



**SUBMISSION  
TO  
QUEENSLAND TRANSPORT**

Discussion Paper:

**Queensland Youth – on the road and in control**  
A discussion of ways to improve young driver safety



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## Introduction

Queensland 2003 crash statistics show that 17- 20 year olds represented 6% of the population but made up 15% of the road toll (Queensland Transport [QT] 2005, p15). People in this age group, therefore, are dying at a rate 2 ½ times that of their proportion of the population.

21 - 24 year olds also represented only 6 % of Queensland's population, while accounting for 12% of the state's road toll in 2003 (QT 2005, p15), dying at a rate two times higher than their proportion of the population. These rates are much higher than for older age groups.

Further to this, in 2003, thirty-nine (28 males, 11 females) out of the 46 young adult fatalities aged 17 – 20 years in Queensland, were either drivers or passengers (QT 2005, p18). This shows that the subgroup of young male drivers/passengers 17 - 20 years of age are 2 ½ times more at risk than their female counterparts. In 2003, 32 of the 37 fatalities among road users aged between 21 and 24 years in Queensland were male (QT 2005, p15).

Due to the higher levels of risk for young male drivers in Queensland, any intervention introduced to improve young driver safety should primarily address the over-representation of young males in the road toll. The RACQ (2003, p4) stated in a previous submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee that there could be a need to specifically target some countermeasures at young male drivers, provided that research shows that they take more risks than females.

One area that offers significant scope for road safety interventions for all young drivers however, is the graduated licensing system (GLS). Components of the GLS fall into two broad categories:

- Pre-licence measures (those which primarily encourage more supervised driving experience); and
- Post-licence measures (those which place restrictions on driving to allow experience to be gained under low risk conditions) (Senserrick and Whelan 2003 p2).

This report will discuss many of these measures as they apply to the appropriate questions in the discussion paper.

## Prioritised List of Recommendations

The following recommendations are prioritised in numerical order under each section, indicating the relative importance/urgency RACQ places on the respective options in each section. Each section provides various opportunities to better prepare and protect Queensland's young drivers.

### Pre-learner Phase

- (1) RACQ recommends that a pre-learner education course/program, similar to *Road Ready* be introduced in Queensland. However, the RACQ also believes that road sense should be developed in schools from an early age, and recommends initiatives that:
  - Foster a uniform and coordinated whole of government approach to the development and delivery of road safety in the schools curriculum involving parents and carers, school communities, government agencies and other relevant stakeholders; and
  - Increase awareness and promote the use of road safety resources among teachers and schools in a consistent manner.
- (2) RACQ recommends that further general first aid information be provided to young drivers in the Queensland Transport publication *Your keys to driving in Queensland*, and that a question/s relating to this first aid information be included in the Q-SAFE test.
- (3) The RACQ recommends that consideration be given to introduction of a general first-aid course/program in Queensland schools to help address young peoples' risk taking behaviours in life in general – not just on the road.

### Learner Licence Stage

- (1) RACQ recommends that:
  - Queensland should follow the lead of all other states in setting a minimum number of driving hours a learner driver should gain whilst under supervision.
  - It should be compulsory for all learners to obtain 120 or more hours of supervised experience before sitting for the provisional licence test and this should include a minimum of 10 hours of night driving.
  - To encourage parents and other licensed drivers to provide supervised driving experience, motor vehicle insurance companies be encouraged to reduce or remove the age excess while learners are driving under supervision.
- (2) RACQ recommends that learners be required to record driving hours in a logbook if a prescribed number of supervised driving hours is introduced.

- (3) RACQ supports the option for learner drivers to be able to re-enter previous information in the event of losing a partially completed logbook. However the Club believes that all learner logbooks should be statutory declaration-type documents, with sufficient weight of law to deter/discourage provision of false or misleading information.
- (4) RACQ supports extending the minimum learner period from six months to 12 months to support the 120-hour minimum experience requirement.
- (5) RACQ recommends that *Ready to Guide* and *Your Keys to Driving in Queensland* be more vigorously promoted and made more widely accessible to learner drivers as well as driver trainers and parents/carers/supervisors to encourage more learner drivers to obtain their licence through a structured approach.
- (6) RACQ supports an education kit for learner drivers and their parents including better use of Queensland Transport's *Ready to Guide* booklet.
- (7) RACQ supports a review of how the Q-SAFE practical test is conducted across Queensland, especially with regard to the consistent allocation of test time and how the tests are marked/scored/rated.
- (8) RACQ supports reducing the learner licence age to 16 years, but only on the condition that it be accompanied by the requirement to obtain 120 hours of driving experience and that a provisional licence can not be obtained until 17 years or older.
- (9) RACQ supports the option for CBTA as an option to gain a driver's licence, but does not believe that participants should be allowed to obtain their licence any earlier than at 17 years of age.
- (10) RACQ supports any eligible supervising driver being allowed to sign the learner's logbook, but with the onus as to the veracity of the recorded information resting with the learner [as mentioned at 3(c)].
- (11) RACQ believes the content of the current Q-SAFE practical test is adequate, when applied consistently.
- (12) RACQ recommends that further research be conducted into the success and value of information sessions held in other jurisdictions for parents/carers/supervisors of learner drivers.
- (13) RACQ also recommends that further research be conducted into the proportion of parents/carers/supervisors in Queensland who would support and attend similar presentations/courses/sessions.
- (14) RACQ supports investigations of innovative penalties and sanctions for learner drivers if they can be demonstrated to be effective, e.g., act as a deterrent to offending.

**Provisional Licence Stage**

- (1) RACQ recommends the re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland provisional licence holders to display 'P' plates on the vehicles they are driving.
- (2) RACQ recommends dividing the provisional licence into two phases (P1 and P2) with additional restrictions primarily in the first phase.
- (3) RACQ recommends that:
  - The government undertake further public education about the increased risks to probationary drivers of driving with young peer group passengers, to raise community awareness and voluntary support for the issue; and
  - A passenger restriction of no more than one passenger aged less than 21 years who does not hold an open licence be introduced for provisional drivers less than 21 years of age during the first year of their provisional licence with a strictly limited range of exemptions, e.g., younger parents travelling with small children.
- (4) RACQ recommends that:
  - The government undertake further public education about the increased risks to probationary drivers of late-night driving to raise community awareness and voluntary support for the issue; and then
  - Consider the introduction of night driving restrictions for unsupervised provisional drivers for the first 6 – 12 months of the three-year probationary period with the option of removing the restriction subject to traffic offence history and at-fault crash free periods.
  - Implementation details of overseas night driving restriction schemes be further researched.
- (5) RACQ supports the introduction of a Hazard Perception Test and associated educational resources as part of the licensing process, for provisional licence holders.
- (6) The RACQ recommends that a Hazard Perception Test be introduced during the provisional stage in Queensland. However, the Club recommends that, in addition, a combined test – consisting of advanced road rules and advanced hazard perception test components – should be used as the 'exit test' for provisional drivers to obtain their open licences in Queensland, similar to the Driver Qualification Test in New South Wales.
- (7) That if an 'exit test', similar to the New South Wales Driver Qualification Test is introduced in Queensland, produce and provide an accompanying handbook similar to the RTA's *Driver qualification handbook*.
- (8) RACQ supports an education campaign encouraging tolerance for all drivers and the adopting of a "sharing the road" approach to driving, as well as an additional public education campaign aimed at encouraging tolerance for young drivers specifically.

- (9) RACQ agrees that Queensland Transport should assist instructors with education and training after any changes to the licensing system.
- (10) RACQ supports a review of penalties for young drivers who breach road rules and to what degree of severity and consistency the courts apply the penalties in Queensland.
- (11) RACQ supports the inclusion of incentives and rewards to encourage drivers to obey the road rules. These could include the removal of restrictions based on driving performance indicators.
- (12) RACQ recommends further research and evaluation to determine how post-licence driver training and education can positively contribute to making safer drivers on our roads.
- (13) The RACQ supports, and has developed, an education and publicity campaign on driver distraction with messages that apply to target groups, e.g., young drivers and older drivers.
- (14) RACQ recommends that learner and provisional drivers not be totally prohibited from using mobile phones while driving. Rather, it is recommended that further publicity/education campaigns for all age groups targeted at reducing all driver distractions be conducted, and that these campaigns include information targeted at high-risk groups for driver distraction such as young drivers. (See Section 17 for more information on RACQ's *Dealing with driver distraction* campaign, including the 'Not Now' approach).

***The following three recommendations are not prioritised, as they relate to suggested restrictions/initiatives that the RACQ does not support:***

RACQ recommends that speed restrictions not be imposed as a licence condition for provisional drivers.

RACQ recommends that vehicle power restrictions not be imposed as a licence restriction for provisional drivers.

The RACQ does not support the introduction of a purely skills-based training program for young drivers in Queensland.

## **Parents**

- (1) RACQ supports initiatives that enhance parents' involvement in teaching young drivers and/or helping them gain additional hours of supervised driving experience.
- (2) As it is stated at section 4(b), the RACQ supports the development of an education kit for learner drivers and their parents including better use of Queensland Transport's *Ready to Guide* booklet.

**Additional Comments**

- (1) The RACQ believes that consideration should be given to the extension of the zero BAC requirements for all young drivers, even those with open licences, until at least 24 years of age.

## Pre-learner Phase

To obtain a Queensland Learner's licence at present, applicants must be 16 ½ years of age or older and successfully pass a written road-rules test. Those preparing for their written road rules test are currently directed to the Queensland Transport [QT] publication *Your Keys to Driving in Queensland* which is available at some newsagents, QT Customer Service Centres and from the QT website.

There is no compulsory training course that the pre-learner must undertake before sitting the Learner's licence written test. It is the choice of the individual whether they seek further pre-licence education/training.

### 1.0 Pre-learner package

The discussion paper (QT 2005, p7) suggests that: "A pre-learner education package could be developed for new drivers which could be provided 12 months before the minimum licensing age".

The RACQ believes however, that the development of a positive and responsible approach towards road safety and driving begins, and should be fostered, from an earlier age than 12 months before the young driver will be at the minimum age for a learner licence to be obtained.

Parents and schools can play an important role in developing responsible attitudes and hazard appreciation skills in children towards the use of the traffic environment as pedestrians, cyclists and car passengers (Queensland Transport 1996, p8).

Parents have a responsibility to provide a good example of safe road use to any children in their presence, regardless of how early their ages. Parents' attitudes towards speeding, drink driving and risk taking, as well as bad driving habits and examples of poor driving in general, can influence children's attitudes and behaviours in relation to road use later in life.

Ninety-three percent of RACQ members agree that young learner drivers should be taught about road safety in the classroom (MCR 2003, p20).

There needs to be a coordinated approach by government, non-government agencies, schools and the local community in addressing road safety education to school age children.

A previous RACQ submission to the Travelsafe Committee recommended road safety education in schools as part of a system to address the behaviour and attitude of young drivers. These recommendations were as follows (Traffic and Safety Department; 1995, p.1):

- Provision of general road safety education to children in school from an early age; and
- Development of hazard perception throughout children's school years so they become aware of the traffic environment when travelling as a pedestrian, cyclist, or a passenger in a vehicle.

RACQ believes that the level of awareness and/or utilisation of existing road safety information and educational resources could be improved, particularly at schools. There are provisions for the inclusion of education about road safety and risk taking, however

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delivery appears inconsistent in method and content, with decisions primarily left to individual teachers or schools.

In addition, students in their final years of high school (years 11 and 12) already face a heavy workload and therefore, the full benefits of pre-licence education may be lost, if a pre-learner package is introduced in a school as an additional requirement rather than as a mandatory topic which contributes to their 'Overall Position' score. This reinforces the need to provide pre-licence education to children from an early age, covering safe road user attitudes and behaviours, first as a passenger, pedestrian and/or cyclist, and then gradually progressing to a focus on driving.

In terms of what components of driver education should be covered in the classroom and what should be delivered outside the school environment, the RACQ believes that:

- School-based road safety education should promote those aspects of road safety that do not primarily concern the driving task, e.g., risk-taking and peer group pressure.
- That family, friends, qualified driver trainers and driving schools should teach the practical driving task away from the school environment.

Evaluations of pre-licence training programs have generally found no significant difference between learners trained at off-road facilities and those trained on-road, in real world driving conditions, in respect of subsequent crash or violation involvement (RACV 2002, p1).

The RACQ's role in delivering road safety education to schools currently includes the following:

- Car Buying Information – About 30,000 copies of this guide are distributed annually to schools and TAFE campuses across Queensland. RACQ also runs information sessions on car buying at high schools in Brisbane and major regional centres across Queensland. The presentation covers issues such as contractual rights when buying and owning a vehicle, drivers' licences, car insurance, technical and related issues.
- *Streetscene* at primary schools – Developed by the RACV in Victoria, and licensed to the RACQ for use in Queensland, *Streetscene* is an interactive road safety program for primary school students, which emphasises pedestrian, passenger and bicycle safety. *Streetscene* seeks input from parents/carers and the wider community to reinforce the learning that takes place in the school environment.

The *Streetscene* program is designed to help teachers integrate traffic safety education into the school curriculum, to increase awareness in students of the risks of being a road user, encourage improved attitudes to road safety among students, improved road safety behaviour among students, and identify road environment features that can help to keep them safe.

- With regard to the *Streetscene* program, the RACQ provides teacher's guides, parents' brochures, road safety worksheets, and free presentations by a qualified road safety educator to schools in the Brisbane metropolitan area.
- Road Safety Docudramas – RACQ provides financial assistance to stage a series of docudramas for secondary schools. These productions depict realistic

recreations of crash scenes with expert commentary provided by road safety professionals.

- Tightrope – RACQ assisted in developing a road safety movie for Year 12 students, which contains an interactive section covering 20 major factors contributing to crashes involving young people. Worksheets are included for teachers to encourage student discussion and their feedback as a driver, passenger or other third party in the driving situation. The DVD is distributed by RACQ *free2go*.

As it is stated in the discussion paper (QT 2005, p7): “The ACT runs a pre-learner interactive classroom based program called *Road Ready* designed to make young people aware of issues about safe road use”. The course is free of charge for most ACT secondary school students (QT 2005, p7).

*Road Ready* includes a road rules knowledge test, and most ACT schools have *Road Ready* as part of their Year 10 program (Road Ready 2006).

The *Road Ready* course is a requirement for obtaining a Learner’s Licence in the ACT, and includes:

- Problem solving and decision making sessions;
- Statistical analysis;
- Group tasks; and
- A research assignment.

Because the *Road Ready* course is a requirement for obtaining a Learner’s Licence in the ACT, those who are not in Year 10 at high school are still able to complete the *Road Ready* course, however the course costs these people \$130, and they have to complete the course at one of the ACT *Road Ready* Centres (Road Ready 2006).

### **Recommendations:**

RACQ recommends that a pre-learner education course/program, similar to *Road Ready* be introduced in Queensland. However, the RACQ also believes that road sense should be developed in schools from an early age, and recommends initiatives that:

- Foster a uniform and coordinated whole of government approach to the development and delivery of road safety in the schools curriculum involving parents and carers, school communities, government agencies and other relevant stakeholders; and
- Increase awareness and promote the use of road safety resources among teachers and schools in a consistent manner.

## **2.0 First-aid training**

It is stated in the discussion paper that: “First aid training, made either compulsory or voluntary, could be provided at the pre-licence level to increase the awareness of risk among young people, particularly on the roads” (QT 2005, p7).

Some overseas research is reported to have found that first aid training can cause secondary school students to become more aware of risks in general (QT 2005, p7).

It is believed that, as well as providing for a greater awareness of risks that could influence driving behaviour, the first aid training of young drivers would offer community benefits through having more people trained in first aid (QT 2005, p7).

In the context of this discussion paper, however, it is the impact that this first aid training could have in helping to make young drivers more aware of the risks that they face that is believed to be of primary concern. In other words, the advantage of requiring young people to undertake first aid training in the pre-learner stage is seen as being primarily based on the opportunity to influence the young drivers' risk taking behaviours as opposed to providing them with the skills to administer first aid (Christie 2005).

A further advantage of this type of training and the impact that it can have on the young drivers' behaviours and attitudes could be that it may make them more aware of risks in general – and not just the risks associated with driving, as has been found in some “emerging European research” (Christie 2005).

The disadvantages of first aid training raised in the discussion paper (QT 2005, p7) include the fact that first aid training is valid only for three years and requires additional time and money to renew, that it would present an additional cost to young drivers and/or their parents during the licensing process, and that there is no research to suggest that first aid training helps to reduce crash rates.

However, the form of first aid training required of young people pre-licensing does not necessarily have to be enough to qualify the participant for a first aid ‘certificate’. Therefore, the training could be shorter in duration and less costly, and would subsequently not be required to be renewed.

This ‘diet’ version of first aid training may still, however, be enough to influence the young drivers' perceptions of risk and thus present a benefit in terms of adjusting the young drivers' behaviours.

The Queensland Transport publication *Your keys to driving in Queensland* has previously included some information on example-based first aid practices, and it may be possible for a future [shortened] first aid course for young people to be consistent with, and presented in conjunction with, the first aid information presented in *Your keys to driving in Queensland*. However, it is likely that in order to do this, changes would need to be made to the publication.

Therefore, it is suggested that the first aid section in *Your keys to driving in Queensland* be updated, upgraded and expanded as appropriate to offer young people a greater range of first aid information with a view to possibly introducing a short pre-licensing first aid course in future. If this additional information is provided in *Your keys to driving in Queensland*, it is also suggested that learners could be tested on their knowledge of this basic first aid information through the addition of a question/s on this information in the Q-SAFE exam.

To help reduce all kinds of risks for all young people in Queensland however, a general first aid course could be introduced in schools focussing primarily on reducing the risks faced by young people in life in general, not just on the road. This course/program could be part of a whole of government approach to risk reduction between Queensland Health, Queensland Department of Education and the Arts, and Queensland Transport.

### **Recommendations:**

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RACQ recommends that further general first aid information be provided to young drivers in the Queensland Transport publication *Your keys to driving in Queensland*, and that a question/s relating to this first aid information be included in the Q-SAFE test.

The RACQ recommends that consideration be given to introduction of a general first-aid course/program in Queensland schools to help address young peoples' risk taking behaviours in life in general – not just on the road.

## **Learner Licence Stage**

### **3.0 Supervised on-road experience**

#### **3(a) 120 hours of compulsory driving experience**

Inappropriate driver behaviour is a major contributing factor to young adults' involvement in road crashes. It can take young drivers many years to develop and adopt a positive and responsible approach to driving.

Therefore, it is important to shift the current emphasis away from obtaining the licence as quickly and cheaply as possible.

Research by Gregersen (as referred to in Sherwood: 2002, p.223) shows that the key to reducing provisional licence holders' involvement in crashes is to increase young drivers' experience whilst under supervision, before they take their practical driving test and start driving solo. From this basis it can be argued, therefore, that it is important that learner drivers receive as much varied on-road experience as possible during the learner period whilst under supervision.

Receiving 120 hours practical experience can reduce the chances of novice driver crash involvement after licensing and driving solo by up to 30% (Gregersen as used by VicRoads 1998).

This experience allows young drivers to nurture the following important skills:

- Physical skills (mastering the vehicle's controls and the ability to manoeuvre the vehicle properly);
- Cognitive skills (e.g., lane changing and obeying road rules); and
- Perceptual skills (e.g., hazard avoidance by judging/perceiving risks and being able to notice changing conditions).

Driving schools, family and friends all play an important role in providing the opportunity for this supervised driving experience to be gained, as well as the means to 'clamp' down on any dangerous practices (Bishop 2002, p6).

New South Wales and Tasmania both require learner drivers to record a minimum of 50 hours' driving practice in a logbook.

In Victoria, the RACV and VicRoads, encourages all novice drivers to get at least 120 hours of supervised on-road driving experience as learners.

In Western Australia there is a two stage Learner's licence. Phase 1 and 2 are separated by the practical driving assessment. In Phase 2, the learner must complete a minimum of 25 hours of supervised driving, recorded in a logbook.

From October 2005, learners in South Australia have been required to complete a logbook demonstrating they have completed at least 50 hours of supervised driving under a range of road conditions, including a minimum of 10 hours at night.

An RACV member survey shows that 87% "of respondents supported making some number of pre-licence driving hours compulsory. Most respondents thought a relatively high number of hours should be made compulsory, with 74% of respondents agreeing to a limit of at least 80 hours of experience, and 60% supporting at least 100 hours" (RACV 2005, p6).

Ninety percent of RACQ members agree that young learner drivers should be required to complete a mandatory number of supervised driving hours prior to being tested for their provisional licence (MCR 2003, p20).

Also, as a general guide, the RACQ recommends 10 hours practice with a supervising driver for every lesson with professional driving instructor.

New Zealand has a trial programme *Practice* for teenagers 15 – 19 years, which encourages learners to undertake at least two hours of supervised driving per week with an ultimate goal of obtaining 120 hours experience. The programme requires learner drivers to register with details of their driving coach. The coach is provided with a guide for driver coaching. Learners are sent road rule questions and can win prizes like petrol vouchers and free driving lessons.

The young Driver Experience Enhancement Program [DEEP], initiated by the Parents and Friends Association at St Mary's College in Toowoomba, was designed to give young drivers more intensive and constructive driving experience, with a goal of having young drivers reach 120 hours of supervised driving experience.

DEEP required participants and their 'mentors'/supervisors to complete a logbook of driving experience, and required the participant to experience a range of driving conditions prior to completion (CARRS-Q 2003).

DEEP is believed to have provided a coordinated, strategic and affordable program to enable parents to help ensure their children have an optimum level of driving experience before obtaining their provisional licence (CARRS-Q 2003).

As the RACQ (2003, p15) has previously stated in a submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: "Although research tends to indicate that learner drivers rarely have crashes whilst driving under supervision, there are still many parents unwilling to provide sufficient supervised driving practice for the learner driver in the family car. Anecdotally, a barrier to a learner drivers gaining extra supervised driving experience may lie in the age excess present on most insurance policies".

The RACQ believes that insurance companies should be encouraged to reduce or remove the age excess which may apply when learner drivers are driving while under supervision, so that the presence of the excess no longer acts as a

deterrent to obtaining as much practical experience as possible while supervised in the family car.

**Recommendations:**

RACQ recommends that:

- Queensland should follow the lead of all other states in setting a minimum number of driving hours a learner driver should gain whilst under supervision.
- It should be compulsory for all learners to obtain 120 or more hours of supervised experience before sitting for the provisional licence test and this should include a minimum of 10 hours of night driving.
- To encourage parents and other licensed drivers to provide supervised driving experience, motor vehicle insurance companies be encouraged to reduce or remove the age excess while learners are driving under supervision.

**3(b) Logbook**

As discussed in Section 3(a) all states that have introduced a mandatory number of driving hours also require those hours to be recorded in a logbook. The logbook acts a prompt for the learner and tutor of the various driving environments and conditions in which they should get their practical experience. It represents a source of reference information for the professional driving instructor.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends that learners be required to record driving hours in a logbook if a prescribed number of supervised driving hours is introduced.

**3(c) Re-enter information in logbook**

As the logbook entry of information relies on the honesty of the learner and tutor, there should generally be no problem in the re-entering of previous information if they lose a book, because this re-entering of information would be based on the same honesty of the learner and supervisor/tutor.

A computerised interactive logbook would have the advantage of allowing the learner driver to reprint a hardcopy if they lose a partially completed logbook.

An interactive logbook could be set up to not only keep track of hours of practice, but also provide suggestions and feedback on how to improve the practice sessions.

The RACQ believes, however, that in order to deter learners and supervisors from potentially providing misleading information in logbooks, the logbooks themselves should be viewed as a statutory declaration type of document.

Due to the fact that making a false statutory declaration is a misdemeanour offence that may require an offender to appear in court, it is believed that making a learner's logbook a statutory declaration type document could provide a reasonable weight of law to act as a deterrent to learners or supervisors entering false or misleading information into the logbooks.

It would be preferable to ensure that this aspect of the logbook applies only to the learner driver because while they may have different supervisors/instructors during their learning period, the learner would be the only person who was present at all times during the times which are referred to in the logbook. There is no minimum age at which an individual can sign a statutory declaration, however signatures on statutory declarations must be appropriately witnessed.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports the option for learner drivers to be able to re-enter previous information in the event of losing a partially completed logbook. However the Club believes that all learner logbooks should be statutory declaration-type documents, with sufficient weight of law to deter/discourage provision of false or misleading information.

**3(d) Supervising driver to sign logbook**

If drivers are required to obtain a substantial number of driving hours over a 12-month period, e.g., 120 hours, it is quite possible that they will not be able to achieve this with a single supervisor/tutor.

If any driver who has held an open licence for 12 months is allowed to teach or supervise the learner driver, the RACQ believes it would be acceptable for any number of suitably qualified individuals to supervise the learner and sign the same logbook, particularly if they were present and could substantiate what was covered in the practice session.

In Western Australia learners facing genuine hardship may be eligible for the learner driver assistance scheme to:

- Assist with access to an experienced driver who can supervise them during the log book phase; or
- Assist them if they do not have access to a vehicle and cannot afford to engage a qualified driving instructor (Byrne 2002).

A similar scheme could be considered for implementation in Queensland if a minimum number of driving hours and compulsory logbooks are introduced.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports any eligible supervising driver being allowed to sign the learner's logbook, but with the onus as to the veracity of the recorded information resting with the learner [as mentioned at 3(c)].

#### 4.0 Education kits for learner drivers and their parents

##### 4(a) Information sessions for supervisors

The physical task of driving a vehicle is not generally a major problem for novice drivers. However, as highlighted by VicRoads (1998, p.2), there is a lot more to driving a vehicle than being able to control it and knowing the road rules.

Learner drivers need to be provided with strong direction and proper tutoring to ensure that they are suitably equipped to cope with driving in a variety of conditions and environments when driving solo.

The RACQ recognises that there will be certain impediments to all learner drivers accessing professional driving lessons so supervisors may need to take on dual roles of teacher and practice coach. In these instances, the supervisor needs to be adequately informed and confident in preparing the learner.

Victoria has free, 90-minute education sessions for learner or prospective learner drivers and their supervisors/parents entitled *Keys Please*.

The *Keys Please* courses are run state wide in Victoria, and aim to show supervisors how to help their learner drivers to get the maximum benefit from the learner period, and become responsible, safe drivers (VicRoads 2005). Topics covered in the *Keys Please* course/session are:

- The complexities of the driving task;
- Reasons why young drivers are at higher risk;
- Resources to assist young drivers in getting more on-road practice;
- Getting supervised practice in a variety of road, weather and traffic conditions;
- Ways that on-road experience can be maximised; and
- Encouraging support from parents in gaining on road experience (VicRoads 2005).

This type of course appears to offer supervisors some important information which could be used to help their learner drivers to become safer and more experienced drivers, however a disadvantage of this course is that the course covers such a wide number of topics in such a short space of time, i.e., only 90-minutes.

Further to this, the RACQ is not aware of how popular the course has been with supervisors and learner drivers in Victoria, and therefore suggests that further research be conducted into the success and value of this type of course/session.

##### **Recommendations:**

RACQ recommends that further research be conducted into the success and value of information sessions held in other jurisdictions for parents/carers/supervisors of learner drivers.

RACQ also recommends that further research be conducted into the proportion of parents/carers/supervisors in Queensland who would support and attend similar presentations/courses/sessions.

#### **4(b) Educational package for learner drivers and parents**

Ninety-five percent of RACQ members agree that young learner drivers need to be given a greater amount of education (MCR 2003, p20).

It is important that parents and carers intending to supervise learner drivers are kept up-to-date with the current road rules and correct driving techniques. Otherwise bad habits and/or the wrong messages may be unwittingly passed on to the learner driver. To minimise the risk of this happening, various Australian state licensing authorities have developed materials to assist learners and supervising drivers, including step-by-step guides.

RACQ believes that the Queensland Transport publication *Ready To Guide* represents a valuable tool to help instruct parents/carers/supervisors on how to teach young drivers, with or without the assistance of a qualified driver trainer.

*Ready To Guide* is attached to Queensland Transport's *Your keys to driving in Queensland* publication, and provides the following (Queensland Transport 2000):

- A step-by-step guide to being a young driver's tutor;
- Structured checklists of skills to cover during each step to ensure the learner driver is getting a wide range of experience on different roads and in all kinds of road, weather, and traffic conditions, e.g., high speed, in the wet, night driving, gravel roads, country roads, etc.;
- Helpful tips for tutors;
- A driver's log to record the progress and check that the learner obtains a variety of practice; and
- Space where professional driver trainers and parents can make comments to help each other plan future driving sessions.

Based on anecdotal feedback gained from member inquiries, the RACQ is concerned that:

- Knowledge of, and use of both the *Ready To Guide* and *Your keys to driving in Queensland* is lacking amongst the target audience, i.e., learner drivers and their family/friends; and
- This lack of awareness may be in part due to poor promotion of the publication to the target audience, e.g., many past QT media statements highlighting the need for learners to gain as much driving experience under supervision as possible, fail to mention *Ready To Guide*.

It is noted with great interest that *Ready To Guide* is not mentioned in Queensland Transport's young driver discussion paper.

The RACQ believes *Ready To Guide* needs to be more vigorously promoted to instructors, family and friends to encourage more learner drivers to gain their licence through a structured approach. There is also a need to ensure that learners and their supervising drivers have greater access to a current edition of the *Your Keys to Driving in Queensland* and the *Ready to Guide* booklets, with feedback from RACQ members suggesting that availability of the two publications is an issue.

It is now an advantage that both aforementioned publications are available on Queensland Transport's website, however there is still a need to make members of the public aware of this fact, as well as other methods of accessing the publications.

As discussed in Section 3, New Zealand has a programme called *Practice* which encourages learner drivers to get more supervised driving practice, and includes an educational resource 'Your guide to driver coaching' for the driving coach.

This coaching resource provides detailed advice for the supervisor through setting targets related to each driving task to be taught, and then providing the supervisor/s with step-by-step advice on how to help their learner achieve the target.

#### **Recommendations:**

RACQ supports an education kit for learner drivers and their parents including better use of Queensland Transport's *Ready to Guide* booklet.

RACQ recommends that *Ready to Guide* and *Your Keys to Driving in Queensland* be more vigorously promoted and made more widely accessible to learner drivers as well as driver trainers and parents/carers/supervisors to encourage more learner drivers to obtain their licence through a structured approach.

## **5.0 Duration of Licence**

### **5(a) 12 months minimum learner licence period**

In most Australian states, the Learner licence stage currently lasts for six months (QT 2005, p10).

It is suggested in the discussion paper, however, that: "Learner drivers could be required to hold their licence for a minimum of 12 months so that drivers can obtain 120 hours of supervised driving experience. To assist with this increase, the learner licence could be issued for three years instead of the current one year" (QT 2005, p10).

The qualitative component of the RACV Young Driver Licensing Survey (RACV 2005, p6) found that most people were happy to see the Learner period extended to a minimum of 12 months in Victoria.

Extending the minimum learner period from six months to 12 months would allow more time, if young drivers make proper use of the full 12 month period, to get practical driving experience, especially if a mandatory number of logbook hours, e.g., 120 hours is introduced.

Further to this, Queensland Transport (2005, p10) research from 2004 has found that: “[...] learner drivers in Queensland currently spend an average of 11 months on their learner licence. Therefore, an increase in the minimum time may not greatly inconvenience the majority of drivers” (QT 2005, p10).

The RACQ believes that due to the fact that that it has been suggested that on average learner drivers already spend almost 12 months on their learner’s permit, and that this increase in the minimum time that learners are required to hold a Learner’s licence would give learners more of an opportunity to obtain 120 or more hours of supervised driving experience during the learner stage, this measure should be considered by Government.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports extending the minimum learner period from six months to 12 months to support the 120-hour minimum experience requirement.

**5(b) Learner licence valid for three years**

If the 120 hours or driving experience becomes mandatory, Learners would require a more substantial amount of time to legitimately obtain that amount of practice. This equates to approximately 2- 3 hours per week over a 12-month period, which could be quite demanding, so it appears reasonable to extend the valid period from one year to three years.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports increasing the learner licence validity form one year to three years to support the 120-hour minimum experience requirement.

**6.0 Reducing the learner licence age to 16 years**

Many other jurisdictions in Australia allow young people to obtain Learner’s licences at 16 years. Other than ACT which is 15 years 9 months all other states and Northern Territory have a minimum learner age of 16 years. If Queensland were to introduce this measure therefore, Queensland would become more consistent with other Australian jurisdictions.

Although the learner would be younger, theoretically they should continue to be a low risk because they will be under supervision (QT 2005, p10).

However while learner drivers are low risk, research shows that crash risk increases dramatically once young drivers are allowed to drive solo. Therefore if the learner licence age is reduced to 16 years, it should be accompanied by a corresponding requirement that the learner must hold their licence for a minimum of 12 months before being allowed to apply for a provisional licence. This also supports the proposal to allow more time to gain 120 hours of supervised driving experience.

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As it is stated in the discussion paper, after introducing a similar measure in 1993, Sweden experienced an overall 17% reduction in its crash rate all novice drivers (QT 2005, p10).

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports reducing the learner licence age to 16 years, but only on the condition that it be accompanied by the requirement to obtain 120 hours of driving experience and that a provisional licence can not be obtained until 17 years or older.

## **7.0 Innovative penalties and sanctions for learner drivers**

It is stated in the discussion paper that: "New penalty and sanction options could be developed for learner drivers who break the law to deter them from re-offending" (QT 2005, p11).

In Queensland at present, learner drivers will have their licences suspended if they accumulate four or more demerit points in one year (QT 2005). Further to this, learner drivers under 25 years of age must have a BAC of Zero (0.00%) while driving in Queensland (QT 2005).

Learner drivers in Queensland must have their learner licences with them at all times when learning to drive, and they must immediately show the licence to a police officer when required (QT 2005).

Under the current L plate trial in Queensland, Learner drivers must display an L plate conspicuously at the front and rear of the vehicle that they are learning to drive, and they must only be taught by a person who holds, and has held, an open licence for the class of vehicle they are learning to drive for at least one year (QT 2005).

The RACQ is currently unable to provide any statistics that indicate how often or what proportion of learner drivers accumulate demerit points for traffic offences, however it is believed that the Queensland Police Service [QPS] or Queensland Transport would be able to obtain these types of statistics.

The RACQ believes that penalties and sanctions should be relevant and of sufficient severity to act as a deterrent against illegal or unsafe driving behaviours, and therefore, the Club supports the investigation of newer, more innovative penalties and sanctions for learner drivers.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports investigations of innovative penalties and sanctions for learner drivers if they can be demonstrated to be effective, e.g., act as a deterrent to offending.

## **8.0 Q-SAFE**

### **8(a) Review of Q-SAFE practical driving test**

A review is due in terms of consistencies and timeframes between examiners and testing centres. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a wide variation in how the test is conducted and time allocated to complete the test can range from 15 to 45 minutes.

Appropriate resources should be provided to allocate adequate time for each individual being tested without unduly affecting the waiting period of 3 – 4 weeks when booking a test.

Further to this, the Q-SAFE practical test itself, and the marking/scoring/rating of the test by examiners, should be conducted in a consistent manner across all testing centres in Queensland.

The RACQ believes that, when conducted and applied consistently, the content of the Q-SAFE practical driving test is adequate.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ supports a review of how the Q-SAFE practical test is conducted across Queensland, especially with regard to the consistent allocation of test time, and how the tests are marked/scored/rated.

**8(b) Adequacy of Q-SAFE practical test**

The components covered in the standard test appear adequate to assess the application of road law knowledge and vehicle control skills and some higher order cognitive skills such as scanning for hazards and judgement. If applied correctly these components are acceptable when moving from learner to provisional stage considering time constraints. However there is scope for further testing in the provisional stage, e.g., hazard perception test (HPT) [See Section 15 for more details].

**Recommendation:**

RACQ believes the content of the current Q-SAFE practical test is adequate, when applied consistently.

**9.0 Competency based training and assessment (CBTA)**

RACQ member research shows 90% of respondents agree that introducing more comprehensive testing and training for learner and provisional drivers, e.g., hazard perception tests and competency-based training, would be effective countermeasures in reducing the road toll (RACQ 2003, p10).

Competency based training (CBT) does not involve a formal practical driving test but the driver still needs to demonstrate good driving skills in short assessments conducted by an Accredited Instructor who signs off each task in the logbook.

The RACQ supports in principle the need for a competency-based training option for learner drivers in Queensland, and believes that this option provides a formal learn-to-

drive process where learner drivers could gain gradual exposure to different and more complex driving environments before and after driving solo.

Accredited instructors, using structured benchmarks of driver competence would preferably deliver this option. RACQ understands that driving instructors in Queensland are currently qualified to deliver the Competency Based Training and Assessment [CBTA] option.

To be most effective, the competency-based training process should be required to be audited by an examiner. However, many examiners may not be qualified to assess the instructors. In those instances, examiners would need to be appropriately trained to allow this expansion of duties.

Competency-based training is presently available in South Australia as an alternative to undertaking the normal steps to gaining a licence. The Competency-based training option comprises 23 training modules of on-road driving skills requiring a minimum of 10 to 12 sessions. Some logbook requirements are also necessary (Senserrick and Whelan 2003, p13). Participants choosing this option are able to gain their licence at an earlier age, and are assessed in modules rather than having to pass one major test.

Research has not shown any difference in subsequent crash risk for drivers who opt for CBTA compared to undertaking the driving test to get their licence, and that Competency-based training is by no means a substitute for supervised, on-road experience.

In Queensland, *Precise Driver Training* on the Gold Coast is currently offering a driver education and competency-based driver-training program (which is Nationally Accredited) to high schools, but participants are still required to pass the Q-SAFE practical driving test upon completion of the competency-based training course (RACQ 2003, p12).

RACQ recognises that many learner drivers would not undertake competency-based training unless there were worthwhile incentives which offset the additional costs and extra training that would be required, such as that provided by the South Australian example. However as crash risk is also related to age, RACQ would not see it as advisable to reduce the minimum age for a provisional licence to lower than 17 years of age.

In New Zealand, successful participants of the competency-based training option can gain access to a range of incentives offered as part of the AA Driver Education Foundation's *Alchemy Driver Programme* (RACQ 2003, p12). The *Alchemy Driver Programme* is an incentive based programme for drivers in the 15-24 year age group (RACQ 2003, p12). It employs a points system to encourage drivers to complete competency-based activities delivered by approved providers including core driving unit standards, e.g., stress, health and fatigue for driving and safe night driving. Points entitle participants to redeem rewards such as insurance benefits.

### **Recommendation:**

RACQ supports the option for CBTA as an option to gain a driver's licence, but does not believe that participants should be allowed to obtain their licence any earlier than at 17 years of age.

## Provisional Licence Stage

Victorian research has shown that: “Young drivers are most at risk as soon as they obtain a probationary licence, and in the first year of driving their risk of crashing is three times higher than that of a more experienced driver” (RACV 2005, p2).

Research also shows that young drivers are commonly more at risk in their first 6 – 12 months of solo driving (Cavallo 2003 cited in RACQ 2004, p56).

### 10.0 Peer passenger restrictions

Research tends to suggest that the crash risk for young novice drivers and passengers is much higher when in a vehicle carrying multiple passengers than compared to when they are driving on their own.

Victorian crash statistics show that 26% of fatal crashes involving probationary drivers occur when the young driver is carrying multiple passengers (RACV 2003, p8). The risk of crash involvement increases with the number of passengers, and new P plate drivers have four times the risk of being in a fatal crash if they are carrying more than one passenger (RACV 2003, p8).

In Ontario, Canada, fatal crashes among 16-19 year olds were found to be 5 to 7 times more likely when two or more passengers were in the car, as compared to when the teenage driver was alone (Baldock 2000, p9). Furthermore, this elevated risk with passengers is present during night and day (Williams 2000, p5).

There are various ways in which different overseas jurisdictions have applied passenger restrictions to novice drivers, including (Williams and Mayhew 2003, p5):

- No passengers allowed;
- No teenage passengers allowed; and/or
- Limits on number of passengers allowed, usually two occupants including the driver.
- As with the night time driving restriction, this could apply for the first 6 – 12 months of driving

Exemptions may be granted if passengers are family members, or there is also an older adult passenger present as a supervising driver [similar to learner conditions].

The concerns raised about passenger restrictions are similar to those raised in regard to night driving curfews, i.e., they relate to non-compliance and social justice implications.

As with night driving curfews, despite non-compliance, research indicates that passenger restrictions were effective in reducing the crash risk of novice drivers during the curfew period (Williams & Mayhew 2003, p5).

In terms of social justice implications, as with the night driving curfews, the RACQ believes many of these concerns will be largely alleviated with the granting of exemptions from passenger restrictions if under supervision.

Other various concerns have been expressed about passenger restrictions, including:

- Personal safety of young women if forced to travel alone (Williams 2001, p.6);
- Having a designated driver under 21 years of age would be prohibited amongst groups of young teenagers which may contradict efforts to reduce drink driving (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee 1996, p73); and
- Compliance with passenger restrictions will lead to more young novice drivers on the road, as they will not be able to car-pool, resulting in increased crash risk (Williams 2001, p5).

On the other hand, RACV (2005, p9) research shows that “a restriction on carrying multiple passengers would affect about 4.4% of young novice driver trips”. This is a very small percentage of trips that could be affected by the restriction.

Also, a Californian-based survey of novice drivers and their parents found that the age group most affected by the passenger and driver restrictions were able to find alternative transport or other means to do their activities in most cases (Williams 2001, p7). In this instance, there were only a small percentage of parents who found the restrictions to be of a frequent or major inconvenience (Williams 2001, p7).

Since the crash risk for young novice drivers is substantially increased when travelling with passengers, even moderate compliance is expected to result in substantial reductions in crashes and injuries (Williams 2000, p5).

Therefore, RACQ would support the introduction of passenger restrictions for the first 6 – 12 months of the provisional licence period for novice drivers less than 21 years of age.

There would however, need to be further discussion on what type of passenger restrictions would be appropriate for Queensland, particularly when considering impacts on people living in non-metropolitan areas with limited transport options, and younger parents with small children.

As with night time restrictions there should also be a public education campaign to encourage informed debate about the various options. For example when the 6-month option was put to respondents in the RACV Young Driver Licensing Survey (RACV 2005, p9) it had relatively strong support from general motorists [74%] and parents of novice drivers [72%]. The level of support was considerably lower among novice drivers, although 42% of them did support this measure (RACV 2005, p9).

RACQ member surveys show 49% agree [48% disagree] that there should be a limit on the number of passengers under the age of 24 allowed to travel with a provisional driver of support for passenger restrictions. In the 18 – 24 year age group, 33% agreed with the proposal (MCR 2003, p28).

### **Recommendations:**

RACQ recommends that:

- The government undertake further public education about the increased risks to probationary drivers of driving with young peer group passengers, to raise community awareness and voluntary support for the issue; and

- A passenger restriction of no more than one passenger aged less than 21 years who does not hold an open licence be introduced for provisional drivers less than 21 years of age during the first year of their provisional licence with a strictly limited range of exemptions, e.g., younger parents travelling with small children.

### **11.0 Late night driving restrictions**

Research has found that “the risk of a new Probationary driver being involved in a fatal crash between 10pm and 5am is six times higher than for all other drivers (NSW RTA as cited in RACV 2005, p7). Late night driving restrictions or curfew periods for young drivers, are possible methods for helping to address this issue.

A ‘late night’ or ‘night’ driving restriction or curfew is taken to include those restrictions that apply to late night and/or early morning periods.

There is general consensus that curfew periods should start before midnight, as restrictions beginning after this time would involve too few crashes to yield either statistically or practically significant changes (McKnight and Peck 2002, pii34). In the United States, starting times for night driving restrictions range from 9 pm to 1 am (Williams 2000, p4).

There are a range of options for night driving restrictions which could include:

- Supervised night driving, similar to learner licence conditions (i.e., no time frames specified);
- Apply as a blanket for all P licence holders at high risk times, e.g., between 10pm and 6am Friday and Saturday nights;
- For first 6 – 12 months of provisional licence;
- For full 3 yr provisional period; or
- Apply only as a penalty for an offence or at fault crash during high-risk times.

RACQ member research shows low levels of agreement for provisional drivers being subject to curfews [28% agree, 71% disagree] (MCR 2003, p28).

There has also been a concern raised in the past that the unpopularity of curfews means they are frequently and easily violated (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee 1996, p72). However, despite evidence of non-compliance, research indicates that night driving curfews were effective in reducing the crash risk of novice drivers during the curfew period (Williams and Mayhew 2003, p5).

Research also tends to suggest that night-time curfews are effective in lowering crash rates during the restricted period, without adversely affecting crashes outside this period (Baldock 2000, p22 and Williams 2000, p4).

In 1994, Ontario [Canada] introduced a night driving curfew. This was evaluated in 1998, and showed a 62 percent decline in appropriate crashes (Langford 2002, p39). In 1987, New Zealand’s graduated licensing scheme introduced night driving

restrictions, amongst other initiatives, and this yielded 23 percent and 12 percent reductions in injuries amongst 15-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds respectively.

For night driving restrictions in the United States, Williams (2000, p) found that: "compliance is reasonably good, and young people violating the restrictions may drive more carefully for fear of detection; parents strongly endorse night restrictions, and they, not the police, chiefly enforce them; and young people subject to the restrictions are not thrilled about them but accommodate over time."

RACV research (RACV 2005, p8) found that these night driving restrictions would only affect around 6.8% of young novice drivers' trips. It is believed this could be further reduced if the night driving condition applied only for the first 6 – 12 months when driving unsupervised, or did/does not apply at all if accompanied by a supervisor [similarly to in the learner stage].

Another concern has been that the imposition of night-time driving curfews would have significant social justice implications for novice drivers, particularly where driving provides essential transport to work and study (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee 1996, p67). The RACQ believes many of these concerns will be largely alleviated with the granting of exemptions from this restriction.

As well as exemptions, the viability of this sanction also depends on the availability of other effective means of transport, particularly public transport. This has a major bearing on the feasibility of night driving curfews given the absence of public transport in many non-metropolitan areas in Queensland, and this would need to be considered in relation to the overall feasibility of this measure, or the granting of exemptions.

RACQ believes that a night driving curfew would provide benefits in reducing exposure of Queensland's novice drivers to road crashes, but social and mobility ramifications would need to be taken into account.

With similar road/traffic conditions to Australia, it is presumed that many corresponding administrative [maintaining up-to-date exemption permits] and social/community issues associated with night driving restrictions would have been addressed in New Zealand, Canada and the United States where this measure has already been introduced. RACQ believes the implementation details of these programs should be investigated.

The subject of night driving restrictions and the various forms it could take need more informed public debate and education campaigns so the community, particularly the target group, understands the increased risk to provisionally licensed drivers of late night driving.

In general, RACQ would not be opposed to restricting unsupervised night driving during a specified time-period for provisional licence holders less than 21 years of age. This period should address the times when night-time crashes are most likely to occur, based on Queensland road crash data for young novice drivers.

The RACQ believes that the introduction of night-time driving restrictions would have the greatest effect if accompanied by passenger restrictions.

### **Recommendations:**

RACQ recommends that:

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- The government undertake further public education about the increased risks to probationary drivers of late-night driving to raise community awareness and voluntary support for the issue; and then
- Consider the introduction of night driving restrictions for unsupervised provisional drivers for the first 6 – 12 months of the three-year probationary period with the option of removing the restriction subject to traffic offence history and at-fault crash free periods.
- Implementation details of overseas night driving restriction schemes be further researched.

## **12.0 Dividing the provisional licence into two phases (P1 and P2)**

New South Wales [NSW] has a provisional licence stage divided into two segments - P1 and P2 (RTA 2005). Among a range of controls, P1 and P2 licence holders in NSW must display the appropriate P plate and are prohibited from driving certain high-powered cars (RTA 2005). P1 must observe a towing restriction, and a maximum speed limit of 90km/h and P2 must observe a 100km/h limit (RTA 2005). Further to this, drivers in the P1 stage can not accumulate more than 3 demerit points, and P2 stage drivers can not accumulate more than six demerit points.

Tasmania also has a 'two-stage' provisional licence in that after holding a provisional licence for a year, certain restrictions are removed [e.g., speed restriction, requirement to display P-plates] (DIER Tasmania 2004).

In Queensland, the provisional licence period has great potential to provide a three-year window of opportunity for gradually increasing exposure of novice drivers to the risk of the driving environment by adding restrictions to control road use.

The RACQ believes that many of the restrictions would be impractical and socially unacceptable if they were to be valid for three years. So therefore the Club believes that there would be merit in introducing a separate stage with extra restrictions to address the high-crash risk period for provisional drivers who are driving unsupervised for the first time.

With a two-stage system, the majority of additional restrictions would best be introduced in the first phase and then gradually relaxed or removed in the second stage.

There are a number of alternatives with regard to how a two-stage provisional licensing system could fit into a revised graduated licensing system for Queensland. Appendix 1 provides a flowchart of how a suggested outline could work.

RACQ would see the P1 stage as the most appropriate period to apply additional restrictions aimed at curbing high-risk recreational driving, e.g., night driving curfews and passenger restrictions.

The RACQ believes these additional restrictions should be effective only for the first six to twelve months of the provisional licence, as research indicates that the crash-risk for provisional drivers declines significantly after they have gained more than 6 months experience driving unsupervised (Williams and Ferguson 2002, pii10).

To identify a stage-one provisional driver to both the police and other road users, 'P' plates would be required to be displayed on the vehicle being driven by the provisional driver at the time. For further discussion on the display of 'P' plates, see Section 13.

Consideration should be given to the possibility of lifting these restrictions once a novice driver has satisfied certain criteria, e.g., passed a hazard perception test [see Section 15(a)].

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends dividing the provisional licence into two phases (P1 and P2) with additional restrictions primarily in the first phase.

### **13.0 P plates**

At present, Queensland is the only state that does not require 'P' plates to be displayed by provisional drivers. The RACQ has previously called for the re-introduction of 'L' and 'P' plates for well over ten years. The Club showed its support for the three year 'L' plate trial that started in January 2005 by offering 30,000 free L-plate packs throughout the year and, once the initial 'batch' of 30,000 sets of L-plates had been exhausted due to such a high level of demand, the RACQ committed to supplying additional 'batches' of free L-plates for the remainder of 2005.

The RACQ would not like to have to wait until the end of the 3-year trial and its subsequent evaluation before the government decides whether or not to introduce 'P' plates. This is due to the potential advantages offered by such a visible means of identifying provisional drivers, including (RACQ 1995, 15):

- National uniformity – the display of these plates would bring Queensland into line with other states and territories, thus promoting national uniformity. However, it should be recognised that there are differences between the various jurisdictions in terms of the identification plates' design and the accompanying licence conditions;
- The promotion of greater accountability for novice drivers – requiring 'P' plates to be displayed by novice drivers would provide an identifiable symbol to encourage them to be more accountable for their driving behaviour. Being more accountable may not necessarily counteract the characteristic immature practices of all young drivers, but could reduce the level of irresponsible behaviour which may otherwise be prompted whilst driving an unmarked and thus more anonymous vehicle;
- Allowing corrective enforcement to be targeted at this high risk group – it is envisaged that proactive enforcement would not lead to an increase in the number of traffic infringement notices issued to the novice driver group. Rather, it is perceived that properly coordinated publicity campaigns and reasonable enforcement would help to deter hazardous or incorrect driving behaviour. When an offence is observed, novice drivers should have the consequences of their actions explained to them as part of the issuing of a warning or, if warranted, an infringement notice;
- Informing other road users of their status – 'P' plates serve as a message to surrounding drivers to provide a buffer, including increased following distance, to allow for unexpected behaviour by the novice driver. This is considered a

natural reaction by most motorists and allows the novice driver a greater safety margin when driving;

- Decreased motorist frustration - as motorists are generally more forgiving of delays caused by novice drivers than those of other experienced drivers. Therefore it is believed that requiring the appropriate plates to be displayed would alleviate problems which involve novice drivers and other road users;
- Being beneficial in identifying a group for the implementation of any further class specific licence incentives/restrictions – if the graduated licensing system in Queensland is extended to incorporate additional restrictions imposed on novice drivers, e.g., number of passengers, times of driving etc., then compulsory 'P' plates would be necessary to supplement these initiatives; and
- Representing a low cost measure – As the cost of the 'L' and 'P' plates is borne by the novice driver, government intervention and funding would be minimal, with the scheme needing little, if any, administration. These plates are devices that can be easily attached, changed or removed if other drivers using the vehicle are not in the defined novice driver category.

If the existing graduated licensing system were to be enhanced with additional measures, such as passenger and night-driving restrictions, there would need to be a re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland provisional licence holders to display 'P' plates on the vehicles that they are driving. The identification plates would be essential, not only for enforcement purposes, but also to alert other road users to make allowances for any licensing conditions that may otherwise impede or frustrate general traffic.

A previous Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (1996, p76) report, on Driver training and Licensing, considered the potential benefits to be derived from 'P' plates to far outweigh the minimal costs and inconvenience factors, and recommended that: "provisions requiring the display of 'P' plates on vehicles being driven or ridden by novices should be reintroduced".

Finally, if 'P' plates were to be introduced in Queensland, there would need to be consideration given to educating motorists and enforcement authorities in other states and territories of the differences between Queensland 'P' plates and licensing conditions from those in other states. This would be a priority in the case of a two-stage provisional licensing system.

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends the re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland provisional licence holders to display 'P' plates on the vehicles they are driving.

#### **14.0 Tolerance campaign**

Driving is a complex task, which places varying demands on the driver according to different environments. How drivers behave can have a dramatic effect on reactions from other road users. Care, courtesy and awareness are very important attributes of a safe driver.

Unfortunately, as roads become congested and vehicles become an extension of the individual's personal space, drivers often have a tendency to feel as though they own

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the section of road that they occupy, and can fearlessly divorce themselves from the consequences of anonymously trying to protect that space.

Although some motorists may not intend to be aggressive, manoeuvres such as improper lane changes or overtaking may delay, endanger or irritate other road users. Driver frustration and impatience may increase errors of judgement, and the chance of a crash.

In a New Zealand study of drivers, 82% said they were most concerned about the way other people drive, but 85% rated themselves as safe drivers (King 2002). A Hartford Financial Services (The Hartford Financial Services Group 2003) survey found 88% of drivers gave themselves high marks for cautious driving but only 17% considered other drivers to be as cautious.

This well documented tendency for drivers to blame other road users highlights the basic challenge that road safety agencies face in trying to change attitudes, behaviours and perceptions.

However, drivers admit to driving more defensively to avoid conflicts when they see a vehicle displaying an L or P plate by allowing for errors by that driver.

This aspect of drivers' behaviour could be further encouraged and built upon by public education campaigns that promote the adoption of a more tolerant attitude to mistakes by young drivers displaying L or P plates.

Combined with other public education campaigns that aim to replace the aggressive "I own the road" or "me first" mentalities with a courteous "sharing the road" philosophy, the RACQ believes that a public education campaign aimed at increasing levels of tolerance for young drivers' mistakes could help to reduce the levels of aggressive driver behaviour experienced on Queensland roads.

### **Recommendation:**

RACQ supports an education campaign encouraging tolerance for all drivers and the adopting of a "sharing the road" approach to driving, as well as an additional public education campaign aimed at encouraging tolerance for young drivers specifically.

#### **15(a) Screen-based hazard perception test (HPT) for P1 to P2**

Hazard perception tests [HPT] are computer-based tests using video of real life driving scenes. In the test drivers are required to respond to each scene by touching the computer screen [or not touching] to indicate when it is safe [or not safe] to drive or choose an appropriate action to prevent a crash. The driving situations covered in the test are known to lead to the most common crashes involving young and inexperienced drivers, e.g.:

- Colliding with the rear of a vehicle going in the same direction,
- Colliding with vehicles coming from adjacent directions at intersections,
- Collisions with vehicles travelling in the opposite direction [head ons],
- Running off the road on a curve and colliding with a tree, pole or parked car,

- Running off the road on a straight and colliding with a tree, pole or parked car (RTA 2001, p9-10).

As the HPT aims to assess more higher order cognitive and judgement skills than the current Q-SAFE practical driving test, it is believed that there is value in using the HPT as an additional test for young drivers.

However, as the HPT relies on access to a Customer Service Centre (CSC), it may be difficult for participants who live in rural and remote areas to do a HPT. In recognition of this, South Australian drivers who live outside a 100km radius of a CSC do not need to take the HPT to move from P1 to P2 stage (DTEI 2006), while in New South Wales the HPT can be completed over the internet (QT 2005, p15).

If HPTs were introduced in Queensland, it would be necessary to determine which stage in the Graduated Licensing System would be the most appropriate stage at which to apply the test. Victoria and Western Australia have a HPT to progress from learner to provisional stages of licensing (VicRoads 2005 and Department for Planning and Infrastructure WA 2006), whereas New South Wales has a HPT to progress from P1 to P2 (RTA 2005).

Furthermore, if HPTs were introduced in Queensland it would be advisable to provide an educational resource to help young drivers prepare for the test by providing them with a resource that covers the various hazards covered in the test.

In South Australia, a HPT handbook is available in hardcopy form and via the Internet. It is suggested that a similar resource be developed for the Queensland HPTs, should they be introduced in Queensland.

RACQ member research shows that 90% of respondents agree that introducing more comprehensive testing and training for learner and provisional drivers, e.g., hazard perception tests and competency-based training would be effective countermeasures in reducing the road toll (RACQ 2003, p10).

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ supports the introduction of a Hazard Perception Test and associated educational resources as part of the licensing process, for provisional licence holders.

#### **15(b) Screen-based hazard perception test (HPT) from Provisional to open licence**

The current licensing system in Queensland does not require a provisional driver to pass any form of testing or other requirement to graduate to a full licence, other than holding their provisional licence for a minimum period of time.

“While some other Australian jurisdictions have introduced exit tests, there is little evidence to suggest that these measures are effective in reducing road trauma, although detailed evaluations have not yet been undertaken” (RACV 2005, p10).

Further to this, “There is some evidence from research that young drivers with a high number of offences have a higher crash risk” (Senserrick and Whelan 2003 in RACV 2005, p10). Therefore, an argument can be put forth for requiring probational drivers to have a clean, or relatively clean, driving record before allowing them to graduate to the next stage of the licensing system (RACV 2005, p10).

The RACQ sees value in the HPT as a means for providing further testing for young provisional drivers before allowing them to become fully licensed, however the Club believes that perhaps another combined form of testing [as well as having a separate HPT during the provisional stage] may be more appropriate as an ‘exit’ test.

New South Wales has a Driver Qualification Test [DQT], which is a touch-screen, computer-based test used to assess applicants’:

- Knowledge of safe driving practices; and
- Ability to recognise, react and appropriately respond to potentially dangerous situations (RTA 2002, p4).

The DQT consists of two components to achieve this, being the advanced knowledge test, and the advanced hazard perception test (RTA 2002, p4).

These two components of the DQT are similar in format to the knowledge test and hazard perception tests faced by young drivers in order to obtain their learner’s licence, and their P2 licence respectively (RTA 2002, p4). However, the questions covered in each component of the DQT are more difficult and complex, with some parts of the advanced hazard perception component requiring multiple responses (RTA 2002, p4).

The RTA in New South Wales has produced a *Driver qualification handbook*, which serves as the young driver’s guide to the DQT, and is an essential study material for the knowledge test component of the DQT.

The RACQ believes that a combined ‘exit test’ consisting of more advanced road rules and hazard perception tests, similar to the New South Wales DQT, should be considered for introduction in Queensland. The Club also believes that, should a combined exit test similar to the DQT in New South Wales be introduced in Queensland, that an accompanying handbook similar to the RTA’s *Driver qualification handbook* be produced and provided.

### **Recommendation:**

The RACQ recommends that a Hazard Perception Test be introduced during the provisional stage in Queensland. However, the Club recommends that, in addition, a combined test – consisting of advanced road rules and advanced hazard perception test components – should be used as the ‘exit test’ for provisional drivers to obtain their open licences in Queensland, similar to the Driver Qualification Test in New South Wales.

That if an 'exit test', similar to the New South Wales Driver Qualification Test is introduced in Queensland, produce and provide an accompanying handbook similar to the RTA's *Driver qualification handbook*.

### **16.0 Should Queensland Transport assist instructors with education and training after changes to the licensing system?**

Currently the industry provides training to instructors through the Workplace Trainer and Assessor Cert IV via a Registered Training Organisation, costing between \$2500 and \$3000.

The RACQ understands that Queensland Transport requires a yearly licence fee for instructors, and provides no additional education or information for this fee.

In Queensland, there needs to be better communication and cooperation between the Queensland Government agencies, driver training providers and researchers.

The *Developing Safer Drivers and Riders* conference, held in Brisbane in 2002, highlighted the frustration and lack of communication being experienced by the training providers (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee and Australian College of Road Safety 2002).

The RACQ is aware that some progress has taken place to improve the relationship between researchers and the driver training industry in Queensland. However, there needs to be further improved communication and cooperation between Queensland Government agencies, driver training providers, and researchers.

Should changes be made to the licensing system, the RACQ believes that it would be of benefit for Queensland Transport to assist instructors with education and training.

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ agrees that Queensland Transport should assist instructors with education and training after any changes to the licensing system.

### **17.0 Driver distraction and Inattention Campaign**

Drivers of all ages engage in some kind of distracting activity while they are driving. In Queensland inattention [which is the nearest classifying factor to distraction] consistently contributes to approximately one quarter of fatal crashes and approximately one third of all crashes (RACQ 2005, based on Queensland Transport statistics).

As a major contributing factor to crashes, distraction deserves much more publicity than it is currently receiving.

Driver distraction falls into three categories:

- Visual – drivers taking their eyes off the road;
- Physical – drivers taking their hands off the steering wheel; and/or

- Cognitive – drivers taking their mind off (or attention away from) the driving task (RACQ 2005).

Young novice drivers are more vulnerable to the effects of distraction than other drivers because they:

- Have not had as much practice driving and therefore the actual operation of the vehicle has not become as automatic as it has for older and more experienced drivers; and
- They are more likely to try to perform two tasks at once more often (Regan 2005) (Regan 2005 in RACQ 2005).

RACQ member surveys (MCR 2003, p71) show that motorists admit to carrying out a range of distracting actions on a regular basis while driving, even though they widely acknowledge the activities as being distractions. These include:

- Changing the CD, radio or tape player (54%)
- Eating or drinking (47%)
- Making or receiving calls with a hands-free phone kit (30%)
- Making or receiving calls without using a hands-free kit (18%)
- Smoking (13%); and
- Sending or receiving mobile phone text messages (9%).

Other common driver distractions include grooming, passengers, reading and writing while driving (RACQ 2004, p54).

It is difficult for legislation, regulations and standards to keep pace with devices in vehicles which can potentially distract drivers, e.g., the introduction of in-car DVD players, information, navigation (e.g., GPS) and communications (e.g., PDA) systems.

Other than hand held mobile phones and visual display devices, it is difficult to legislate and enforce against driver distractions. Driving without due care and attention can normally apply as a contributing factor after a crash occurs, however it is important that steps be taken to prevent crashes from occurring in instances where distractions may have been avoided.

The RACQ has recently developed a distraction awareness campaign consisting of a brochure *Dealing with Driver Distraction*. The brochure describes a 'Not Now' approach to potential distractions that aims to help drivers manage and reduce the occurrence/impact of distractions while driving.

For the 'Not Now' approach to potential distractions to be effective, the driver:

- Identifies the potential distraction;
- Actively vocalises 'Not Now'; and

- Chooses a more appropriate time to deal with any potentially distracting behaviours/ issues (RACQ 2005)

**Recommendation:**

The RACQ supports, and has developed, an education and publicity campaign on driver distraction with messages that apply to target groups, e.g., young drivers and older drivers.

**18.0 Prohibiting all mobile phone use for learner and provisional drivers when driving**

An RACV (2005, p10) member survey showed quite strong support for prohibiting use of any form of mobile phone for probationary drivers. Sixty-six percent of the total sample supported a ban on mobile phones for P platers, with parents giving the highest level of support at 70%, and novice drivers giving 55% support (RACV 2005, p10).

Research conducted by Griffith University has found that even when drivers use mobile phones with hands-free devices, they still drive slower than the speed limit, brake later, fail to use their indicators appropriately, swerve in the lane, and tailgate other vehicles (Hinchcliffe 2005, p2).

It has been found that: "While a ban on mobile phones for probationary drivers received good support from the community in Victoria, research about the level of risk associated with using a hands-free mobile phone while driving among the general population compared to the risk for probationary drivers is needed before this measure could be considered" (RACV 2005, p10).

This is primarily due to the fact that many of the reasons for banning mobile phones for novice drivers could well also apply to all other drivers.

The RACQ agrees with the view of the RACV in that research into the level of risk associated with using hands-free mobile phones while driving among the general population compared the risk for probationary drivers should be conducted before a ban on mobile phone use for any specific group of drivers could be introduced.

Further to this, it could prove quite practically difficult to enforce a ban on mobile phones using hands-free kits. This could be due to the fact that it would be difficult to distinguish with any certainty whether a driver is talking on a hands-free mobile phone or doing something else, such as:

- Talking to a passenger;
- Talking to themselves; or
- Singing along to music.

In the interim, until further research is conducted on the effects of mobile phone and hands-free mobile phone use on all drivers, compared to young drivers specifically, it would be preferable to conduct publicity/educational campaigns aimed at combating driver distraction in general e.g., 'Not Now' [see Section 17 for more information], as opposed to prohibiting young drivers from mobile phone use including with hands-free kits.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends learner and provisional drivers not be totally prohibited from using mobile phones while driving. Rather, it is recommended that further publicity/education campaigns for all age groups targeted at reducing all driver distractions be conducted, and that these campaigns include information targeted at high-risk groups for driver distraction such as young drivers. (See Section 17 for more information on RACQ's *Dealing with driver distraction* campaign, including the 'Not Now' approach).

**19.0 Review the penalties for young drivers who breach the rules**

According to Townsend (1990), education is less effective than enforcement and engineering in producing road safety benefits. He stated (Townsend 1990) that the best driver training programs can offer is temporary improvement in driving knowledge and reduced violations, but that education rarely reduced crash records, especially for novice drivers. Therefore, it is important that education-based countermeasures aimed at informing young drivers of inappropriate driving behaviours be supported by enforcement and vice-versa in order to deliver more tangible road safety benefits.

There is a constant need to strive for the right balance and use of police resources for camera-detected offences versus manned enforcement activities. The RACQ believes that a more visible police patrol presence would be effective in helping to address unsafe speeding behaviours amongst young drivers, and that police should target not only the fatal 4 but other offences and risky behaviours such as aggressive driving, following too closely, weaving and distraction/inattention.

Above all, a highly visible means of on-road enforcement would increase the perception of reality amongst young drivers that there is a reasonably high risk of being caught. This, coupled with appropriate fines and demerit points appropriate to the offence, as well as the swift application of these appropriate penalties would be an effective deterrent against unsafe and dangerous driving behaviours.

Enforcement of penalties could be assisted through the expansion of programs that assist police with on-road on-line links to licence and offence databases, such as MINDA (Mobile Integrated Network Data Access).

Existing penalties for traffic violations could be increased, or driving restriction durations extended if the offender is a probationary licence holder, however the RACQ believes that sufficient penalty differences already exist in the form provisional and learner licence holders being able to accumulate fewer demerit points before having their licences suspended. Any further restrictions upon young drivers should only apply after a first offence has been committed, rather than imposing blanket restrictions on all novice drivers.

Some common restrictions used to control novice drivers' exposure to risks as part of penalties imposed upon them after offences have been committed include:

- Increasing minimum age allowed to obtain licence and period of displaying plates;
- Increasing the minimum period of supervision;
- Night-time curfews;

- Peer passenger limitations;
- Reduced tolerance of driving infringements; and
- Penalty differences.

The RACQ believes that a possible deterrent against traffic offences among young drivers may be extension of the provisional licence period when demerit points are incurred, e.g., extending the offender's minimum provisional licence period to four years instead of the current minimum of three years.

Further to these options, as part of the penalties for young drivers, either as first time or repeat offenders, they could be forced to attend driver intervention, improvement or rehabilitation courses, provided that such courses can be shown to reduce crash involvement and violations for those who attend.

The effectiveness of penalties also depends on how the penalties are applied by magistrates. It has been found that the provision of restricted/hardship licences at appeal of licence suspension reduces the effectiveness of licence suspension sanctions (Voas and DeYoung 2002, p263). Therefore, if young drivers know that they will usually be able to appeal licence suspension penalties on hardship grounds, suspension will not be as effective as a deterrent to young drivers from engaging in unsafe driving behaviours.

Due to this it is important that other alternative options for penalties that may impose further restrictions on young drivers be considered, due to the fact that they may provide more of a deterrent effect.

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ supports a review of penalties for young drivers who breach road rules and to what degree of severity and consistency the courts apply the penalties in Queensland.

#### **20.0 Incentive and reward options**

Graduated licensing systems in other countries have been enhanced by the inclusion of incentives and rewards to influence responsible driver behaviour.

The removal of blanket restrictions, based on demonstrated safe driving performance, can also act as motivational tools for continued safe driving. For example, as an incentive a provisional licence holder may receive a reduction in the period that P-plates must be displayed if they satisfactorily complete:

- A violation free period;
- An at-fault crash free period; or
- Further approved post-licence training.

Under the Graduated Licensing System scheme in New South Wales, restrictions on new drivers are relaxed as they progress through the various licence stages.

In New South Wales, by the time a driver reaches the P2 stage, the restrictions that still apply to them are that they must:

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- Display P plates with a green P on a white background at the front and rear of the car when driving and, if towing a trailer, a P plate must be on the back of the trailer;
- Not exceed zero blood alcohol concentration;
- Observe a maximum speed limit of 100 km/h;
- Not supervise a learner driver; and
- Not drive a prohibited vehicle, i.e., vehicles with eight or more cylinders, a turbocharged engine, a supercharged engine, any engine performance modifications, or certain high performance six cylinder engine vehicles (RTA 2005).

In the ACT, an optional *Road Ready Plus* course is offered to provisional licence holders of six months or more at a cost of \$70, which on completion allows the individual to remove their P-plates, and increases their demerit point allowance by four [to a total of eight] (Road Ready 2006).

This graduated relaxing of restrictions on young drivers shields them from hazards in the early licensing stages and gradually exposes them to more risky/challenging driving conditions only after they have demonstrated that they are ready (Roads and Traffic Authority 2002).

The RACQ believes that there needs to be further discussion with regard to what restrictions would have the desired effect of controlling a novice driver's exposure to risk in Queensland, at the different stages of the Graduated Licensing System.

### **Recommendation:**

RACQ supports the inclusion of incentives and rewards to encourage drivers to obey the road rules. These could include the removal of restrictions based on driving performance indicators.

#### **21(a) Education and training support for provisional drivers**

In the discussion paper it is stated that: "Education and training support could be developed for provisional drivers to help them understand issues including safe following speeds, hazard perception and vehicle maintenance" (QT 2005, p17).

However, it is also stated that: "[...] international and Australian research shows that the driver training beyond that required to gain an initial driver licence may not decrease crash risk, particularly among young males. For example, training that concentrates on car control (involving skid recovery and emergency braking) may increase risk among young males by making them overconfident, and [making them] want to test their driving abilities" (QT 2005, p18).

Due to this, it has been argued that driver education programs targeted at novice drivers should aim to raise novice drivers' awareness of limitations in their driving skill and their underestimation of risk, rather than adding to overconfidence in personal driving ability (Senserrick 2002).

This has recently resulted in increased attention being directed at driver education programs based on 'insight' training principles. Overseas studies have shown insight training principles to have contributed to positive changes in self-reported attitudes and behaviours of young drivers that were likely to result in reduced crash risk (Senserrick 2002).

Monash University Accident Research Centre has recently evaluated one such program, the AAMI/Skilled Drivers Program. This one-day insight program was developed for 18-25 year old drivers and is comprised of both theoretical and practical components targeting issues of over-confidence, safety awareness and risk evaluation – rather than traditional *advanced* driving skills. It was concluded that this insight education/training combination effected positive changes that were more likely to reduce the risk of crash involvement of the young participants (Senserrick 2002, p76).

RACQ strongly believes there is an ongoing need for further research into the development and evaluation of education programs which better address the wide range of cognitive, motivational, attitudinal and perceptual factors which influence driver judgement, risk assessment and decision making.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau [ATSB] is currently preparing to conduct a trial of post-licence driver education programme among 14,000 Victoria and New South Wales P-plate drivers with 6-12 months of solo driving experience [with a 14,000 young driver control group] (ATSB 2005).

The course under trial will incorporate 'insight' training principles. This type of training focuses on providing young drivers with an understanding of their limitations and "an insight into how they can reduce the risks they face on the road" (ATSB 2005).

The ATSB curriculum is expected to 'go live' by early 2006 (ATSB 2005).

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends further research and evaluation to determine how post-licence driver training and education can positively contribute to making safer drivers on our roads.

#### **21(b) Skills based training for Provisional licence holders**

As it has been stated in the discussion paper: "Both international and Australian research suggests that there is no particular need for skills-based education and training programs (for example, involving skid recovery and emergency braking)" (QT 2005, p18).

Further to this, it has been stated that: "Scientific evaluations of off-road novice driver training in Australia, Norway, Sweden, USA and Canada over the last three decades have shown no worthwhile crash reduction effects compared to on-road programs. Some have actually shown such training to lead to an increase in crashes through overconfidence, particularly in young males" (QT 2005, p18).

Unfortunately, with regard to skills-based training, research has found that there is a link between increased skill and increased risk taking, a phenomenon called optimum bias or unrealistic optimism (Job 1992). For example, if taught emergency braking or swerving procedures, how to control skids and lateral sliding, some drivers may believe they are better than average and practise such [advanced] tasks at inappropriate times and locations, particularly in the presence of peers. Thus the trainee may be twice or four times as likely to get out of a crash situation but ten times more likely to allow themselves to get into it (Job 1992).

Further to this, as the RACV have found, there is no sound evidence that either advanced or defensive driving courses reduce crash involvement even for experienced drivers who attend them (RACV 2002).

Therefore, with any encouragement of drivers to seek further driver training, there needs to be safeguards in place against drivers becoming overconfident in their own ability.

The RACQ believes there also needs to be guidance provided to young drivers towards post-licence driver training and/or education courses which emphasise the cognitive aspects of the driving task, i.e., the need for driver awareness and concentration, hazard perception, risk assessment, alertness, appropriate behaviour and attitude.

#### **Recommendation:**

The RACQ does not support the introduction of a purely skills-based training program for young drivers in Queensland.

## **22.0 Power restrictions of cars a provisional licence holder can drive**

Some suggestions have been made about imposing vehicle engine size or power restrictions on P-licence drivers, similar to those imposed on novice motorcyclists. Vehicle power restrictions currently apply to probationary drivers in Victoria (RACV Public Policy Department 2002, p29) and in New South Wales (RTA 2005).

These efforts to reduce probationary drivers' exposure to risk are admirable, but considering the acceleration rates and top speeds of most modern vehicles - regardless of engine capacity and power - the RACQ believes this could have minimal effect. As it has been highlighted by a previous Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (1996 p73) report: "[...] a novice driver who wants to drive a high powered vehicle, but is restricted from doing so, will drive an acceptable vehicle near its full capacity anyway."

The RACQ acknowledges that its Victorian counterpart, the RACV, supports this measure for minimising the novice drivers' exposure in overly powerful cars. This measure is also widely supported by RACV members. A problem with this measure is that although VicRoads does publish a list of cars that do not comply; the list is not exhaustive and therefore leaves owners of vehicles not on the list to perform their own calculations.

VicRoads (2005) publish a list of high powered vehicles which provisional drivers are restricted from driving on their website, and state that: "A high powered vehicle is any vehicle with a power to weight ratio over 125 kw [kilowatts] per tonne, or with an engine capacity to weight ratio over 3.5 litres per tonne. This includes any make of car".

In New South Wales, the RTA website (2005) also provides a list of vehicles that provisional drivers are prohibited from driving, and states that prohibited vehicles include those with eight or more cylinders, turbo- or super-charged engines, engine performance modifications, and some 'high performance' six cylinder vehicles (RTA 2005). Exemptions from these rules are provided however, for some 'lower-performance' vehicles with turbocharged engines.

In Queensland, the RACQ would not support the introduction of vehicle restrictions for provisional drivers and would prefer the emphasis be towards the purchase of safer vehicles.

As with all age groups, it is important to encourage the purchase of newer vehicles with improved safety features, e.g., crumple zones, airbags, anti-lock brakes, etc to increase survival rates in crashes. Also, improved vehicle safety standards and technology (including intelligent transport systems) would help to minimise driver error and the event of a crash from occurring.

#### **Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends that vehicle power restrictions not be imposed as a licence restriction for provisional drivers.

### **23.0 Speed limit restrictions for provisional drivers**

Although there are still some Australian states and territories that have retained speed restrictions for young drivers, the RACQ believes there would need to be further evidence to support the introduction of this measure as a means to reduce novice driver crashes in Queensland.

On previous occasions, RACQ (1996) has not been supportive of speed restrictions for learner or provisional drivers due to the adverse impacts that the:

- Speed differential between restricted drivers and other motorists can have. This could be as important a factor in contributing to crashes as the actual travel speed of the vehicles; and
- Effects of a speed restriction on traffic flow.

There is also the issue of compliance and enforcement. In Victoria, the speed restriction was lifted following evidence which indicated that provisional drivers exceeded their limit "by a greater amount than ordinary drivers" (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee 1996 p72).

RACQ member research shows only 27% of respondents agree [72% disagree] that learner and provisional drivers should be required to drive at 10km/h below the speed limit on major highways (MCR 2003, p28).

The RACQ does not support the introduction of speed restrictions for probationary drivers - either as a specified amount under the legal limit, or as a specified maximum speed.

**Recommendation:**

RACQ recommends that speed restrictions not be imposed as a licence condition for provisional drivers.

**Parents****24.0 Parent involvement in educating and training their children to drive**

Research has found that gaining on-road experience in the learner period helps learner drivers become safer solo drivers (Johnson and Christie 2005, p1), and parents can play a role as the supervisor in helping their learner gain valuable on-road practical driving experience.

To be an effective supervisor parents need to be aware of road rules, understand safe driving techniques/ behaviours and the correct methods/approach to deliver this information.

Parents also need to be a good role model and set a good example well before their child reaches the eligible age to be a learner.

The RACQ believes a structured approach for driver training is best achieved when a professional driver trainer is used in conjunction with family and/or friends to prepare the learner driver.

As explained by Sherwood (2002, p223), the driver trainer can deliver skills and techniques during lessons while family and/or friends follow up in a supervisor/tutor role in valuable practice sessions.

Under this arrangement the supervisor should be encouraged to attend at least one professional driving lesson with the student so they can ensure that their own driving is consistent with the rules, techniques and concepts being applied by the professional driver trainer.

In Victoria, parents are encouraged to become more involved in their child's learning-to-drive experience through RACV Drive School's *Parent Plus* program (Johnson and Christie 2005, p1).

When a learner driver commences professional driving lessons with the RACV Drive School, the supervising driver is invited to attend a free first lesson with their learner, as an observer (Johnson and Christie 2005, p2).

The driving instructor tailors the lesson to the needs of the learner and the supervising driver, focussing on commentary driving, highlighting the complexities of learning to drive, and identifying problem areas (Johnson and Christie 2005, p2).

In the RACV program, the supervising driver receives brochures covering tips relevant to each of the following three stages (Johnson and Christie 2005, p2-3):

- First brochure is provided when invited to attend the first free lesson;
- Second brochure is provided after attending the free lesson; and the

- Third is sent approximately two months after attending the free lesson.

After operating for one year, the program was evaluated. Results show that:

- 93% of respondents rated the *Parent Plus* lesson as useful or very useful in assisting them to supervise their learner driver (Johnson and Christie 2005, p6).
- 66% of respondents would be more likely to provide more on-road supervised driving experience (Johnson and Christie 2005, p4).
- 84% of respondents had a better understanding of how to help the learner develop their driving skills (Johnson and Christie 2005, p5).
- 73% of respondents felt more confident about giving their learner driver experience in various on-road conditions (Johnson and Christie 2005, p4).

### **Recommendation:**

RACQ supports initiatives that enhance parents' involvement in teaching young drivers and/or helping them gain additional hours of supervised driving experience.

## **25.0 Information for Parents**

In addition to the RACQ's comments made at section 4 (b) with regard to the Queensland Transport publication *Ready to Guide*, which the RACQ believes represents a valuable tool to help instruct parents/carers/supervisors on how to teach young drivers with or without the assistance of a qualified driver trainer, the Club believes that further research should be undertaken with regard to whether a CD-ROM version of this resource would be desirable for parents.

As it was stated at section 4 (b), the RACQ supports the development of an education kit for learner drivers and their parents including better use of Queensland Transport's *Ready to Guide* booklet.

Further consideration should be given to incorporating any additional information provided in other jurisdictions' learner driver education resources into any information package provided to supervisors/parents/carers in Queensland, similarly to what has occurred in other states.

### **Recommendation:**

As it was stated at section 4(b), the RACQ supports the development of an education kit for learner drivers and their parents including better use of Queensland Transport's *Ready to Guide* booklet.

**Additional Comments****Extending Zero BAC**

At present, Queensland learner and provisional drivers are required to have a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC), and most young people would progress to a full licence after three years when they are approximately 20 years old.

In Queensland in 2003, alcohol involvement contributed to as many young drivers and riders being killed in crashes in the 21-24 year age group as in the 17-20 year age group (QT 2005, p19).

In Victoria, the RACV suggests that one method of countering this problem would be to increase the zero BAC condition beyond the P period until all drivers are 23 or 24 years of age (RACV 2005, p11).

In Queensland, a similar measure to equate this to may be to extend the zero BAC requirement for all drivers until the age of 25 years, when learners and provisional licence holders are able to have up to 0.05% BAC.

The proposal for extending the zero BAC period was generally well supported by RACV members, with 67% agreement from the total sample for zero BAC until 23 years of age, and 62% support for this measure from novice drivers themselves (RACV 2005, p11).

**Recommendation:**

The RACQ believes that consideration should be given to the extension of the zero BAC requirements for all young drivers, even those with open licences, until at least 24 years of age.

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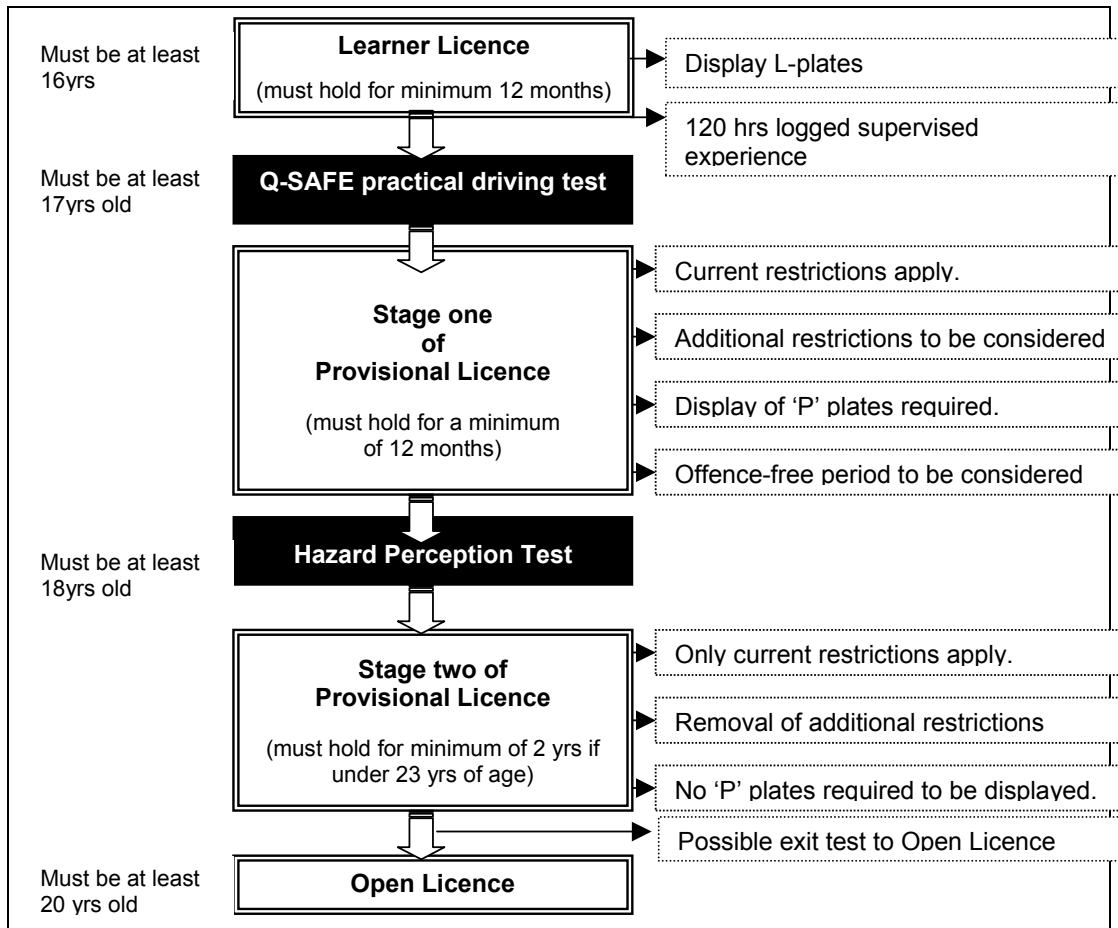
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## Appendix 1

## RACQ Example of Possible Graduated Licensing System



Stage one would retain most of the current restrictions that apply to provisional licence holders, such as:

- Zero blood alcohol content; and
- Provisional drivers on an automatic licence not to drive a manual vehicle unsupervised unless a manual practical driving test is undertaken.

The four demerit points that current provisional drivers are currently allowed to accumulate may be replaced by the requirement that the provisional driver serve a minimum offence-free period. Alternatively, this restriction could still apply with the offence-free period used as an incentive for earlier advancement onto the next stage.

To be eligible to undertake the hazard perception test, the novice driver would have to satisfy the following criteria:

- Not accumulated more than four demerit points in a specified period; or
- Maintained a clean driving record for a specified period.

The way in which these criteria are constructed would be dependent on whether the offence-free period is used as an incentive for early advancement, or to replace the existing four demerit points

At present, RACQ would see the progression to an open licence, in addition to the four demerit points, as adequate disincentive for drivers to engage in further high-risk or illegal driving behaviours.