

Mobile education unit

Steve Elvidge

INTRODUCTION

There is only one way to educate the general public and that is to book them. That's right, write out as many infringements as possible.

On the 4th of April 1978, aged 27, I began a new job as a Perth City Council Parking Inspector and that was the advice given to me by an old senior parking inspector assigned to train me. I was young and impressionable and I was going to change the world. Even back then I believed education to be a strategic part of municipal law enforcement.

I've now had 14 years experience and written over 100,000 infringement notices but have I educated anyone? I don't think so. You can train animals, for example, by putting a citronella collar on a dog he soon learns that barking is not really a good idea. At City of Subiaco we have some drivers with over 80 infringement notices on computer gathered over a period of time - does it appear they have learned any lessons? I will let you be the judge of that.

Education. No one wants to be educated in a confrontational manner which writing parking, dog and litter infringements is. To educate people they must want to learn and be able to do so in a way they feel comfortable with.

WESRANG

In 1995, rangers in the western suburbs formed WESRANG, Western Suburbs Rangers. A group consisting of rangers from Peppermint Grove, Mosman Park, Claremont, Cottesloe, Nedlands and Subiaco for the purpose of having regular meetings to exchange ideas and information with a view to making ranger work more uniform in the Western Suburbs.

At one of the early meetings, Graeme Raine the then Senior Ranger at Nedlands came up with an idea for a mobile display trailer. This was something he had been toying with for some time and now was a good time to get started. He went to the Parks Manager to see if there was an old trailer available that would fit the bill. Jim Elliot said he could do better than a trailer, he offered Graeme an old works caravan that had been used by parks and gardens staff. It was a bit run down but had excellent potential, so in true ranger style Graeme took it off his hands.

The first time Dave Tonkin (Senior Ranger Subiaco) and myself went to inspect the caravan we looked at each other and thought what the hell have we got ourselves into. It was not a bit run down, it was a lot run down. Again, in true ranger style we did a lot of fast talking and the CEOs in the western suburbs agreed to inject funds and with another nice donation we started getting quotes for its' refurbishment. The guys at Nedlands depot repaired the chassis, brakes, electrics and put on new tyres, in the mean time we embarked on finding sponsorship. Garth Jennens was only too happy to help, so Amrex and Barkline were bought on board soon followed by Securelink with security display equipment, R & L Electronics with video display unit and Ramsay's Retravision at Home Base Wembley donated a fridge and air conditioner.

About this time Graeme Raine left Nedlands for greener pastures at Rockingham and lost touch with the project but we continued on. Eventually it was finished inside and out and talk about impressive. I did meet with Graeme some time later and he was very impressed with the finished product.

What to put on board? Well now that we have it what do put in it, how do we use it and where do we use it?

We finally launched the Mobile Display Unit in Bay View Tce Claremont. Mayors and councillors from the different areas were on hand to help out. Inside was a continual video running of animal care and dog training, we had leaflets and handouts on dog laws, parking, littering, security, graffiti and other subjects of community interest. Across the walls are photo posters depicting rangers involved in their various daily duties. The unit is not only an education centre, it is also used for community services. Members of the public can register their dogs, ask advice from rangers on any matter regarding local government law enforcement and where possible a vet is on hand to give free advice about pet care or pet problems.

Where will it be used? Each of the Council Ranger Services in WESRANG can book and at any time use the caravan for any event that may be upcoming. Subiaco has used it for street displays and for its' annual Christmas street party. Last year's Royal Show was a great experience with quite a number of people coming through and a lot of show bags being given away to children filled with puzzles and activity books.

One event at which the caravan was well used was Dogs Day Out on February 21st this year on the Nedlands foreshore. The event was advertised with members of the general public able to phone and make an appointment for a consultation with Garth Jennens on animal behavioural problems or to just come down and speak to one of a number of vets. It was really a great day with not only people getting to know each other but a number of animals discussing their lot in life. A couple of arguments seemed to break out between some of the dogs but I didn't catch what it was all about.

The caravan has been hired by councils outside WESRANG with one trip to the Merredin Show. The unit is available for use and can be booked by calling Shaun Nancarrow at City of Nedlands. I will hand out some information at the end of this talk.

In summing up, I believe the whole project has been very worthwhile in not only being of great assistance to rangers as an educational aid and a venue to meet the public but also to the general public in finding out who their local rangers are, but also what do they do and what is their role in the community.

So, without doubt, customer service of the highest standard should be our goal. Educating the community in any way we can, helping people to get to know their rangers and to realise we are there to be of service, can only in the long run make our job easier.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Steve has been a ranger at the city of Subiaco for four years. He is also a committee member of the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers Association WA. His previous experience consists of 10 years in the City of Perth Parking, St John Ambulance as a Senior First Aid Instructor and an ambulance driver in the United Kingdom.

[UAM 98 Index Page](#)