

## Senior's Fire Awareness & Safety Project

A report on:

# The Logan Senior's Fire Awareness & Safety Project

April 2002 – December 2002

**For:**

Logan City Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre Inc.  
&  
Queensland Fire Rescue Services  
&  
Logan Police (Volunteers in Policing)  
&  
Multicultural Affairs Queensland.

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A special thanks to the Woodridge Fire Station Officers, Tom Franks and Kevin Derges providing fire safety information and handouts to the seniors. Thanks especially for the hours they spent with our visit to the Woodridge fire station in October 2002. I can remember clearly that day, when the crew had just returned from an emergency response, still smiling and eagerly greeting our group of seniors. The seniors were all pleased with what they heard and learnt from the crew in relation to the

services that the fire brigade provides to the community.

Our deep gratitude goes to the following volunteers who spent their valuable time assisting in the delivery of the fire safety and security audits as well as the fitting of smoke alarms in client's homes.

This project could not have been completed so successfully without their help. These people were:

Miroslav Bjelajac, Cathy Murray, Wendy Northoe, Anne Stafford and Kaye Umutaua from Logan Central Police Volunteers in Policing (VIPs).

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A project of this type is only as good as the people involved. We had the best people from senior government and community as well as clients who supported the project. To our wonderful project staff and volunteers who achieved far more than we had anticipated, congratulations.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the “Senior’s Fire Awareness and Safety” project was to disseminate information to elderly people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Because of age, language barriers, cultural diversity and isolation, often fire safety messages do not get through to older people. This project promotes fire safety consciousness by providing information in a range of languages and in a manner which is sensitive to the cultural and religious beliefs of clients.

The targets to reach with the Fire Safety project, were 100 smoke alarms to be installed and 150 seniors to receive the fire safety message. Both of these targets were exceeded with 246 participants, 183 of these people being seniors. Number of smoke alarms installed was 119 (refer Statistics Pg 19).

Home visits of one hundred and four (104) senior’s houses were made by two (2) to three (3) volunteers, working a minimum of 6 to 8 hours a week. Home visits involved fire safety audits, security checks, testing and checking of existing smoke alarms

and installation of new smoke alarms as needed. Volunteers were trained in performing the above tasks. In the instance where language was a barrier (in over 60% of recipients), a Personal Care Assistant (PCA), (employees of LCMNC), who spoke the language, was coordinated to be present with the volunteers to ensure effective communication with clients.

A total of one hundred and thirty seven (137) persons in one hundred and four (104) homes received information about Fire Safety in the home. This included the use of “home safe” checklists, fire safety talks and orientation, smoke alarm functions and maintenance, proper fire reporting and development of fire escape plans.

‘Fire Safety Workshops’ were conducted to promote the message of safe practices in the home. Many of these practices are ignored as people get older whether from complacency or forgetfulness. These practices need to be effectively instilled in peoples minds. PowerPoint presentations and videos facilitated this. Given that there were barriers in reaching a large audience of culturally and linguistically diverse recipients (during workshops), the most effective way of ensuring clients were aware of fire dangers was through an actual enactment of a fire in a safe mobile Fire Kitchen.

Field trips were conducted to the nearest Fire Station, demonstrations of fire in a kitchen were held in a QFRS van across the road from LCMNC and presentations were conducted to culturally and linguistically diverse recipients, with PCA’s used as interpreters.

## OUTCOME

The Senior’s Fire Awareness Project was accepted by the culturally and linguistically diverse senior’s of Logan and their families as a valuable process of learning to protect their homes from the threat of fire.

Evidence of this was particularly apparent in the evaluation questionnaires completed by the large majority of clients. Of one hundred (100) evaluation questionnaires distributed, seventy (70) returned with positive answers.

Of the reviews conducted on all Workshop recipients, the most noticeable comment is that the visual mobile Fire Kitchen demonstration is the most effective means of instilling in people, that Fire Awareness is paramount.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT:

In July 2001, a meeting was initiated by Lynda Ford with Judy Netwon (Qld Fire and Rescue Authority) after discussions with Elias Obediente, a TAFE student on placement with Logan City Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre Inc. (LCMNC). Elias had previous experience in his home country working with the US Navel Base and the Royal Saudi Air force Base as a Fire Consultant and discussed with Lynda the needs of the ethnic community in Logan.

Judy Newton of Sustained Fire Safety (at that time a QFRS project), Debbie Taylor of Community Education and Research Unit, Lynda Ford of LCMNC and Elias Obediente sat around a table discussing fire safety in the homes of migrants. Discussions placed special emphasis on the frail aged. During this meeting the decision was made to apply for funding to assist in creating home fire and safety awareness.

To ensure this project would be given priority, Judy Newton firstly asked for support from Mr. Wayne Hartley, Chief Commissioner of Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority (QFRA) as well as providing background research and a letter of support. Lynda Ford wrote an application for funding and submitted this to Multicultural Affairs Queensland, in the Premier's Department of the Queensland Government.

In early 2002, the funding request was approved and the "Senior's Fire Safety and Awareness Project" was born. A Partnership Project was formed between LCMNC, QFRA and the Logan Police.

Elias Obediente had the fire safety knowledge required and was hired to work ten hours a week. LCMNC also discussed with Logan TAFE, the prospect of Elias working an extra 8 hours a week on student placement and this was also agreed on. The

project benefited greatly from an 18 hour per week project worker. It was decided the project would be coordinated within LCMNC by the Coordinator of the Logan Ethnic Aged and Disability Services (LEADS). This gave the project immediate access to ethnic aged and disabled clients and also the opportunity to access available resources within the targeted recipient group.

#### LOGAN AREA:

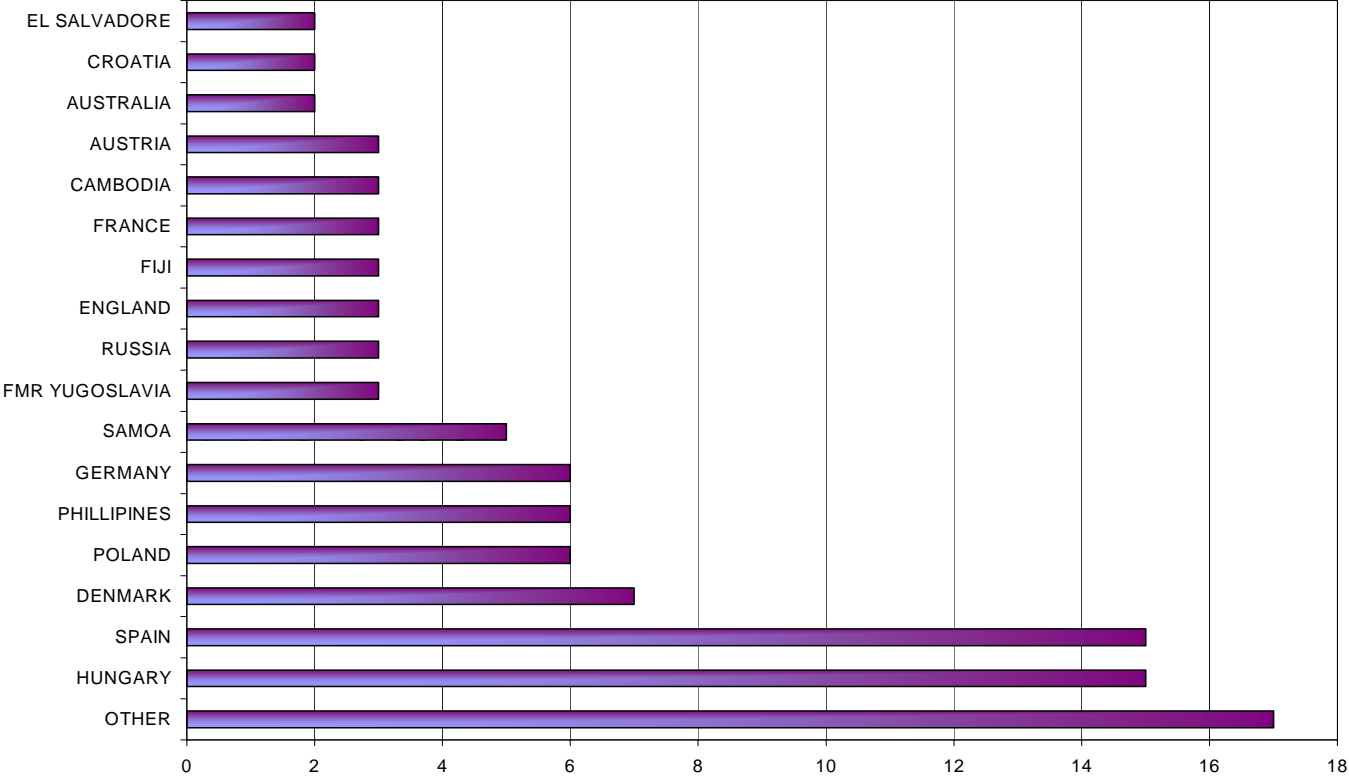
The decision to apply for funding was also centered on the basis that Logan is a growing city with an estimated resident population at 30th June 2001 of 167,808 people. The number of older people (sixty-five and over) living in the community of Logan is increasing dramatically, an example being Australian Bureau of Statistics figures taken from the which reveal an increase of 24.9% from 8,025 at the 30th June 1996 census to 10,023 people at the 30th June 2001 census. Logan is a culturally diverse society with a total of 10.6% of people residing in Logan speaking a language other than English in their home compared with 7.1% of Queensland's population.

As can be seen from graph 1, the main ethnic groups reached were Hungarian and Spanish. The group named other consisted of single recipients of Indonesian, Slovak, Tamil, Sri Lankian, Arabic, Albanian, Italian, Lebanese, Latvian, Czechoslovakian, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Romanian, Greek, New Zealander and Indian nationalities.

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Graph 1

RECIPIENTS





## GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS.....

To ensure sufficient information about the project reached a wide-ranging audience within the older community of Logan, the Project Coordinator Elias Obediente approached Fazil Rostram of LCMNC's Community Development Program to organise an announcement of the commencement of the program over the ethnic radio station 4EB. This station has programs for more than 30 language groups on a weekly basis.

In May 2002, the project was broadcast over the radio with three bi-lingual people announcing in five (5) different languages: English Arabic, Farsi, Tagalog, and Spanish.

To effectively continue the dissemination of information to older people, the following people were approached:

Tom Franks, Judy Newton, Sgt Marie Foelz and the LEADS coordinator

Tom Franks from the Woodridge fire station was asked to link the project with the local fire brigade. The following items were provided by Tom to help with the project;

- fire safety leaflets and posters for distribution to recipients
- guidelines for proper fitting of smoke alarms in homes

Tom showed continued support to the project by authorizing a fire station visit and presentation of the project to recipients.

Judy Newton of Sustained Fire Safety offered 200 smoke alarms to be donated by the QFRS, for installation in homes of the older people and people with a disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

Sgt Maree Foelz of Logan Police was contacted requesting volunteers. It was explained to Sgt Foelz these volunteers would undergo training in fire safety auditing and the installation of smoke alarms in private dwellings.

LEADS Coordinator Volkan Dogan was asked to initiate interviews and police checks of all volunteers.

## Chapter 2

### Project Details

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This project was a partnership project of the LCMNC, QFRS and the Logan Police with LCMNC taking responsibility for the financial management.

The Project Steering Committee consisted of:

Lynda Ford	LCMNC
Volkan Dogan	LCMNC, LEADS
Snr Constable Rachel Whitford	Logan Police District
Judy Newton	QFRS
Ted Beitz	QFRS
Elias Obediente	LCMNC Project Coordinator

The Steering Committee membership changed during the project with Snr Constable Whitford taking maternity leave and being replaced by Snr Constable Leonie Daly, and Snr Constable Ted Dale and Volkan Dogan leaving the organisation and replaced by Debbie Bragg.

## AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The major aims of the project were to disseminate information about fire safety awareness for older people of CALD backgrounds, to create mutually beneficial relationships and provide links between the QFRA, the Logan Police and the residents of Logan.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- To reduce the number of fire related deaths, injury and property damage amongst culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- To provide clear communications between the QFRA and residents of Logan from different language backgrounds;
- To increase recipient's knowledge of fire hazard identification;
- To increase the awareness of the dangers of fire in the home;
- To make recipients aware of the common causes of fire which are mostly preventable;
- To ensure recipients gain an understanding of how a smoke alarm functions and to ensure smoke alarms are regularly tested in the future
- To have the opportunity of receiving free smoke alarms installed in their homes.

## PROJECT DESIGN

The project operated for thirty four (34) weeks from the second week in April through to December 2002.

The Senior Fire Awareness and Safety Project consisted of four different activities:

- A. House to house visits to 104 homes of recipients, to conduct fire safety and security checks, smoke alarm checks, maintenance and or installation. Trained volunteers from both LCMNC and Logan Polices Volunteers in Policing (VIP) performed these tasks under direct supervision of the Project Coordinator. With the permission of the householder, Volunteers in Policing also undertook a security check of each home to ensure appropriate locks, security screens etc were fitted.
- B. 'Fire Safety Workshops' were presented by Ted Beitz from the Beenleigh Fire Brigade, using three (3) distinctive methods:
- A mobile Fire Kitchen was set up where a demonstration was shown of the effects of a small stove fire engulfing a kitchen within seconds;
  - A PowerPoint presentation was conducted explaining how a fire can start at night when everyone is asleep.
  - A film was shown explaining the duties of firefighters and informing people of the opportunity to avail themselves of the free services of the Fire Brigades in the community.
- C. Field trip conducted to the Woodridge Fire Station and a presentation was conducted by Kevin Derges, the senior fire officer and his staff.
- D. Production of the final report

## Chapter 3

### Project Operations

## PROJECT OPERATIONS

To fully explain the requirements of conducting this project smoothly, it is necessary to give a month by month account of the operations. This is over and above the normal operations of installation, inspection and safety audits.

### **May:**

Workplan drafted to guide the project. This workplan was in the form of month by month targets as well as an ongoing workplan.

A set amount of funding was allocated for equipment necessary to install the smoke alarms and conduct safety checks. After assessing the needs of the project an investigation was conducted with local hardware stores in Logan and an informal request was made to the management of each company asking for a discount which would contribute to a worthy project. Bunnings came back with a very generous discount offer and the necessary equipment was purchased at this business.

A database was developed to ensure the necessary data was collected for the final report.

Volunteer recruitment and interviews were conducted.

A letter was distributed to 28 ethnic community organisations in and around Logan, explaining the offer of free smoke alarms and safety checks.

Project flyers were placed around many local community notice boards with Triple-C, Logan City Council Library and Post Office being the most accessed.

The commencement of the project was announced over radio 4EB in 5 different languages and arrangements were made for regular advertising of the project by language radio programs and LCMNC's monthly 4EB radio program.

At the end of the month a meeting was conducted between LCMNC and the QFRA officers to discuss project delivery. Discussed in the meeting were the effective strategies to be implemented in the approach to elderly recipients, the engagement of volunteers and the effective use of personal care assistants (PCA's). Also discussed was the need for recipient or advocates consent of this free service prior to delivery.

### **June:**

Close attention was paid to the organising of volunteers. Training of newly recruited Volunteers in Policing was coordinated with Snr Constable Whitford in the to include fire safety audits and smoke alarm installation. There were twelve (12) volunteers given training. A brief description of training provided to volunteers includes using home safe checklist,

smoke detector maintenance check, proper fire reporting, fire evacuation plan and conducting security checks .

Received free, 200 smoke alarms provided by QFRA, through Judy Newton and purchased equipment needed to implement project requirements.

Coordinated with Personal Carer Assistant (PCA's) workers to obtain client's written consent to conduct fire safety and security check and installation of smoke alarms in their home.

Coordinated the Workshop with seniors and Ted Beitz, Fire Scene Examination Officer from Beenleigh Fire Station.

Project coordinator accompanied two VIP's on the first six senior's homes to ensure effective training had been provided.

A partnership project meeting was held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2002 to ensure the partnerships were working effectively. Discussion regarding the differences between Home Assist Secure and this project were explained.

- A bi-lingual worker is present at the time a fire safety and security audit is undertaken. This is to ensure that clients are explained (in their own language) outcomes of the audit and how to maintain the smoke alarms.
- The project focuses on clients from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.
- There is a combined home safety and home security audit to minimise disruption to the householder.
- Referral would be made to Home Assist Secure, where there is a need for other work around the house (example of this would include fixing hazardous stairs and electrical repairs)
- This is an integrated project in which LCMNC, QFRA and Police are working in partnership – it is not a single service project.

### **July:**

On the spot questionnaire with clients during fire safety and security audit, to ensure everything was running smoothly. There were no negative observations made by clients. Volunteers expressed their enjoyment in working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Clients were very hospitable, providing refreshments such as cake, coffee, tea and biscuits.

Two (2) workshops were conducted, the first was training for the Volunteers in Policing. The second workshop a Power Point presentation and mobile kitchen fire demonstration, with the LCMNC English class.

Personal Care Assistants were asked to inform people of the benefits of having homes fire safety check. This was because many consumers were initially reluctant during the first consultations, to have their homes inspected. With appropriate use of interpreters, people

changed their minds and agreed to fire safety checks.  
Thirty six (36) homes with forty seven (47) clients were visited this month

**August:**

First official evaluation surveys were sent out for feedback on project delivery. Twenty four (24) homes with thirty three (33) clients, were visited during this month. .

**September & October:**

At times transportation was unavailable so volunteers used their car to keep up the schedule of client's home check. Forty five (45) clients in thirty five (35) homes, were visited during these two months.

**November:**

The final nine (9) homes were visited in November, with eleven (11) people visited.

QFRS were critical in formulating the final evaluation questionnaire which was distributed to the one hundred and four (104) homes, where smoke alarms had been installed. The previous evaluation questionnaire was revised and improved to suit the information required for the final report. 70% of evaluation forms were returned, all with positive feedback.

**TO DATE:**

*Total number of individuals receiving the Fire Safety Awareness message* 246

- Number of seniors who received the fire safety message 137
- Number of person received the fire safety message from five workshops 109

*Total number of homes visited* 104

- Homes without smoke alarm 46
- Homes without enough smoke alarms 24
- Homes with defective smoke alarms 34

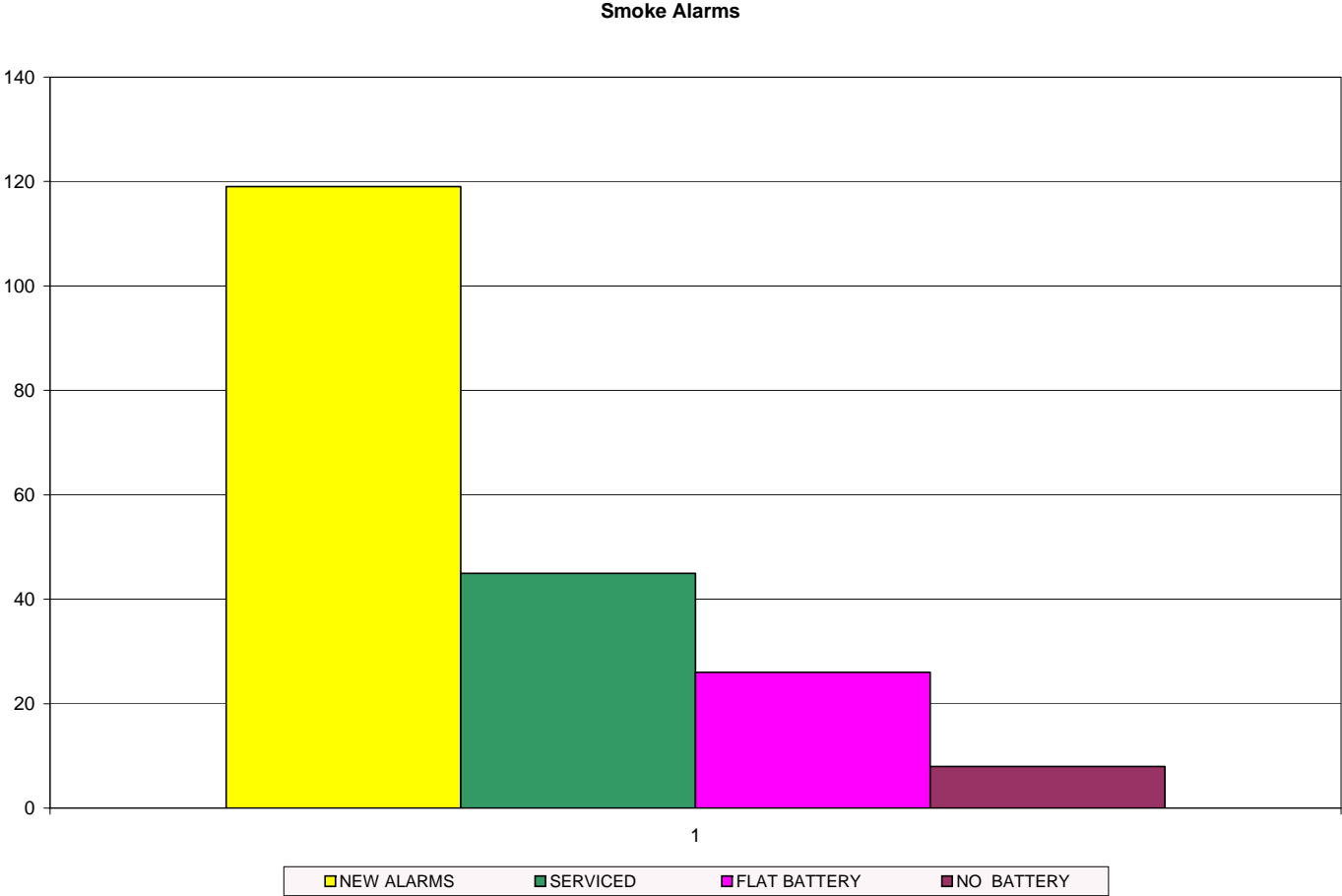
*Total number of smoke alarms fitted / serviced:* 187

- Total smoke alarms installed 119
- Total old smoke alarms checked and serviced 68



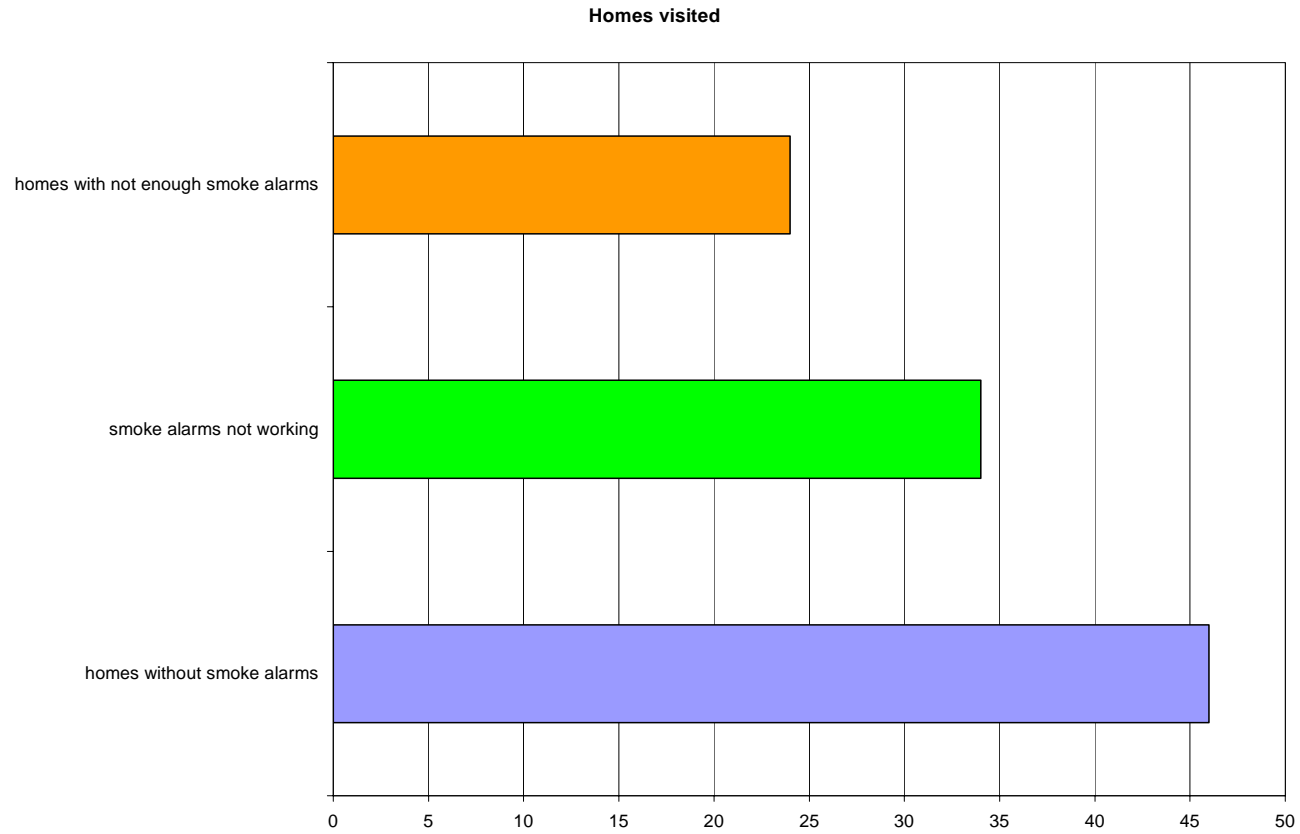
Graph 2 illustrates the number of smoke alarms installed in recipients homes and the number of smoke alarms already installed but defective as outlined.

Graph 2



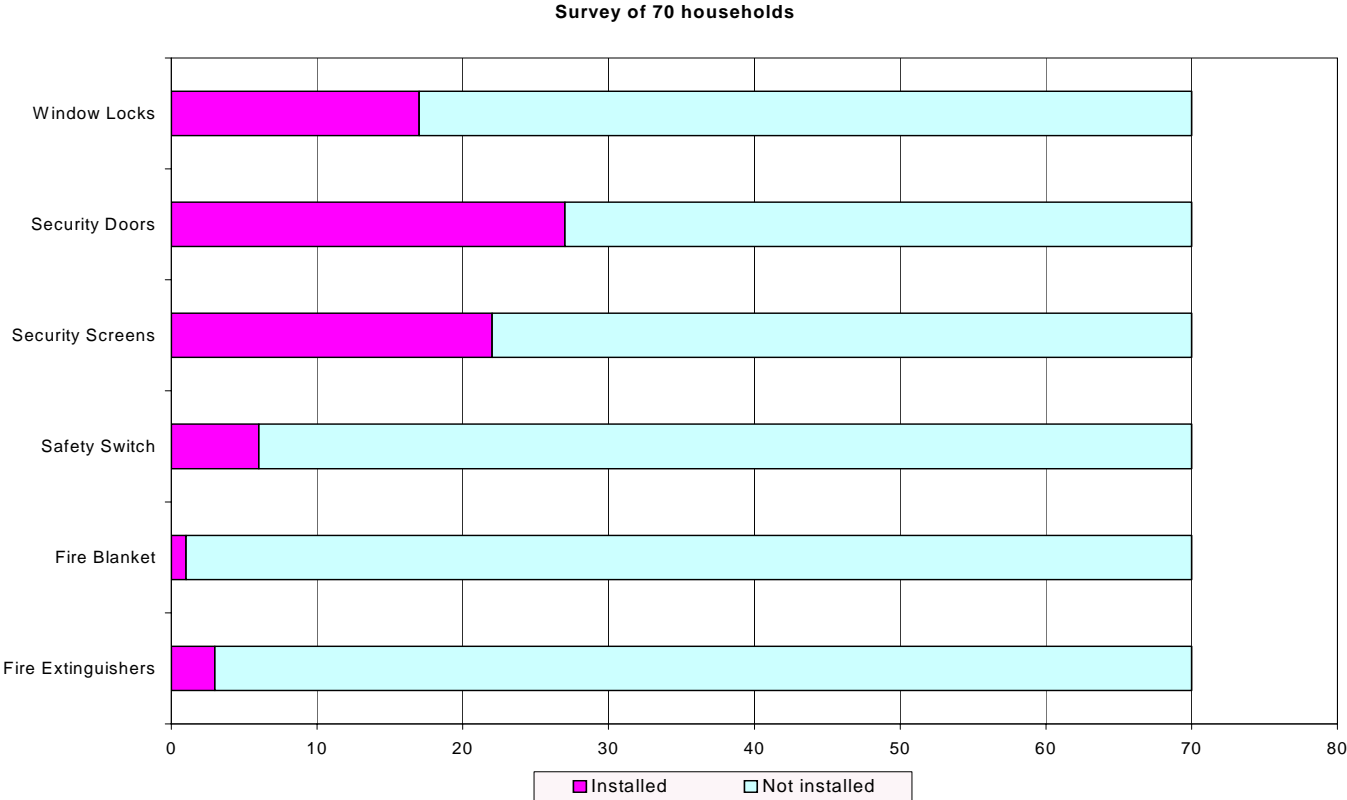
As graph 3 shows 44% of homes visited did not have smoke alarms and 23% of homes didn't have enough smoke alarms. The most disturbing aspect was that 33% of homes had smoke alarms that did not work.

Graph 3



Prior to having the home safety / security visit, 70 households were asked if any of the items listed below were installed in their homes. Graph 4 illustrates that households had a low level of items to ensure security of their home.

Graph 4



## WORKSHOPS

Five workshops were held in which 109 seniors, 45 family members or carers and 18 others attended.

#1	Date:	<u>21 June 2002</u>	
	Venue:	Logan City Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre	
	Attendees:	Volunteers in Policing Service (VIP's)	- 11 people
		Police in Logan District	- 1 person
	Presenter	Elias Obediente	

This workshop was unique in that the volunteers were given training in safe work practices as well as instruction on disseminating fire awareness to recipients. A combination of theory and instruction on fire safety audits, checks and maintenance as well as proper installation of smoke alarms in homes, was given to ensure volunteers were competent to impart the message of fire safety to recipients. Training in testing, maintenance and fitting of smoke alarms was provided. Directions to explain correct areas to fit smoke alarms was given. In addition, volunteers were trained in equipment use such as manual handling of ladders and safe use around the home.

Additional lectures and demonstration involved:

- Method of proper fire reporting
- The use of home safe checklist
- Development of fire evacuation plan

Videos from QFRS, showing the actual task of fire safety home visits titled "Seniors Fire Education" and Operation Safe Home" were also shown towards the end of the workshop.

#2	Date:	<u>29 June 2002</u>	
	Venue:	Logan City Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre	
	Attendees:	Seniors group	- 25 people
		PCA interpreters	- 8 people
		Volunteers	- 2 people
	Presenter	Ted Beitz	

This workshop was held in the Community room of the LCMNC., and outdoors across the street in a parking lot. All staff acted as interpreters when required. Seniors representing twelve nationalities attended.

The first part of the workshop was held in the Community room where seniors were comfortable. A PowerPoint presentation was used as a visual aid to instill the message of fire safety awareness to the seniors. This presentation explained that as a fire spreads rapidly and emits poisonous smoke, this can cause a person to fall into a deep sleep. The smoke alarm plays an important role in these conditions, by waking the occupants of the house before the

house is filled with smoke, thereby giving advanced warning and providing enough time to evacuate the house.

Participants were shown how to test and maintain a smoke alarm. Ted also explained that if the smoke alarm beeped, this was because the alarm battery was flat and would need to be replaced. In future, occupant/s of the house could ring Home Assist to have this done. The need for a fire evacuation plan was also explained as critical to the safety of householders.

The second part of the workshop was conducted across the road from the Centre. A mobile kitchen on a trailer with working cooking facilities, was bought in by QFRS. As the participants watched from a distance of approximately 10 metres, an unattended cooking pot boiled over and started a fire. Depicting a true to life reaction of a person not knowing the nature of oil on fire in the kitchen, the QFRS representative threw a container of water on the fire. This caused an enormous fire to explode in the kitchen, this in turn caused a large heat wave which impacted with the people watching. This proved very effective in imparting the message of fire safety. After getting the fire under control, the DO's and DONT's of controlling kitchen fires were then reiterated by the presenter.

#3 Date: 31 July 2002  
Venue: LCMNC Green Room  
Attendees: English Second Language (ESL) students - 30 people  
  
Presenter: Ted Beitz

This workshop was attended by students that attend English classes at LCMNC. The male and female students between the ages of 25 and 55 years, represented ten different nationalities. Translation was not necessary as these students were becoming familiar with English in their studies and the presenter was asked to speak slowly and clearly. A PowerPoint presentation was used to explain the fire safety message. Pamphlets and handouts about fire safety awareness were also distributed to participants. Demonstration on the use of fire blankets and fire extinguishers was also shown.

The second part of the workshop was again conducted across the road from the Centre. The mobile kitchen was used in the same manner as above to ensure participants understood the dangers of fire in the kitchen. Students were shown the correct usage of a fire extinguisher and fire blanket.

#4 Date: 26 October 2002  
Venue: Woodridge Fire Station  
Attendees: LCMNC Respite Group - 30 people  
Staff interpreting - 4 people

Presenter Kevin Derges and Crew

Two 12 seater buses were used to transport a group of LCMNC Respite Centre clients to visit the Woodridge Fire Station. Although the Fire Brigade had just returned from an emergency response they were only too pleased to invite the group into the station. The senior Fire Officer, welcomed the group and briefed them on the duties and responsibilities of a fire crew. Fire responses, rescue and pre fire planning, of Woodridge high hazard areas, were also explained.

During the presentation, questions were asked by seniors, about what firemen do in the event of car accidents or when someone is trapped inside a car that catches fire. The fire crew presented the "jaws of life" and demonstrated the proper and efficient use of the equipment. The crew also explained the use of various pieces of equipment such as the oxygen breathing apparatus (OBA), a portable oxy/acetylene cutting torch, the battering ram and the fire axe. This workshop proved very effective in showing the importance of fire brigades in the community.

#5 Date: 13 November 2002  
Venue: LCMNC Green Room  
Attendees: Multicultural Support Group - 5 people

Presenter Elias Obediente

Twelve people had intended to attend the workshop but as the five present represented five different languages, this was still a very effective means of reaching the different communities. Italian, Maltese, Vietnamese, Filipino and Australian-born people were represented. The importance of fire safety awareness in the home was stressed to participants. The method of identifying fire and safety hazards was emphasised. Steps needed to rectify the hazards were discussed and a film about the danger of fire in the home was shown. Questions and answers to fire safety problems at work and at home were clarified. Safety measures were shown on what to do in case of fire such as fire exit drill and fire reporting.

## Chapter 4

### Introduction

## DATA COLLECTION

During the initial stages of deciding on content for the evaluation questionnaires, questions were raised on what information could be collected. Maria Orifici from QRFS asked if such questions as those below could be included in surveys;

- would clients have accessed other services?
- can client remember how to test alarm?
- do clients know two exits from the house in case of a fire.?
- how many occasions of service were provided in other languages?

After discussion, the Steering committee decided that adding these questions to the survey would cause undue pressure on the translators, who were already gathering as much information as possible.

The question was raised if a smoke alarm could be installed in private house rentals without landlord's approval. Jenny from QRFS explained that alarms can be installed without giving notice to private house rental landlords.

## STATISTICS

As can be seen from Graph 1, some clients already had alarms in their homes but most of these were either defective, in need of a service or there were not enough alarms throughout the house. The main cause for concern was the fact batteries had been taken out of the smoke alarms. Clients explained this was usually because they were beeping and they didn't know why. Once it was explained that the smoke alarms beep when the battery is going flat, clients were more at ease with having a new battery fitted. Another reason batteries had been taken out was because they would constantly beep when toast was burnt. Once it was explained the smoke alarms were inappropriately placed, it was just a matter of moving the smoke alarm to a more appropriate position.

There were other reasons why occupants smoke alarms were not at a safe level in the home. These reasons were exacerbated because recipients were non-English speaking or / and aged. Many people thought one smoke alarm was all that was need to be safe from fire. Others didn't know how many were required but felt safer after installing only one smoke alarm. Many people thought alarms had to be installed professionally and the costs would be prohibitive. Others did not know where to go to find someone who would install smoke alarms in their homes.

Another area of concern was smoke alarms had not been tested and the batteries were flat. These clients said they had not heard the warning beeps at all. Other recipients had taken the batteries out (or asked a younger person to do so) as they did not know what the beeps were and thought the smoke alarm was faulty. Over 80% of clients said they didn't realize that smoke alarms needed to be tested and did not know how to perform checks on the alarm or battery. All clients were told that Home Assist checked and monitored smoke alarms yearly and it was only a matter of ringing to have the service done.

Recipients who only had one smoke alarm where several were needed, or did not have other safety measures, thought that with a fire alarm installed, a fire could be dealt with promptly and there would not be further need for such items as fire extinguishers / fire blankets.

At the completion of the project, households were asked 'As a result of your home safety / security visit, have you installed or are you considering installing the items listed below. Graph 5 illustrates the majority of households figures highlighted in orange, are considering installing one or more safety items in their homes. Although this emphasises the message being received regarding fire safety, seniors need to be made more aware of safety issues

Graph 5

