

Broken glass as an injury hazard in the Indigenous community of Cherbourg

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Abstract

The research to identify measures to prevent glass-sourced injury is one target of an injury prevention and safety promotion project in Cherbourg, a 1200 resident community 250 kilometres north-west of Brisbane.

Funded by Health Promotion Queensland and the Queensland Injury Prevention Council, the Cherbourg Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Project (CIPSPP) was established in 2008. Five areas were identified for action, one of which was the environment, in which there was a specific interest in broken glass litter.

Exact data on glass-sourced injury were poor as records from the public hospital, the Aboriginal Medical Service clinic or school-based laceration clinic did not specify cause or location of injury. However the volume of anecdotal evidence backed by community concerns about glass as a cause of injury has resulted in focussed activities to reduce litter and prevent injury.

The broken glass project has three principal objectives of determining the extent of the problem, devising workable strategies within the local context and assessing the outcome and impact following implementation of those strategies.

Determining the extent of the problem was supported by Photovoice, undertaken by the local school children, community survey and interview with community members, health service providers and other stakeholders. Photovoice, in which the school children captured over 100 photographs of potential injury hazards in the community, identified the principal area of interest, glass litter. Fifty three survey respondents and 20 interviewees revealed the perception of glass litter being an increasing problem which was exacerbated by a number of factors including lack of garbage collection and decline in social responsibility in particular by youth.

A number of strategies were designed and implemented that dovetail into the overall safety and injury prevention plan. A Council-driven alcohol management plan has contributed to reducing the amount of glass in the community. This has been supported by a community clean-up campaign and a resumption of a household garbage collection service. Rubbish bins have been purchased and located in high traffic areas.

Education is a key component of the strategy and a poster competition was initiated as part of the litter awareness and education campaign. Glass as the cause of injury to humans and animals, the unattractiveness of litter and the benefits of wearing shoes were the foci of the poster competition. The five winning posters were generated into an anti-litter message for the community.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

Endorsement

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	vi
1. Background.....	1
1.1 Safety concerns.....	4
2. Literature Review.....	7
2.2 Injury: Global.....	7
2.3 Injury: Australia.....	9
2.4 Injury: Queensland.....	12
2.5 Injury: Indigenous.....	13
2.6 Litter.....	15
2.7 Glass.....	16
2.8 Prevention.....	20
3. Methods.....	23
3.1 Aim.....	23
3.2 Objectives.....	23
3.3 Identifying the problem.....	24
3.4 Ethics.....	24
3.5 Governance.....	24
3.6 Observations.....	25
3.7 Community Survey.....	25
3.7.1 Incentive.....	25
3.7.2 Distribution of survey.....	26
3.8 Individual interviews.....	27
3.9 Collection of injury data.....	27
3.10 Student Survey.....	29
3.11 Student Photos (Photovoice).....	29
4. Results.....	30
4.1 General Observations.....	30
4.2 Community Survey.....	30
4.3 Individual Interviews.....	46
4.5 Cherbourg Hospital injury data.....	51
4.5.1 Age and Gender.....	51
4.5.2 Top 10 Major Injury Factors.....	52
4.6 School Survey-Year 6/7 Cherbourg Primary school.....	55
4.7 Photovoice-Cherbourg Primary School.....	56
4.8 Cherbourg School injury data.....	57
4.8.1 Age and gender.....	57
4.8.2 Monthly records of injury.....	57
4.8.3 Type of injury.....	58
4.8.4 Bodily location of injury.....	58
4.8.5 External causes of injury.....	59
4.8.6 Part or place where injury occurred.....	59
4.8.8 Activity when injured.....	61
4.8.9 Method of injury.....	62
4.8.10 Injury Factor- Glass.....	62
5. Discussion.....	64
5.1 Key findings of the study.....	64
5.2 Community Survey.....	67
5.3 Individual Interviews.....	72
5.4 School survey.....	75
5.5 Cherbourg School injury data.....	76
5.6 Hospital injury data.....	77

5.7	Photovoice.....	78
5.8	Activities implemented from recommendations from the project.....	80
6.	Conclusion	83
	List of References.....	85
	Appendix A – Consent Form.....	89
	Appendix B – Community Survey	91
	Appendix C – Map of Cherbourg in relation to Brisbane	93
	Appendix D – Town map of Cherbourg.....	94
	Appendix E – Location of Placement of Community Bins	95
	Appendix F – School Injury Data Form	96
	Appendix G – School Survey	98
	Appendix H – Presentation of Photovoice.....	99

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Action areas	4
Table 1.2	Injury prevention priorities	4
Table 1.3	Injury issues for the Cherbourg community	5
Table 3.1	Survey distribution.....	26
Table 4.1	Age of survey respondents.....	31
Table 4.2	Gender of survey respondents.....	31
Table 4.3	Residency of survey respondents.....	31
Table 4.4	Survey respondents who work in Cherbourg.....	32
Table 4.5	Respondents use of streets and footpaths.....	32
Table 4.6	Perception of litter in Cherbourg	32
Table 4.7	Occurrence of broken glass on the streets.....	33
Table 4.8	Is broken glass a hazard?	33
Table 4.9	Locations of broken glass	34
Table 4.10	Origin of broken glass.....	34
Table 4.11	Perceptions of change in the amount of broken glass.....	35
Table 4.12	Respondents cut by broken glass	35
Table 4.13	Medical treatment sought due to laceration from street glass.....	36
Table 4.14	Were shoes being worn at the time of injury?	36
Table 4.15	How often is footwear worn?.....	37
Table 4.16	Are there enough bins in Cherbourg?	37
Table 4.17	Resident perception of litter problem	38
Table 4.18	Residence cut by broken glass within Cherbourg.....	39
Table 4.19	Survey respondents and their response to being cut by glass	40
Table 4.20	Laceration from glass and the use of footwear	41
Table 4.21	Perception of litter problem and if Cherbourg has enough rubbish bins ...	42
Table 4.22	Age of survey respondents and their perception of the litter problem.....	43
Table 4.23	Age of survey respondents and their perception of the litter problem.....	44
Table 4.24	Areas in which broken glass is a hazard	44
Table 4.25	Reasons for littering	45
Table 4.26	In the past year has the problem worsened or improved, and why?	45
Table 4.27	Solutions for glass.....	46
Table 4.28	Individual interview part one	47
Table 4.29	Individual interview part two.....	48
Table 4.30	Individual interview part three.....	49
Table 4.31	Individual interview part four	50
Table 4.32	Age and gender	51
Table 4.33	Top 10 Major injury factors	53
Table 4.34	External cause of injury	54
Table 4.35	Gender of survey respondents.....	55
Table 4.36	Does Cherbourg have a litter problem?	55
Table 4.37	Is there broken glass in Cherbourg where you walk, skate, cycle or play?55	
Table 4.38	Have you ever been cut by broken glass in Cherbourg?.....	55
Table 4.39	Were you wearing shoes at the time?	56
Table 4.40	Location when cut by glass.....	56
Table 4.41	Age and gender	57
Table 4.42	Injuries per month.....	57
Table 4.43	Nature of injury.....	58
Table 4.44	Bodily location of injury	58

Table 4.45	External causes of injury.....	59
Table 4.46	Where injury occurred	60
Table 4.47	Type of place.....	60
Table 4.48	Activity when injured	61
Table 4.49	Mechanism of injury	62
Table 4.50	Glass- place of injury	63
Table 4.51	Glass- nature of injury	63
Table 4.52	Glass -activity when injured	63