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**ACTING IN THE COMMUNITY INTEREST: A SUSTAINABLE  
NGO THEATRE-IN-EDUCATION MODEL FOR DELIVERING  
CHILD SAFETY EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

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**Background** Constable Care Child Safety Foundation delivers performance-education programmes to children aged 2–13 years in primary schools and early learning centres throughout metropolitan, regional and remote Western Australia, a 2.5 million sq km area 3.5 times the size of Texas. Covering issues in child safety, crime prevention and citizenship, the organisation works with over 150 000 children each year in a joint government and community funded early intervention programme aimed at increasing knowledge and changing attitudes and behaviours. Over its 23 year history the organisation has provided theatre-in-education

programmes for over 2 million children, including children in very remote indigenous communities in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

**Purpose** Education research supports the effectiveness of theatre-in-education as a tool for teaching children about personal safety issues. Delivering protective behaviours, road safety and violence prevention interactive programmes, the organisation invests in best-practice approaches to content development, performance methodology and outcome measurement.

**Method** Constable Care's sustainable funding model mixes national, state and local government recurrent and project funding with corporate sponsorship, philanthropic donations and fee for service activity. Educational themes are determined by schools and local government partners through ongoing consultation processes, with local safety and school issues given priority. A mix of puppet theatre, drama and interactive question and answer sessions cater for younger and older learners.

**Outcome** Over time the organisation has amassed a database of teacher feedback in relation to the perceived efficacy of the programme. Data indicates that teachers view the programme as being of considerable value in raising children's awareness of safety issues. In 2011 the organisation formed a research partnership with a WA university to design and collect ongoing pre-post survey data from participant children to evaluate changes in knowledge, attitude and behavioural intent. Initial findings from this process, although still in its early stages, indicate that the programme has impact for the children involved.

**Significance** The Constable Care model demonstrates a sustainable government-community-NGO partnership that delivers effective and evaluated child safety theatre-in-education programmes responsive to changing local community safety priorities and school needs.