

May 2015

EastLink

Targeting the 'invincibles': Delivering road safety messages to young people

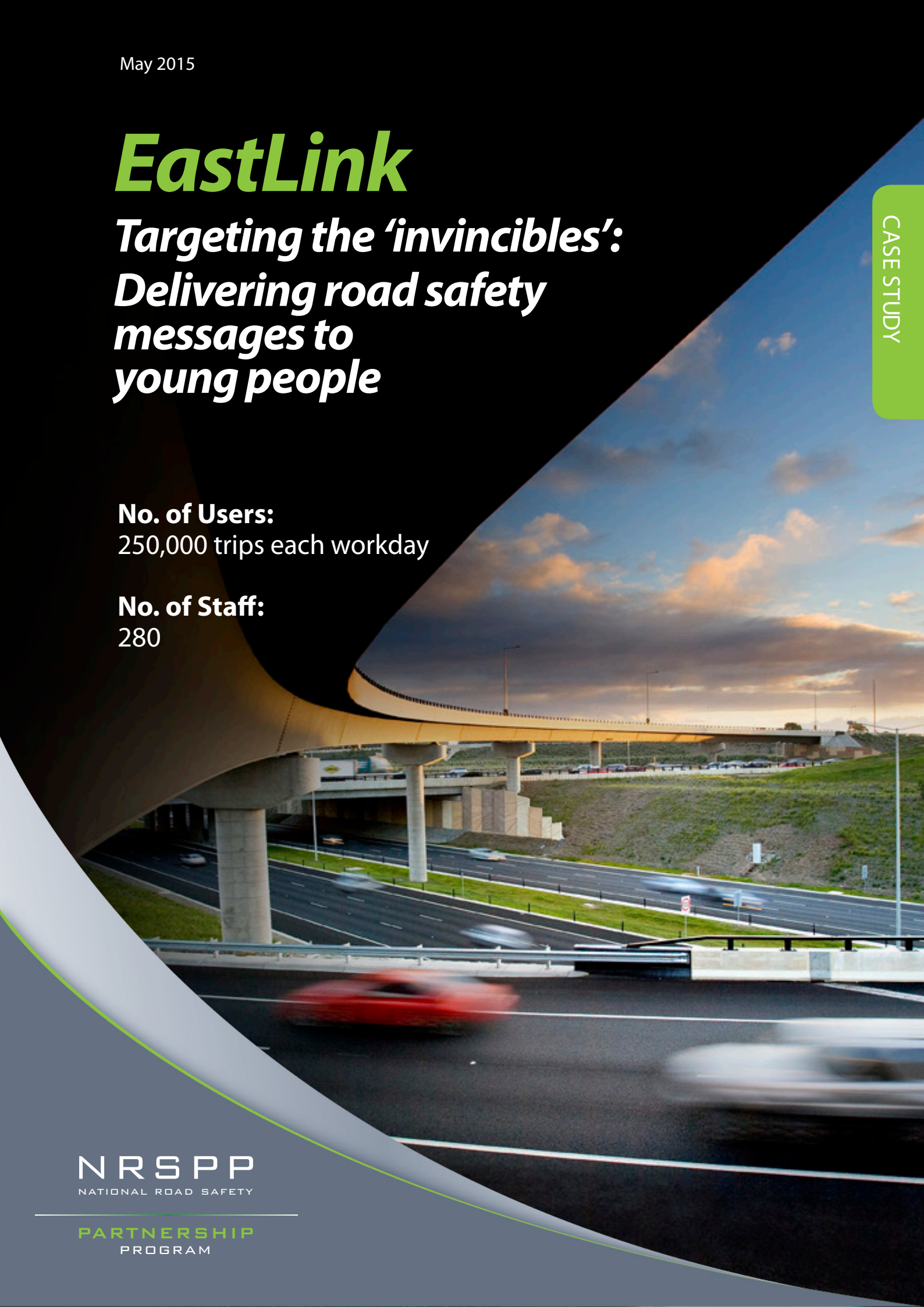
No. of Users:
250,000 trips each workday

No. of Staff:
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CASE STUDY

NRSP
NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM



Organisation: EastLink
No. of Staff: 280
No. of Users: 250,000 trips each workday



EastLink
Time better spent.

Case Study:

Connecting with clubs, EastLink delivers the road safety messages through sport

Key Outcomes:

- Working with football and other sporting clubs is effective in reaching the 18-25 age group, who regard themselves as invincible but are over-represented in road trauma
- Tailoring content to the age group and an environment that does not reflect a school situation increases engagement of a young audience
- A collaborative approach extends the reach of the road safety message through pooling resources of partner groups
- Peer discussion and interactive activities can encourage young road users to make better driving decisions and build awareness of road safety
- Celebrity ambassadors, particularly sports stars, are key influences on young people's behaviour

Synopsis:

A partnership approach between road operator EastLink and the football community has resulted in increased knowledge and awareness about road safety among thousands of local young people, who often see themselves as 'bullet proof' and can be difficult to engage with road safety messages.

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Company Overview

ConnectEast is the owner and operator of EastLink, Melbourne's second fully-electronic tollway. Australia's largest road development to date, EastLink comprises 39km of freeway-standard road connecting the city's eastern and south-eastern suburbs. There are an average 250,000 trips on EastLink every workday, with more than 300 million trips completed since opening in June 2008. The EastLink project also delivered 35km of bicycle and walking paths for local residents.

ConnectEast employs about 280 employees in its road and tolling operations.

Road Safety Focus

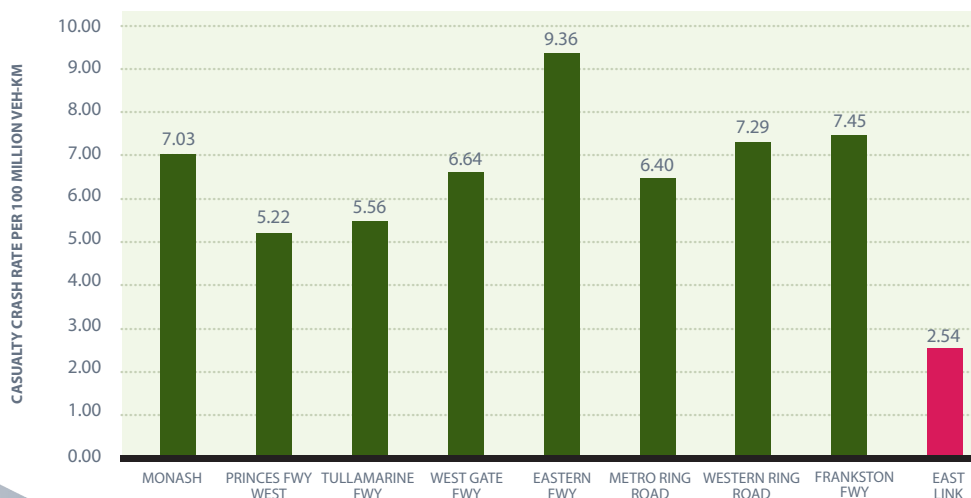
As a road operator, understanding and implementing a Safe Systems approach to road safety is an integral component of ConnectEast's business, therefore the integration and safety benefits of safe roads and roadside, safe speed and safe user is fundamental to the company. While it can't control the user's vehicle selection (safe vehicles) it can influence the other three core elements. EastLink is one of Australia's safest roads, with about one third of the rate of accidents resulting in injury experienced on comparable freeways in Victoria.

Road safety is a compelling issue in Melbourne's outer-east and south-east, particularly for young drivers, who are at greatest risk of experiencing road trauma. In 2008, 40 per cent of people killed on Victorian roads were under the age of 30 and, in addition, four of the top seven municipalities for road deaths in Victoria were located in the east and south-east of Melbourne.

Those statistics, combined with ConnectEast's desire to be a "good neighbour" in the communities in which it operates, resulted in the company taking a proactive approach to road safety.

Casualty Crash Rates

Metropolitan Freeways, including EastLink 2009 to 2010



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Enough is Enough

In the same year EastLink began operation, ConnectEast teamed up with the Mornington Peninsula Nepean Football League (MPNFL) to address road safety concerns in the region.

The league, which has nearly 4,000 footballers and netballers competing each season, had decided 'enough was enough'. Several clubs were reporting that some members were engaging in dangerous driving practices, resulting in near accidents, and in August 2008 one club lost its Reserves captain in a car accident, the eleventh road casualty that year in the region.

With the help of the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) seed funding, the league formed a partnership with RoadSafe and the RACV 'free 2 Go' program to deliver the road safety message to its young footballers and netballers. ConnectEast agreed to fund years two and three of the program, launching the MPNFL EastLink Road Safety Program.

The program aimed to hold compulsory young driver education sessions in sporting clubrooms after training. Content was tailored to the age group, and the environment was deliberately chosen to be away from a classroom and not have teachers or others lecturing young drivers. Instead, through peer discussion and interactive activities, they were encouraged to make better driving decisions.

The program was delivered to about 12,000 MPNFL players and officials over four years.

Football club environments are an ideal setting to reach large groups of the demographic most at risk on the roads, males in the 18-25 age bracket.

From Little Things

Building on that initial partnership, ConnectEast then approached the Eastern Football League (EFL) in 2009 to expand its road safety efforts broadly in line with the geographic coverage of EastLink.

The EFL is the largest Australian Rules football competition in the country in terms of numbers of players participating each weekend. The EastLink EFL RoadSafe Program is delivered to players and officials, providing them with the information and knowledge to make good road safety decisions and become leaders in positive decision making.

The program highlights the consequences of making poor decisions on and off the road, introduces positive and useful information to first-time drivers about owning a car, and talks about acting responsibly regarding drinking alcohol and driving.



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Towards Big Things in 2015 and beyond

The EastLink EFL RoadSafe Program was reconfigured in 2014 with METEC Driving School introduced as a content partner. The program delivers an interactive program featuring a classroom session and dual control instructor managed cars to 160 total attendees aged 18 or under. The METEC program was structured with 30 minutes in the classroom covering program objectives, road rules, and the safe operation of a vehicle. Students then proceed to the dual control instructor managed cars. They have approximately 2 hours in the car, which is split into two sessions for each student to ensure they gain the maximum benefit from their driving practice.

The in-car sessions are carefully structured to ensure students' progress in a realistic and positive manner through start, steer and stop to more complex practices within the student's capabilities. The program was extremely well received by the students and football clubs and is being delivered to the remaining 30 EFL clubs over the next three years.



Connecting With Clubs

The EastLink Road Safety Program continues to deliver a road safety program that educates young

football players on, and raises awareness of, road safety. While football leagues and their clubs exist to organise football games, they are not immune from social issues that face local communities, such as road trauma. However, football club environments are an ideal setting to reach large groups of the demographic most at risk on the roads, males in the 18-25 age bracket.

Club involvement in the road safety program is a condition of being part of the league, and league administration coordinates delivery of the program to clubs. A key feature is a multi-phase approach where each club receives one phase annually, ensuring the message is not repeated to the same audience.

The program is also promoted to league participants via social media, website stories and in person at the season launch, and a road safety round features daily road safety-related content and a minute's silence before every game in the under-19s.

Program Components

Looking After Our Mates

Players in the older age bracket (over 18) participate in the Looking After Our Mates program, which emphasises choosing safe road user behaviours as an example to others in the community. This program provides general information about driving, alcohol and good decision making, centred on the 'one poor choice can change your life forever' theme.

Historical Program Components

RACV free2Go

The RACV's free2Go program was delivered to the audience aged 16 to 28, introducing useful information for first-time drivers, such as how to buy and register a car, and positive things associated with driving. It is aimed at young drivers, particularly those who have graduated, or are about to graduate, from 'P plates'. The program also offered either free or discounted Emergency Roadside Assist membership to participants.

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Get Your Head in The Game

After a training session, program presenters used a professionally produced DVD featuring AFL players from program partner Hawthorn to deliver road safety messages focussed on tunnel safety, distracted drivers, vehicle safety and the benefits of choosing safer cars, the importance of insurance, and how players and clubs can influence decision making on the roads.

The DVD featured EastLink CCTV footage to demonstrate idiotic driver behaviour on the motorway. The combination of entertaining yet educational EastLink footage and high profile sporting heroes ensured program participants are engaged with the road safety message.

Simulated Driving Awareness

After discussions with road safety experts, including police and other emergency services, it was decided that the consequences of irresponsible driving habits needed to be demonstrated to young people. The Safety Sense Simulated Driving Awareness Program was developed to help the 16-29 age group understand they are not 'bullet proof'.

Through using a high-tech driving simulator, the Safety Sense program revealed in a practical manner how easy it is to have a serious crash as a result of driver error. As part of the program, the Australian Drug Foundation worked with clubs to develop safe transport strategies to reduce the risks of drink-driving.

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It's a RAP: Don't Drive Like a Demon

The Road Awareness Program (RAP) was a hard-hitting insight into the reality of a road crash delivered by rescue-accredited firefighters or SES officers, the very people that attend a crash scene and know first-hand the devastation caused.

Beginning with a short DVD of a "Car Cut", demonstrating how the Jaws of Life are used to free someone who is trapped in a vehicle, the information presented includes the process of a rescue, time constraints, and patient stabilisation. A second DVD was shown about a group of teenagers involved in a fatal collision after a party. Speed, alcohol and peer pressure contributed to the death of a mate and left another with brain injury; and he talks about how this has changed his life. The flow-on effect of a single crash is discussed, looking at the impact on road users, emergency services, hospital staff, police, family and friends.

'Don't Drive Like a Demon' used five Melbourne Football Club players as Road Safety Program Ambassadors to deliver the road safety message to young footballers.

Leveraging the local league's links to Melbourne, both the 'Demon' and RAP initiatives were key features of the initial MPNFL EastLink Road Safety Program that ran for four years.



PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



Ambassadors Key Influences

Celebrity ambassadors are recognised as important influences on adolescent behaviour. Recognising that AFL players are required to dedicate a set number of hours to community activities, the EastLink Road Safety Program leveraged the influence of sports stars with links to the local area to deliver the road safety message.

For example, Hawthorn players Sam Mitchell and Liam Shiels were recruited from EFL clubs and the Hawks' administrative facility is based in Melbourne's south-east, just off the Wellington Road exit of EastLink. These connections resulted in Hawthorn players appearing in the 'Get Your Head In The Game' DVD.

Previously, after the Melbourne Football Club commenced training locally, the Mornington league approached the Demons to support the road safety program. In 2010, for example, Melbourne appointed five AFL players as Road Safety Ambassadors, including number one draft pick Tom Scully and experienced midfielder Nathan Jones, who had both played junior football locally.

Partnerships Drive Program

ConnectEast's partnership approach to road safety has been a key driver in delivering the road safety message to thousands of young people across Melbourne's south-east since 2008, and contributes to the expansion and continued longevity of the program.

EastLink Road Safety Program partners have included, for example, ConnectEast, the Eastern and Mornington Peninsula & Nepean Football Leagues, RoadSafe, RACV free2Go, Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, Safety Sense, local councils and the Hawthorn and Melbourne Football Clubs.

This collaborative approach recognises that different organisations can bring different skill sets and resources in delivering community programs. Each organisation has finite resources but pooling those resources has created, as well as extended the reach and impact of, a highly regarded road safety program.

The EastLink Road Safety Program shows what can be achieved when levels of government, the private sector and key community organisations work together on this important issue.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Club Perspective

Feedback from clubs participating in the EastLink Road Safety Program demonstrates that the program's success in reaching a typically hard-to-engage audience is built on its tailored delivery.

Participants are not lectured to, although that is what they often expect. Content is targeted specifically for the age group by high-quality presenters who are skilled in engaging the audience.

Often, participants themselves have experienced road safety-related issues, such as losing their licence, or been touched in some way by road trauma, making them more receptive to road safety messages.

Another attraction for clubs is the program delivers lessons that are beyond football – focusing on life lessons for young men who are often removed from the consequences of the decisions they make.

On The Mark

Such non-football programs were a major factor in Park Orchards Football Club choosing to join the Eastern Football League competition when it fielded its first senior team in 2012.

More than 100 of the club's players and officials have participated in the EastLink Road Safety Program. The club's hierarchy has been impressed with how content is tailored for each phase to make it highly relevant to the age group, and the skill of the presenters to interact with and engage the audience with the message.

Feedback from players and officials confirmed that the message resonated with them, and that they could see tremendous value in being part of the program. Supporters and parents are also positive about the club's participation in the road safety program and that young footballers are being taught lessons outside of football, treating young people as a 'whole person' rather than simply a footballer.

Sometimes with a young group it can be hard to harness their attention and participation. The subject matter resonates with them and the way it is presented really engages the players with the message. I was very impressed.

- Stephen Harrington, Park Orchards Football Club president

