

First Watch

Promoting health and safety initiatives in the resources sector

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Rio Tinto Rail Safety Community Awareness Campaign

Project Summary

Rio Tinto's rail safety campaign in the Pilbara region has gone from strength to strength since it was launched in 2007. It was driven by the concerns of the company's train drivers for children playing on and near railway tracks, and road users failing to stop at crossings.

The annual initiative comprises of a schools-based program and a community awareness campaign using advertising and media, to coincide with the National Rail Safety Awareness week in July and other rail safety events throughout the year.

Location

Twelve primary schools near crossings were identified in the Pilbara towns of Wickham, Roebourne, Karratha, Dampier, Pannawonica, Tom Price and Paraburdo.

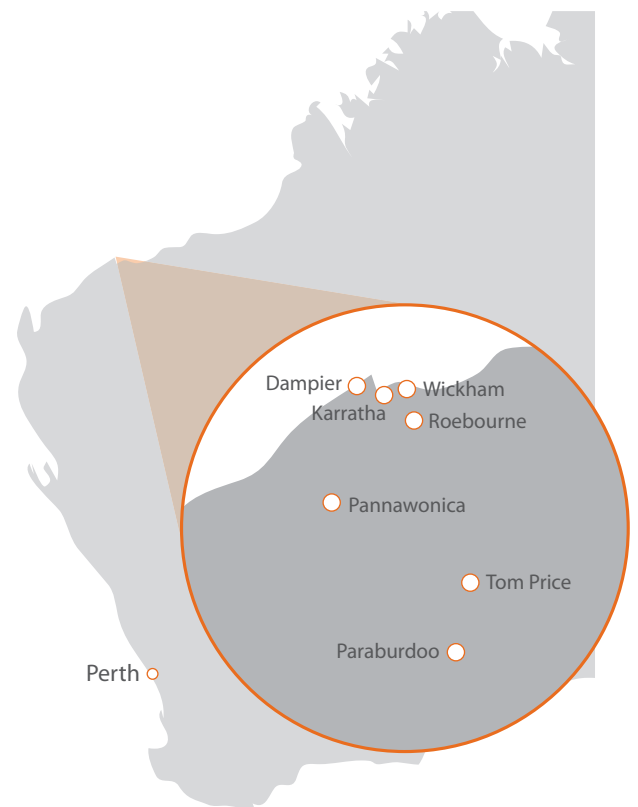
Number of employees

A team of five specialists from Rio Tinto's Railways and Communities divisions worked together to develop and implement the rail safety campaign.

Key Learning

Participation in the schools-based program has more than doubled in three years through the use of creatively packaged resources, including posters, bookmarks and a highly-successful rail safety competition offering prizes and certificates. In 2009, a record 702 primary-aged children were focused on rail safety compared to 270 in 2007 when the campaign began.

Rio Tinto



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Dampier Primary School students receive their iPods and rail safety certificates from Rio Tinto representative Michael Bailey.



The Challenge

Rio Tinto safe working superintendent Trevor Nunn said the challenge was to creatively engage the community, young and old, in rail safety education as part of a rolling national campaign. In particular, the team wanted to reach remote Aboriginal communities, as well as families who use or live near railway crossings.

Rio Tinto's iron ore trains average 2.5 kilometres in length, weigh 29,000 tonnes when fully loaded and can take up to two kilometres to stop when travelling at speeds of 75-80 kilometres an hour. The team selected the simple but effective rail safety message:

Trains can't stop but you can - please obey the signals to ensure your safety.

The Solution

Safety specialists from the Railways Division worked in collaboration with the Communities team to develop the campaign to remind adults and children of the dangers near rail crossings and deliver safety messages.

The annual education program was targeted at junior, middle and senior primary schoolchildren through a rail safety competition offering iPods to the best two entries from each school. Younger children were invited to colour in drawings of trains and crossings, while older students were asked to depict a safe way to cross a railway.

The winners were presented with their prizes at school assemblies where rail safety messages were repeated by representatives from Rio Tinto.

As well as the education program, a three-week rail safety community awareness campaign was advertised locally in newspapers and on the radio, and the overall winning entry was printed on a rail safety banner displayed at the Karratha FeNaCING and Nameless festivals.

The Results

Rio Tinto safe working superintendent Trevor Nunn said the increase in student participation over the years was sensational and he could not remember the last time a train driver reported a child near a track. "This is a simple and cost-effective campaign that we hope saves lives each year and reminds the community about safety near crossings.

"With the campaign in its fourth year in 2010, we now have teenagers learning to drive who are aware of the dangers at crossings and we hope will always put safety first."

