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# UnitingCare Queensland

**Cutting accidents  
and reducing  
insurance premiums**

**Fleet Size:** 2,200

**Vehicle Type:** 80% passenger cars;  
20% buses, people movers and trucks

CASE STUDY



BlueCare

**NRSP**  
NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

**PARTNERSHIP**  
PROGRAM

**Organisation:** Blue Care  
**Fleet Size:** 1,550+  
**Staff and Volunteers:** 10,000



### Case Study:

## Road safety focus puts Blue Care in the black

by Mark Stephens, Uniting Care Queensland Fleet Operations Manager

### Key Outcomes:

- 3,400 staff and volunteers have attended 250 driver safety workshops since 2009
- Tailored training programs for bus and truck fleet drivers and targeted training of identified at-risk drivers are valuable road safety initiatives
- Blue Care's insurance premium reduced by 3% in 2011-12, and was stable the previous year when most fleets increased 10%. The lower fleet premium has stabilised and is expected to decrease after the 2014-15 insurance year
- At-fault crashes decreased 10% and fail-to-give-way accidents decreased 35% in three years, with Blue Care achieving an at-fault average of 136 claims a year
- More than 50% improvement in infringement rates, and severity of infringements has also decreased
- Marked improvement in the condition of vehicles presented for sale
- Sustained funding for fleet road safety program through savings in vehicle purchases and insurance premiums has ensured management support
- Impressive results have shown value of road and vehicle safety program and built strong and continuing safety culture.

### Synopsis:

Making vehicle and road safety a central focus of fleet management has delivered major savings in insurance premiums and significant reductions in accidents for UnitingCare. An inspired funding model guaranteed management support, and impressive results have helped promote a strong and productive safety culture.

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### **About UnitingCare**

UnitingCare is one of Australia's largest not-for-profit aged care providers with a diverse range of community and residential care services that engage with most special needs groups, specialised community social and health agencies, and the acute health care sector. UnitingCare Queensland services large geographic regions in metropolitan, regional and remote Queensland, northern New South Wales and is expanding into the Northern Territory.

Blue Care is UnitingCare's service group, operating 4,240 residential aged care beds and providing the equivalent of 1.5 million days of care each year. Blue Care also delivers more than 3 million occasions of service annually for community clients in their homes or in its community centres.

### **Making Safety a Core Function**

This case study shows how UnitingCare moved fleet safety from an era where there was no training and minimal focus on crash frequency and driver risk analysis to making fleet safety a core function of the Fleet Management Unit.

It outlines how UnitingCare reduced crash rates through comprehensive risk analysis, driver education, thoughtful vehicle selection, and developing industry partnerships to achieve the desired outcomes.

The UnitingCare fleet road safety program includes:

- In-house Driver Safety Awareness training sessions;
- Road safety and eco driving e-learning program;
- Driver evaluations and rectification interventions;
- Non-conformance training and assessment packages;
- Identifying efficient and inefficient vehicle operations;
- Frequent communication through a range of mediums; and
- Promoting fleet safety and sustainability.



## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### Fleet Growth

UnitingCare's Blue Care has been delivering community nursing services since 1953. During the early days, community nurses used public transport to travel to clients' homes. Since then, Uniting Care's fleet has grown to more than 1,500 vehicles that travel 32 million kilometres each year. This includes some staff using their own vehicles.

Before 2005, vehicles were managed at a local level using a spreadsheet or simple database. From 2005, all vehicle management was centralised on an outsourced fleet management database with the physical management split between a contracted fleet management company and the Uniting Care Fleet Unit of four full-time staff.

At the start of 2012, UnitingCare Queensland consolidated the UnitingCare community fleet (formerly Lifeline) of 550 vehicles along with the UnitingCare managed fleet, bringing the total fleet under management to more than 2,200. The fleet will continue to grow as demand for more community services increases.

**Note:** Statistics provided in this case study are based on the Blue Care fleet of 1,550 vehicles.



### Driving Motivation

Before 2008, UnitingCare did not provide a coordinated staff education program in road safety or have a risk analysis process to identify poor driving and potential driver or vehicle risks.

From the day UnitingCare commenced until 2005, there was very little data that could be used to analyse and determine where risks existed to put in place risk mitigation interventions. The data that was available indicated a high number of at-fault crashes. The move to smaller cars went some way to reducing the number of crashes, especially reversing crashes.

**...the high cost of a road accident, which can be 20 times that of the physical damage to the vehicle.**

Several significant issues have highlighted the importance of fleet vehicle and road safety for modern fleets. Driven by legislated changes in Europe, Australia has recognised that duty of care compliance encompasses all aspects of working life and should include every aspect of fleet operations, from the purchase and operation of fleet vehicles to staff training in their duty of care to other road users and pedestrians.

Additional financial motivators to develop and implement a fleet road safety campaign include:

- the high cost of a road accident, which can be 20 times that of the physical damage to the vehicle;
- escalating insurance premiums as insurers recognise the higher risk of insuring fleet vehicles; and
- potential negative impact on organisational reputation if road safety programs are not implemented.



## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### **Executive and Management Support**

Any attempt at change relies on the support of the executive team and line managers. In the case of UnitingCare's road safety program, the first step in gaining executive support was relatively easy as the program aligned with one of UnitingCare's principle values: to value staff and volunteers. Integral to gaining this support was that the program would be funded out of rebates from vehicle purchases and insurance premiums. Committing these funds and removing the financial burden from the cost centres' operational budgets guaranteed management support.

Ongoing support has been just as important as the Fleet Management Unit introduces new resources and tools to compliment the program and maintain the focus on road safety.

***Integral to gaining this support was that the program would be funded out of rebates from vehicle purchases and insurance premiums.***

### **UnitingCare Program**

Existing programs that are either in place or are nearing completion include:

- In-house Driver Safety Awareness training sessions;
- E-learning program aimed at assessing the skills of new staff and as a refresher for existing staff, especially those in remote areas and as an intervention for staff identified through data analysis or a traffic infringement;
- The program addresses key elements of the national workplace safety harmonisation legislation;
- Driver evaluations and rectification interventions;
- Non-conformance training and assessment packages. Non-conformance includes traffic infringements, crashes, confirmed complaints from other drivers or passengers, and inefficient driving as a result of data analysis;
- Data analysis of all elements of fleet operations to identify efficient and inefficient vehicle operations and from the data program driver interventions and procurement policy; and
- Frequent communication through a range of mediums promoting fleet safety and sustainability. Methods include internal newspaper, magazine, email, poster campaigns, driver handbooks and staff meetings.



**SLOW DOWN. MONITOR YOUR SPEED.  
PEOPLE ARE DEPENDING ON YOU.**

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### ***Driver Safety Campaign***

A road and vehicle safety program was designed and delivered in consultation with internal stakeholders and peak bodies, ensuring acceptance by staff and embedding in organisational culture from the top level of management to drivers at the coalface. It became obvious that the acceptability of and compliance with the program would be more likely if key external partners were associated with it. To add credibility to the program, external collaborators were selected because they were icons that UnitingCare drivers recognised and respected for their contribution to driver safety.

Both CARRSQ and the RACQ have had long relationships with UnitingCare and were obvious partners in designing, developing and implementing the program. CARRSQ's involvement started as a research program with Australian Research Council funding in 2006. This research program contributed to the first interventions with CARRSQ providing technical assistance in the development of slogans and the review of resources during program development.

The RACQ has for many years provided roadside assistance to UnitingCare. UnitingCare uses several RACQ services to develop and review road safety and operation of fleet vehicles. The RACQ road safety education unit has been pivotal in providing technical support to develop internal education resources and in delivering education sessions.

Since 2009, more than 3,400 UnitingCare staff and volunteers have attended two hour driver safety awareness sessions, with more than 500 hours of driver safety sessions being delivered across UnitingCare's metropolitan and regional centres.

The development of resources to support the education program and provide continuing reminders to staff was essential and was the first task completed before the rollout of the regional training program.



FIGURE 1

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### A Constant Reminder

With the assistance of RACQ and CARRSQ, UnitingCare's graphic designers developed a range of posters aimed at protecting the driver and reminding them of their responsibilities to their family and the public. These posters were designed from the driver view of the road reinforcing that, as drivers, people are depending on them (Figure 1).

A recent addition to the poster campaign depicts a person missing at the meal table, and outlines six road safety messages. The aim of this poster is to drive home the "Zero Harm at Work" and the "Decade of Action" messages (Figure 2). More than 2,000 posters have been distributed to UnitingCare facilities and provided to community groups to promote road safety.

Other communication and dissemination strategies include stickers and driver safety handbooks and brochures. To ensure that the road safety message was communicated to all UnitingCare staff, volunteers and their families, 20,000 copies of the road safety manual were distributed. Copies were made available for visitors to UnitingCare centres.

With all communications to drivers or managers, UnitingCare fleet staff provide a range of print material including a driver safety brochure, Federal Government-sponsored safe reversing brochure, and the Queensland Government "Be Street Smart Road Rules Refresher" pamphlet.

All these methods are aimed at ensuring the road safety message is constantly being promoted.



FIGURE 2

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### Outcomes

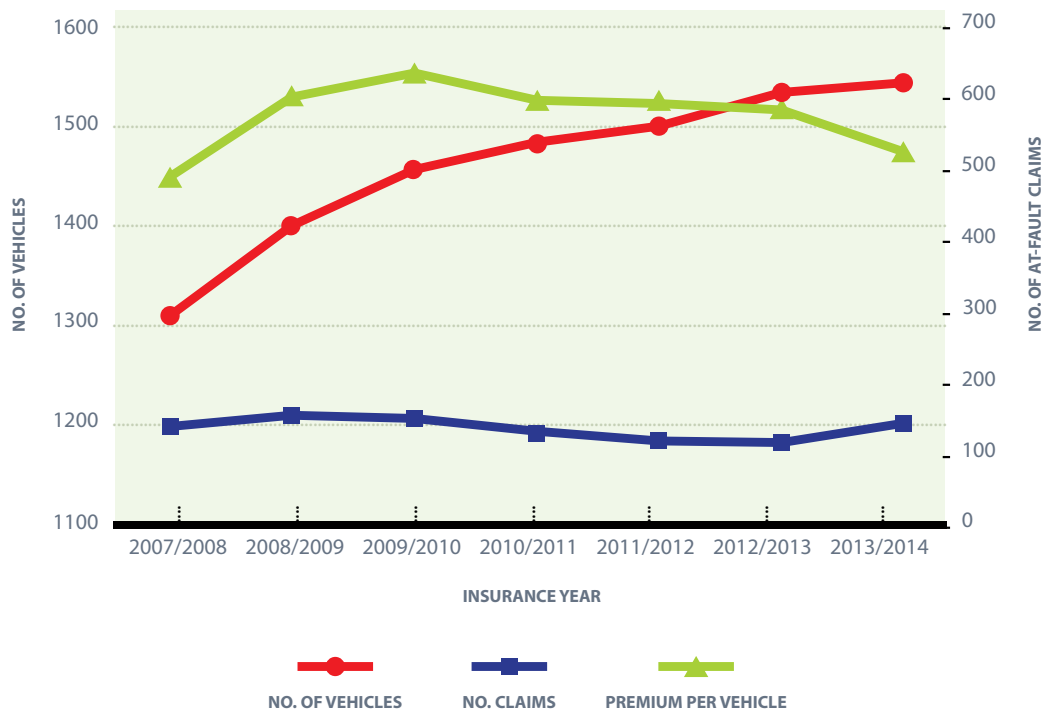
Since 2009, UnitingCare has held 250 Driver Safety Awareness workshops for more than 3,000 staff and volunteers. These workshops were conducted across the state, from the NSW border to Mossman in North Queensland and west to Mount Isa, Charleville and Cunnamulla.

The results of this training and the resources distributed are evidenced by data that shows a drop in at-fault accidents and infringements compared to growth in vehicle numbers. Figure 3 shows reductions that have been achieved against the number of vehicles in the UnitingCare fleet in recent years.

The success of the program is highlighted by:

- UnitingCare's insurance premium did not rise in the 2010-2011 insurance year, compared with most fleets rising by at least 10%;
- UnitingCare's insurance premium for 2011-2012 reduced by 3%;
- a 10% decrease in at-fault accidents between 2008 and 2011 against a 10% growth in fleet numbers;
- a significant reduction in serious crashes including rollovers; and
- building a solid foundation that will ensure a culture of road and vehicle safety within UnitingCare.

### At Fault – Vehicles vs Claims Comparison



**FIGURE 3:** INCIDENCE OF AT-FAULT CRASHES COMPARED TO FLEET GROWTH



## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### ***Implications for Future Practice***

UnitingCare believes it has achieved a level of best practice in fleet safety. However, the question of how to extend this initiative needs further consideration. This could also benefit other organisations with large numbers and varieties of vehicles to have the confidence to provide best practice initiatives in fleet safety and address their duty of care.

To achieve these outcome all fleets need to address such factors as:

- Provide drivers with all current knowledge in road and vehicle safety as well as any traffic regulation changes;
- Multimedia education strategies that include print materials, e-learning and structured training sessions;
- Comprehensive data collection on all facets of vehicle operation that will enable the analysis and identification of 'at risk' drivers or centres of operation;
- Intervention strategies and policies that address drivers who have at-fault crashes, traffic infringements or who have been identified as inefficient drivers;
- Use of data analysis to determine the effectiveness of interventions to improve vehicle operations and driver safety, e.g. training, HR intervention;

- Where possible, the use of GPRS technology as an additional means of ensuring policy compliance and providing data to improve vehicle and driver optimisation and safety;
- Introduction of near-miss reporting on a "no consequence" basis that ensures staff confidence in actions to reduce risks;
- Procurement policies for the selection of safe and sustainable vehicles that will lead to reductions in vehicle incidents, carbon emissions and improvements in vehicle operating costs; and
- Organisational policies and procedures that provide clear direction on the operation of vehicles.

### ***Environmental Fleet Sustainability***

Fleets have entered a new phase with the introduction of the carbon tax and, in the case of some of the larger fleets, the introduction of mandatory reporting and obligations to reduce emissions under the Energy Efficiency Opportunities (EEO) program.

This new obligation presents an opportunity for fleet managers to use sustainability principles to not only reduce carbon emissions but, through initiating environmentally sustainable driving techniques, further reduce the risk of road crashes and reduce the operational costs associated with running the fleet.

UnitingCare has now incorporated fuel efficient driving into its program with the introduction of e-learning and promotional campaigns. Development of new analysis tools will also provide fleet staff with the ability to focus on vehicle performance in identifying poor driving patterns.

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### ***The Road Ahead***

UnitingCare is committed to furthering the development of new initiatives that add value to current strategies. The future direction in road safety will be exciting and challenging as UnitingCare looks to enhance the use of data, introduce new technologies, and develop new training methods and policies to further reduce the incidence of road crashes.

The lessons learned in the delivery of this road safety program may inform similar organisations. Through continued engagement and input of internal and external stakeholders, UnitingCare will continue to take a leadership role in the delivery of road safety education to its staff, the community and in support of other fleets that may require assistance from time to time.

In addition, Uniting Care is committed to ensuring the road safety message is delivered not just to drivers of UnitingCare vehicles but also to Grey Fleet drivers, all staff and members of the community.

Uniting Care is also committed to the Closing The Gap program for Indigenous communities. As part of this commitment, the UnitingCare Fleet Unit is providing no-fee fleet safety education and resources to Indigenous groups when trainers are visiting regional areas.

***UnitingCare will continue to take a leadership role in the delivery of road safety education to its staff, the community and in support of other fleets.***

### ***Case Study Author***

Mark Stephens has been UnitingCare's Fleet Operations Manager since 2005 after joining the organisation in the mid-1990s. Before that, Mark worked for 15 years in local government as a diesel fitter, giving him a thorough understanding of the daily challenges fleet drivers face. Mark's role has seen him develop fleet safety, fleet management and environmental fleet practices for UnitingCare Queensland as well as a lead for other UnitingCare agencies nationally and the fleet management sector.

