



The Train Outreach Project: an innovative approach to drug and alcohol issues, young people and trains

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1 Introduction

This paper provides a description of an innovative pilot project that has been designed as one positive response to the problem of alcohol and drug affected passengers on suburban trains. This paper will begin with a description the problem context, and will then describe the project. After this there will be discussion of the policy context, the goals and purposes of different stakeholders, and the constraints that influenced the design and implementation of the project. The paper will describe some incidents that have occurred so far, and how the Transit Officers and Drug ARM WA team co-ordinated their response to achieve good results for both organisations. The paper will conclude with a discussion of how the project will be evaluated and a brief discussion of some of the evaluation problems.

2 Problem context

The problems addressed by this project concern how best to respond to issues that arise from suburban train use by intoxicated passengers, and in particular intoxicated young people. Passengers who are intoxicated are more likely than sober passengers to become aggressive towards other passengers and to Transit Officers and may harass other passengers and Transit Officers through either threats or unwanted interaction. This occurs because alcohol especially, and some other drugs, reduces interpersonal sensitivity and personal inhibition. Increased aggression and reduced inhibition of intoxicated passengers causes problems for public transport systems worldwide because it increases risk of conflict with other passengers and with Transit Officers and decreases perception of passenger safety, which is important to the promotion of public transport usage. Unmanaged aggressive or nuisance behaviour by intoxicated passengers reduces the willingness of other passengers to use public transport and increases job stress for Transit Officers. At the same time, the use of public transport, instead of driving, is promoted to intoxicated passengers on grounds of safety to road users. Public Transport employees have a duty of care for all passengers who are not able to take care of themselves, whether through intoxication or for other reasons. The duty of care requirements are more stringent for young people under 18 years old than adults because they are legally minors and considered to be in need of additional protection. There is on-going difficulty in recruitment of Transit Officers, at least in part because of unpleasantness and difficulty posed by management of intoxicated passengers, and role conflicts inherent in their work.

3 The project

The Train Outreach Project was developed through collaboration between the Public Transport Authority (PTA) and Drug ARM WA (Drug ARM). Before the project began, a Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up between the PTA and Drug ARM. The Office of Crime Prevention has provided financial support to trial the usefulness and effectiveness of the project as a crime prevention initiative. The need for the project arose from the findings of passenger surveys, including a survey of young people who used

trains on the Armadale line, (Cooper, Love, Affleck, & Donovan, 2007) which identified that some young people were particularly afraid of intoxicated passengers.

The Train Outreach Project provides an outreach service to contact young people who are intoxicated, and to offer informal counselling and practical help. The methods used in the project are based upon a well-tested approach developed for the Drug ARM WA 'Street Van Program' that Drug ARM has operated in various locations, over a period of fifteen years, in response to perceived need. The focus of both the Train Outreach Project and the Street Van Program is to identify, assist and refer young people, aged between 10 and 24 years, who are involved in substance abuse or at risk of involvement in substance abuse, and to help them achieve a healthier drug-free lifestyle. The Train Outreach Project will operate in a similar way to the Street Van Program except that:

- The Train Outreach youth worker and volunteers operate on PTA property rather than public space, specifically on the Armadale line between Cannington and Armadale.
- The team will not offer food or drink

The Drug ARM team travel on trains on the Armadale line between Armadale and Cannington on one evening each weekend (either Friday or Saturday) between 8pm and about 1am. The Drug ARM team wear t-shirts to identify their affiliation and use 'detached youth work' methods to establish contact with young people, and sometimes with parents. The Drug ARM team consists of two paid youth workers assisted by trained volunteers

3.1 Anticipated benefits

It was anticipated that the Train Outreach Project would directly benefit young people and to the PTA and indirectly benefits the wider community. It was anticipated that the Train Outreach Project would offer direct benefits to young people and to Transit Guards, by offering support in their welfare and duty of care responsibilities for intoxicated young people. It is also anticipated that the presence of Drug ARM youth workers and volunteers will provide reassurance to other members of the public and will alleviate concerns of other passengers about their own safety and the safety of intoxicated young people. It is anticipated that this will indirectly reduce the nuisance to other passengers caused by young people who are intoxicated. Ultimately, any effective intervention to reduce of substance use by young people has community benefits that extend beyond the PTA. These include firstly, reduction of crime committed to fund drug use, which lessens the pressure on the resources of police. Secondly effective intervention to prevent or reduce drug use reduces of health risks for young people, and this alleviate pressure on health services and associated emergency services. Outcomes will be achieved through positive interactions between young people and the Drug ARM youth worker and volunteers, and through appropriate emergency intervention and appropriate referrals. This project will document and evaluate direct benefits to young people and to the PTA. Where possible, indicative data will be gathered about indirect societal benefits, but it is beyond the scope of this project to systematically assess indirect benefits of the project.

3.2 Project duration

The project began on 20th April 2007, when the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the Hon Alana MacTiernan launched the pilot project. The timing of the start of the project was determined by the need to delay the start of the project until completion of evening track works on the Armadale line. The project is operating alternate Friday and Saturday nights between Cannington and Armadale. The project will operate for five months, during which time it will be evaluated for effectiveness and usefulness. The pilot project will finish at the end of September.

3.3 Training of Train Outreach Personnel

The Train Outreach team includes two youth workers on each roster. Volunteers who assist the youth workers will have completed 6 hours of training and have received a reference manual that provides information about how to respond to situations they are likely to encounter. The volunteer training provided participants with skills to help them to engage positively and effectively with young people, and included a briefing on how to operate in the context of the train. Training includes listening skills, drug and alcohol information, how to deal with clients in difficult circumstances, and the different roles of Drug ARM and PTA personnel. In addition to this training, all volunteers and youth workers have Senior First Aid Certificate.

4 Primary stakeholders

This section describes the goals and purposes of the three primary stakeholders, the general public, the PTA and Drug ARM.

4.1 PTA

The Public Transport Authority is responsible for provision of suburban trains in Perth. Transit Officers are responsible for train security, for revenue protection and for customer assistance and welfare. During the daytime, in some of these tasks, specialist staff or teams support some of these roles (for example, the revenue protection team, passenger assistants, and fare gate attendants), but in the evenings Transit Officers usually assume all roles. This can lead to role conflicts in some instances, and increases job stress (Cooper et al., 2007). This is especially relevant at night times where duty of care responsibilities for young people or people who are dangerously intoxicated require that staff remain with passenger who are vulnerable until parents, responsible adults, or sometimes until an ambulance arrives to assume responsibility for the person. For safety reasons, two Transit Officers remain with a vulnerable person. Whilst Transit Officers are doing this, they are unable to provide security on the trains. 'Duty of care' responsibilities last until other arrangements can be made to hand the person into the care of others, and the duration of this responsibility is generally not predictable and can be lengthy.

On the trains the Drug ARM team does not interfere with the duties of the Transit Officers, but they are sometimes able to offer to take over the welfare and Duty of Care role as will be illustrated in one of the incidents described later in this paper. Drug ARM are also able to provide reassurance to other passengers who may be concerned about other passengers, especially young people who are intoxicated.

The Drug ARM team are able to provide support, in a number of ways. Firstly, they can assume a duty of care for a young person. They can then arrange transport to take the young person home, transport them to the Time Out sobering up centre, wait with them whilst an ambulance arrives, or transport them to hospital, according to what is required. This enables the Transit Officers to resume their security duties on the trains. Secondly, they are able to provide an alternative source of intervention. Because the TOP team are not perceived as authority figures, some young people will co-operate with Drug ARM where they would not co-operate with Transit Officers.

4.2 Drug ARM WA

Drug ARM is an inter-denominational Christian not for profit agency that provides care, support, education and counselling to individuals and families affected by drug or alcohol abuse. As part of its services, Drug ARM provides an outreach program through its 'Street

Van Program', the Time Out sobering up centre for young people, located near the Armadale rail line, and provides support services at several locations including Dunsborough, Kalbarri and Rottneest during 'leaver's week'. The Train Outreach Project is similar to the approach used in the Street Van Program, and the methods have been adapted from those used in the Street Van Program. This section describes the Street Van Program, on which the Train Outreach Project is based. This section also describes the rationale for the service, and additional information about its policies, practices and methods.

4.2.1 Rationale and overview of Street Van Program

The Street Van Program is a unique service which operates during the night between the hours of 8pm – 2am where there are no other youth services available, and goes to the locations where the young people gather. The workers take a non-threatening approach to young people, and go where needed, rather than the young people having to seek this type of service and try to find it on their own. The Street Van Program offers young people a cup of coffee or Milo with a biscuit to encourage engagement in conversation. This may lead to informal education, assessment or counselling. After assessment of the client's needs, referrals may be made to other agencies or other services operated by Drug ARM WA. Drug ARM WA provides in-house crisis support, first aid, transport to hospitals and/or emergency accommodation. During the last 10 years, thousands of clients have received first aid, access to referrals to emergency accommodation, counselling and food through the "safe haven" provided by Drug ARM WA Inc.'s Street Van Program.

The policy of The Drug ARM WA Street Van is to go to a few different locations within their designated area throughout the night. The Van does not usually remain in one location for the entire night. Trouble "hot spots" receive particular attention at different times during the night as the Street Van team make contact with the young people. At the end of each shift, staff report on contacts, activities, interventions and any concerns. The Street Van Coordinator and other staff address the concerns raised and follow up referrals of clients to other services. At the end of each month the Street Outreach Coordinator assesses and compiles the weekly reports and formulates them into a monthly report. The Board of Management is then presented with this along with the financial, operational and procedural activities and clients concerns to assist them to determine the future development of the program.

The primary target group for the Street Van Program are disadvantaged and marginalised young people who are unemployed, truanting, lonely and alienated, as well as homeless young people. The target group includes many young people who are abusing drugs and alcohol, involved in both petty and significant criminal activity and participating in unsafe sexual practices, including those who are HIV positive and currently practising juvenile prostitution. In short, young people who have little adult supervision, who lack positive adult role models, have high risks of poor health and involvement with the justice system, and who are in moral, physical and/or emotional danger.

4.2.2 Train Outreach Project

The Train Outreach Project has a similar primary target group. The Drug ARM workers in TOP make contact with young people where they are, and provide practical and emotional support. In TOP they are not able to provide refreshments because of transport regulations.

4.3 Passengers: the travelling public

Any discussion of the travelling 'public' is difficult because passengers are not a monolithic category. Many different types of people use the evening trains and their interests do not always coincide. Friday and Saturday evening passengers includes both young and old, female and male, intoxicated and sober, workers and party goers, people making a single

journey to a destination, and people 'train hopping' to make multiple journeys throughout the evening. Passengers include sole travellers, small groups and larger groups. The PTA Transit Officers enforce standards of behaviour for the train that are intended to align with community standards so that people feel safe to travel at any time, even if they are alone. A problem occurs because different people have different ideas about where the line between acceptable and anti-social behaviour lies. Behaviour judged as normal by some passengers, may be offensive and threatening to others.

A particular difficulty arises for Transit Officers when passengers behave unusually. Intoxicated young people may behave in abnormal ways and step outside the norms of behaviour, without doing anything illegal or dangerous. This may also occur when young people suffer from some psychiatric illnesses. Transit Officers can only intervene if the behaviour is illegal, or a threat to the safety of passengers. In most instances, odd behaviour is not illegal, but other passengers may still feel disturbed or unsafe because they do not know how to anticipate what will happen next. Drug ARM WA staff are trained to be able to engage in positive conversation with intoxicated young people despite unusual conduct, and this kind of intervention reassures other passengers and reduces their feelings of apprehension.

5 Policy context

The project has the capacity to further policy objectives of a number of government departments and is comparatively inexpensive. It is anticipated that if the project is successful, at the end of the project, long-term funding will be gained from a consortium of interests, which might include some of the following government departments. These bodies are secondary stakeholders in the project because, although TOP supports some of their policy directions, the organisations are not directly involved in the management or delivery of the project. This section briefly outlines relevant the policy goals and interests of government departments that have an interest in the issues addressed by this project. The policy context is important, because once the pilot project is over, unless stable funding is found, the service will cease.

5.1 Drug and Alcohol Office

The Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO) is a statutory agency within Western Australian State Government, responsible to the Minister for Health. According to its website, DAO's remit is to take responsibility for drug and alcohol strategies and services in Western Australia (Drug and Alcohol Office, 2007). The agency has a dual role to both provide advice on alcohol and drug policy, and to provide or manage preventative and treatment services to the population of Western Australia. In addition, the agency oversees provision of professional training and research related to alcohol and drug abuse. Drug ARM WA, through the Train Outreach Project, has access to hard-to-reach young people who use drugs and alcohol at harmful levels. Drug ARM has the potential to deliver client services to minimise harm and to offer support to young people who want to reduce harmful alcohol or drug use. Drug ARM WA workers also provide informal education about drug and alcohol issues to one of DOA's primary target groups, who are difficult to engage by other convention services. Data will be provided about the numbers of times, drug or alcohol information or advice is provided and about referrals made as a result of the TOP scheme.

5.2 Office of Crime Prevention

The vision of the Office of Crime Prevention WA (OCP) is to "... to make Western Australian communities safer through targeted and coordinated crime prevention and crime reduction initiatives" (Office of Crime Prevention, 2007). The OCP works from the assumption that sustainable crime prevention must adopt a holistic and inclusive approach, which recognises the systemic economic, social and environmental factors that contribute to crime. From this position, the OCP assumes that crime reduction and prevention can only be achieved through collaboration between government agencies, and between community organisations, and seeks to support evidence-based interventions. The TOP initiative has the potential to contribute to crime reduction and prevention, both directly and indirectly. The TOP scheme directly reduces victimisation through reduction of opportunity when Drug ARM provides a duty of care for young people who are in danger, and directly reduces crime opportunities where intoxicated young people are transported directly home rather than remaining in the station environs when they leave the train. Data will be gathered in the evaluation about the numbers of times these incidents have occurred. The TOP initiative has an indirect crime reduction effect through Drug ARM's mission to support young people to reduce substance abuse and adopt a drug-free lifestyle. This is not something that can be evaluated through a short-term intervention.

5.3 Department for Communities

The recently formed Department for Communities includes the Office for Children and Youth (OCY). The OCY has identified four strategic priorities for the period 2006-2008 (Office for Children and Youth, 2007). Two of these priorities are

- Increase awareness of the harm of inappropriate alcohol consumption
- Promote positive mental and emotional health

The TOP has potential to contribute to both these strategic priorities, especially the alcohol education priority with hard-to-reach young people. The contact sheets will provide data that will indicate the numbers of conversations between young people and the TOP team about alcohol use, and will also record numbers of young people transported to the sobering up centre, and any subsequent referrals.

5.4 Department of Child Protection

The Department of Child Protection (DCP) has been formed recently to provide a stronger focus on child protection and support for 'vulnerable families'. On the DCP website the major focus of the department is to "meet[ing] the needs of vulnerable children and families", and "protection and caring for children and of supporting people at risk of crisis" (Hogben, 2007). For the purposes of this definition a 'child' is any person less than 18 years old. The TOP scheme directly contributes to the protection of young people from harm, through its ability to assume a duty of care for vulnerable young people, and through practical assistance with safe transport for young people at risk of harm. The project evaluation will collect data on numbers of contacts that included protection for a young person under the age of 18 years old.

5.5 Department of Transport and Infrastructure

The Department of Transport and Infrastructure has as its vision improvement of the quality of life for Western Australians through enhancement of economic and social networks. An important outcome for this strategy is "An accessible and safe transport system" (Department

for Planning and Infrastructure, n.d.). This priority explains why the PTA in recent years has given a high priority to improvements to active and passive safety in transport systems. The TOP scheme contributes to active safety initiatives and complements active security services provided by Transit Officers. The TOP workers provide an alternative avenue for intervention. The evaluation of the scheme will document and analyse incident reports to assess the contribution of TOP to safety on trains. If the project continues, passenger feedback should be sought through the PTA passenger surveys on the Armadale line.

6 Project evaluation

This project is a pilot project of short duration and limited scope. During the pilot project it will be possible to evaluate the feasibility of a similar project of longer duration and of larger scope. This will enable decisions to be made about whether it is worthwhile to extend the project's duration and/or expand its scope. The short duration and limited coverage of the pilot project does not provide enough duration or scope to systematically evaluate the longer term goals of the project, although it should be possible to identify where possible long-term gains are likely to accrue from the experiences in the pilot project. Therefore, two important purposes of evaluation of the pilot project are to:

- Ascertain whether TOP is feasible in practical terms, to identify problems, and to report upon whether they have been resolved
- Identify any benefits, the nature of the benefits and to identify beneficiaries

Data will be collected primarily to reflect these priorities. Feasibility data will focus upon documenting how TOP articulates with the work of Transit Officers, and problems encountered. Data will be collected to record any benefits and beneficiaries, and to analyse recorded interventions and to identify beneficiaries.

It is difficult to efficiently measure the direct effectiveness of the intervention as a crime prevention measure, because the project is small scale, short-term and has limited geographic coverage. A key goal of the project is to improve passengers' perceptions of safety, but changing people's perceptions may require lengthy intervention. Other research has shown that perception of risk can be a powerful modifier of behaviour and does not necessarily align with actual risk as objectively measured, see for example, (Brunton, Oliver, Oliver, & Lorenc, 2006). Drug ARM and PTA employees and volunteers will be asked to report to their managers or through the questionnaire, any positive or negative comments from the public about the scheme. Passenger's perceptions will not be directly measured in this evaluation, because of the cost of surveying a large enough sample to be meaningful, and because it is unlikely that significant change in perception will be achieved during the pilot project. A request will be made for questions about TOP to be included in the PTA's own passenger survey. Minutes of progress meetings between the PTA and Drug ARM WA and effectiveness and utilisation data collected by Drug ARM may also contribute useful indirect data about crime prevention.

6.1 Drug ARM Evaluation Process

Data will be collected from three sources about the utility and effectiveness of the project for Drug ARM WA in terms of their work with their target client group. The first source will be an interview with the Drug ARM WA program manager and the Transit Officer Manager. The second source will be an anonymous questionnaire to Transit Officers and TOP staff and volunteers about their perceptions of the utility and effectiveness of the Train Outreach Project, with a specific focus on the positive or negative effects of the Train Outreach Project on their own role on trains where the service is provided, and their perceptions of passenger responses to the Train Outreach Project.

The third source of data will be contact sheets and incident reports that Drug ARM currently uses to evaluate utilisation and project effectiveness data, as part of their normal internal quality management processes. Drug ARM already collects systematic data about the usage of Street Van Program services. Drug ARM will collect similar data for the Train Outreach Project. The data they collect relate to the four desired outcomes of the project for Drug ARM. Drug Arm will make this data available for the purposes of evaluation. The benefits of using an established proforma are that staff are familiar with its use, it has been tested for useability over a period of time, and it relates well to the mission of Drug ARM. Drug ARM staff will collate the data, to preserve the anonymity of clients. The Drug ARM contact sheets record data about four service outcomes important to Drug ARM's mission. These are:

1. Outcome 1: To establish contact with clients who are at risk, homeless, suffered abuse or involved in drug use.
 - a) Number of clients identified using drugs through volunteer observation or client admission.
 - b) Average age of clients identified using drugs
 - c) Number of males and females
 - d) Number and percentage of Aboriginal clients
 - e) Total number of new contacts (not previously accessed service)
 - f) Total number of established contacts (accessed service in previous three months)
 - g) Total number of old contacts (accessed service more than three months ago)
2. Outcome 2: Provide crisis support services to clients accessing the service.
 - a) Total number of clients engaged with accommodation support.
 - b) Total number of clients engaged with alcohol/drug support.
 - c) Total number of clients engaged with other support.
3. Outcome 3: Provide support and information to clients accessing the service.
 - a) Total number of clients requesting general support (e.g. discussion of issues, however no information is provided nor referral made).
 - b) Total number of clients provided with alcohol/drug health promotion and educational information.
 - c) Total number of clients provided with information regarding alcohol/drug services.
 - d) Total number of clients provided with other information (e.g. training, education).
4. Outcome 4: Provide information and referral assistance to suitable agencies. (Due to the outreach nature of this service, referrals are only recorded if the client maintains he/she will make an appointment with the suitable agency.)
 - a) Number of referrals to other services within Drug ARM WA Inc
 - b) Number of referrals to Community Drug Service teams
 - c) Number of referrals to other alcohol and drug services
 - d) Number of referrals to accommodation services
 - e) Number of referrals to any other services

Incident reports will add supplementary information about more sustained interventions by Drug ARM staff where this involves sustained contact with a single person or group, crisis intervention, or the transportation of young people to a place of safety.

To evaluate feasibility of TOP, the report will make use of:

- Data about problems or difficulties derived from questionnaires administered to Transit Officers and to Drug ARM WA staff and volunteers
- Problems reported in the minutes of the joint meetings, and any steps taken to resolve problems identified

To evaluate the benefits of the service, the report will analyse

- Interviews with the TOP manager and the Transit Guard manager
- Analysis of contact sheets to identify beneficiaries
- Analyses of incident reports to identify beneficiaries
- Data about perceptions of benefit derived from questionnaires administered to Transit Officers and to Drug ARM WA staff and volunteers

7 Interim Project outcomes

The final project evaluation has not yet been completed. Interim data indicate that the number of contact per shift is highly variable and seems to be strongly influenced by weather conditions and by factors such as whether there are special sports events or large social gatherings. A few incident reports are briefly described here to show how TOP team interventions potentially contribute to the goals of several agencies.

On the 13th July 2007, a young man and a young woman aged about 16 left the train at Cannington station at about 9.30 in the evening. The young man was very intoxicated, collapsed on the station and was unable to walk. The young people were not willing to go voluntarily with the Transit Officers, and in other circumstances the Transit Officers may have been compelled to arrest the young person if he failed to co-operate because he was a danger to himself. The couple agreed to accompany the Drug ARM team, at which point the Transit Officers carried the young man off the platform, and the Drug ARM team waited with the young people until the young man could be transported to the Drug ARM Time Out Centre (sobering up centre) in Kelmscott. The presence of the Drug ARM team meant that the Transit Officers were able to resume their duties on the train, where otherwise they might have been taken off the system for several hours whilst they processed an arrest and waited with the young person until they could be taken to hospital or other suitable place. For the young person, the presence of the Drug ARM team reduced the potential conflict, enabled the young person to be taken to an age-appropriate facility, and allowed the possibility of referral and follow up by Drug ARM services. Since the inception of TOP, PTA staff have referred young people to the Time Out Centre on occasions when the TOP team have not been on duty. Before TOP, this would not have occurred.

On another occasion, the team found a man who had collapsed and was bleeding whom they could not rouse. He appeared to be intoxicated and had been attacked or injured after a fight. The TOP team called an ambulance and the man was taken to hospital. On several occasions the TOP team have discussed drugs and alcohol with young people or with parents and have been able to offer education about harmful levels of alcohol consumption, and information about drug treatment centres. On one occasion, the team noticed an older woman who was travelling alone was being followed by a group of people including young people. The TOP team accompanied her to her car and the people who had been following her got back on the train.

8 Conclusions

The pilot project is not complete at this point, but preliminary data indicate that the project is feasible and offers benefits to a number of stakeholders including several government departments who are direct or indirect stakeholders. When the project finishes in October the evaluation will describe any barriers to implementation that have been identified and will provide an analysis of the benefits of the project for different agencies in terms of their strategic priorities.

9 References

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