding (a two year average for the Hunter Region was 22%) This includes crashes on local roads and connecting roads only, the Pacific Highway has been excluded from this result. The following table shows an increasing trend of speed related crashes over 4 years with a decrease in 2007. However, as outlined previously it shows an increasing trend in speed within lower speed zones (50-60 km/hr zones).

Driver Fatigue and Distraction

Driver fatigue is a factor in at least 20% of fatal crashes in New South Wales. Public education and advertising campaigns attempt to ensure that drivers are aware of the dangers of driver fatigue over long and short distances, and what is needed to prevent it.

Fatigue related crashes could occur at any time including short trips or within two hours of the start of the trip. It is estimated that over one-third of fatigue related crashes occur while travelling to and from work.

With the prevalence of in-car technology such as MP3 players, GPS units and mobile phones, such distractions have been known to amplify driver fatigue and affect driver behaviour and skill.

Results from published Monash University research has indicated that in car distractions

- Reduced overall driver performance (poorer speed control, lane keeping)
- Reduced drivers' ability to detect and respond safely to unexpected hazards and
- Increased drivers' feelings that they were under pressure.

(Young, K et al 2003).

In the Great Lakes area during 2003-2007, 14% of crashes on local roads and connecting roads are thought to have fatigue as a contributing factor. The average for the Hunter Region is 8.8%.

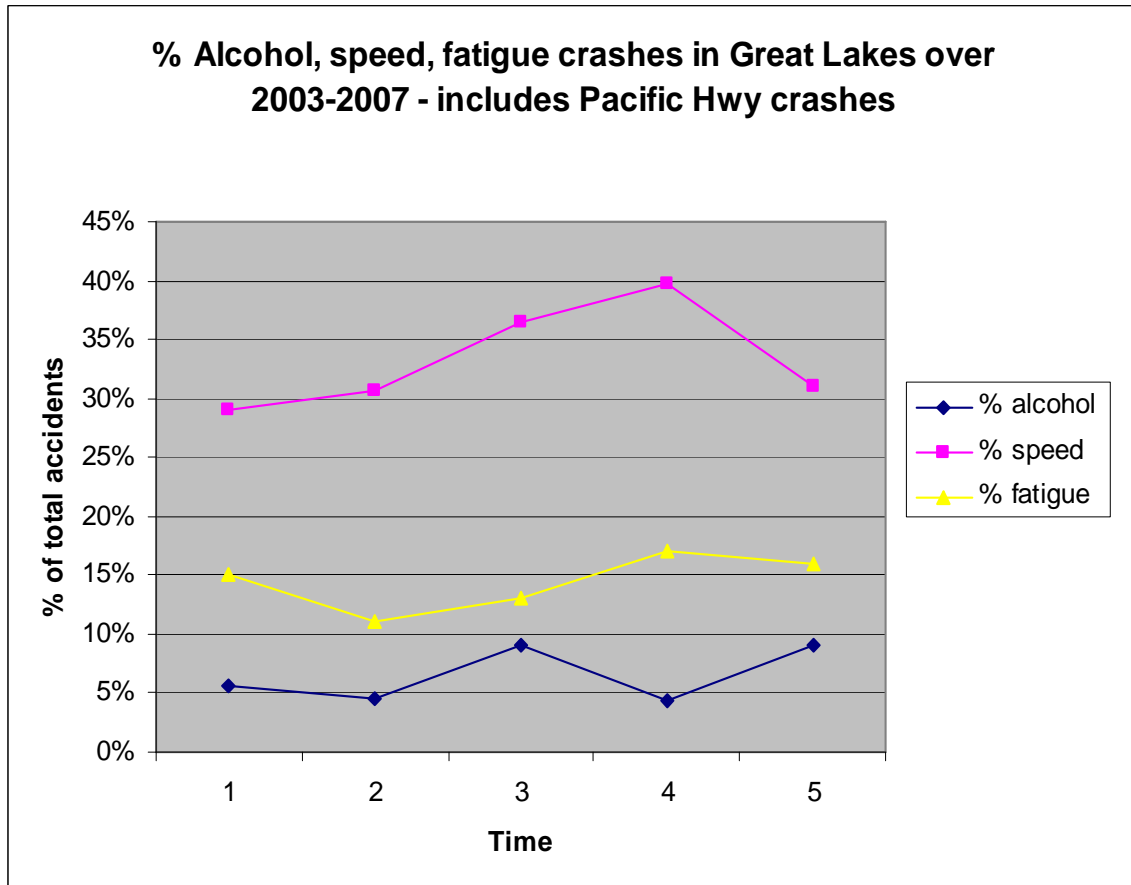
Use of Occupant Restraints

The statistics for Great Lakes on the use of in particular child restraints is of some concern. A child that is properly secured in an approved child restraint is less likely to be injured or killed in a car crash than one that is not (RTA 2007).

Most car seat belts are designed for adults, so children do not fit them properly. The sash (diagonal part of the belt) tends to fall across their head and neck so the belt does not provide the best protection. To travel safely by car, all children should be seated in the rear seat in an approved child restraint suitable for their size and weight.

Road safety experts in Australia recommend the use of child restraints until the child is 26kg or approximately 7 years old. However, currently it is only legal to fit a child in an approved restraint up until 12 months old.

Great Lakes Road Crash Trends over five years due to human factors



In summary, traffic crashes in Great Lakes over a five year period, without the influence of the Pacific Highway, are more likely to:

- Involve speed (33%). This is also reflected in types of accident occurring i.e. loss of control.
- Occur in 50-60 zones km/hr (50%) or 100 km/hr zone (18%)
- Involve local residents (61%)
- Involve drivers aged 40-49 (11%) and 17-25 (20%) years old.

Another issue highlighted in analysing road crash data is a gradual increasing trend in alcohol related crashes.

Pedestrian safety along Great Lakes local roads is also of concern, with pedestrians being represented in 4% of crashes (including one fatality).

Our Strategy

Key objectives:

- To improve road safety through awareness, attitude and behavioural change
- To improve the safety of the road environment
- To ensure that road safety is a priority in the planning and management of land use
- To develop widespread community support for the improvement of road safety within the Great Lakes Local Government Area
- To monitor and report on the plan

Information collected from different sources has been analysed and grouped under the following –

1. Safer people
2. Safer roads
3. Safer vehicles
4. Land use and transport planning
5. Community based action
6. Co-ordination and monitoring

Under each of these headings; objectives, strategies and responsibilities have been identified and outlined in the following table. Actions and time frames for the implementation of each strategy are to be detailed in the Road Safety Officer's Annual Action Plan.

1. Safer People

Objective	Strategy	Responsibility
<p>To improve road safety through awareness, attitude and behavioural change</p>	<p>Driver behaviour</p>	
	<p><i>Speeding</i></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with police in targeting speed problem areas. 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing promotion of appropriate speed for particular conditions (rain, storm events and road works). 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue speed monitoring around schools through courtesy speed checks and regular rotation of traffic classifiers. 	RSO, TE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue providing speed monitoring equipment to works staff for use in road works zones. 	RSO
	<p><i>Drink/drug Driving</i></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued liaison with Liquor Accords and Police to identify drink driving behaviours and problem times/areas. 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with the Liquor Accord continue promotion of Alternate Transport options and identify whether transport improvements are required. 	RSO
	<p><i>Fatigue</i></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue supporting and promoting the use of driver reviver areas during peak periods. 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support regional education campaigns about the consequences of distraction and lack of attention when driving, specifically regarding the use of mobile devices such as phones, MP3 players, GPS units. 	RSO
	<p><i>School Road Safety</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue community education regarding 40km/hr zones around schools. 	RSO	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to schools on road safety. (<i>RTA Move ahead with Street Sense. Limitations of children in the road environment</i>). 	RSO	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with police and school P&C committees with targeting black spot areas around schools. 	RSO	
<p>Road Users</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate the concept of “Sharing the Road” and increase awareness and consideration of all road user groups to address and reduce conflict 	RSO	

	between users.	
	<i>Pedestrians*</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and identify pedestrian black spot areas (specifically around beaches, parks and playgrounds) 	TE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate methods of improving pedestrian safety at pedestrian black spots 	TE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the high risk pedestrian groups and develop an education campaign regarding the dangers posed. 	RSO
	<i>*includes motorised wheelchair/scooter users</i>	
	<i>Parents and Children</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate levels of child restraint use • Develop communication strategy to coincide with possible restraint legislation changes. 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of key road safety messages for parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Choose Right Buckle Right ○ Never leave children alone ○ Helmet wearing, driveway safety 	RSO
	<i>School Safety</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address key road safety issues around schools such as illegal parking, speed, inadequate supervision of children, and use of crossings. 	RSO
	<i>Pedal cyclists</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work directly with cyclist groups to implement safety and education strategies aimed at both cyclists and motorists 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public awareness of existing and new cycle ways in support of Council's cycleway construction program 	TE
	<i>Young driver education</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to deliver 'Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers' Scheme workshops for supervisors of learner drivers 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support educational programs for young drivers 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote road safety directly through the school curriculum in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training as required. 	RSO
	<i>Visitors</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute all road safety education materials through local tourism and accommodation 	RSO

	<p>providers and investigate joint promotional opportunities.</p> <p><i>Police co-operation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in co-operation with police on road safety programs whenever applicable. 	TE, RSO
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2. Safer Roads

Objective	Strategy	Responsibility
To improve the safety of the road environment	<i>Road Conditions</i>	RSO,TE, GWM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify black spots to ascertain the critical issues with regard to these areas 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek funding and implement solutions for black spots 	RSO,TE, GWM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate if road conditions are an issue within black spot areas and possible solutions to this. 	TE, GWM

3. Safer Vehicles

Objective	Strategy	Responsibility
To provide information to car buyers in support of vehicle safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When appropriate promote ANCAP safety rating scheme to car buyers and council fleet services. 	RSO

4. Land use and transport planning

Objective	Strategy	Responsibility
To ensure that road safety is a priority in the planning and management of land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote the issue of road safety in the assessment of zoning Development Control Plans (DCP's) and development applications 	TAC, Planning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate parking black spots and the provision of parking 	TE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote safe use of buses and bus stops 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure by policy and procedures the integration of road safety issues with Council traffic and transport strategies. 	TE, RSO

4. Community based action

Objective	Strategy	Responsibility
To develop widespread community support for the improvement of road safety within the Great Lakes LGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Council's webpage with road safety issues and project updates 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate getting an article into the local newspapers on a regular basis highlighting road safety issues and educating the public. 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the most efficient way of educating the local community regarding road safety issues 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with local organisations wherever possible to promote road safety 	RSO

5. Co-ordination and monitoring

Objective	Strategy	Responsibility
To monitor and report on the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue involving key stakeholders with the implementation of the strategy 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with the Traffic Advisory committee in addressing local road safety issues 	RSO, TE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an annual review of the Action Plan with key stakeholders 	RSO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the Road Safety Strategic Plan as part of Council's Management Plan Review 	RSO

Key:

RSO Road Safety Officer

TE Traffic Engineer

GWM General Works Manager

Planning Town Planners and Development Assessment Officers

TAC Traffic Advisory Committee

Reference List

ABS (2006) *Great Lakes Community Profile*

NSW Centre for Road Safety and RTA (2008) *Speeding: the facts* brochure – September 2008

RTA (2007) *Choose Right Buckle Right* brochure - December 2007

Young, K. Reagan, M and Hammer, M. (2003) *Driver Distraction: A review of the literature Report No. 206 November 2003* Monash University Accident Research Centre

Youthsafe (2009) *Review of the literature research on the impact of supervised driving hours and passenger restrictions on parents and young people.* Youthsafe January 2009.