



**SUBMISSION**

**TO**

**TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE:**

**INQUIRY INTO PROVISIONAL DRIVER AND RIDER LICENCE  
RESTRICTIONS**

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RACQ recommends:

1. the consideration of a two-stage provisional licensing system aimed at minimising the initial high-risk period for newly-licensed provisional drivers.
2. a comprehensive review of the existing Queensland driver licensing system to consider further restrictions and incentives that gradually increase the provisional drivers' exposure to the driving environment during the highest risk periods.
3. that night driving curfews be considered for provisional drivers.
4. that passenger restrictions be considered for provisional drivers.
5. that vehicle power restrictions not be imposed as a licence restriction for provisional drivers.
6. the consideration of a towing restriction prohibiting provisional drivers from towing a trailer with an unladen weight greater than 250kg.
7. that speed restrictions not be imposed as a licence condition for provisional drivers.
8. that offence-free periods be considered for the introductory phase of the provisional licence period for provisional drivers, i.e., the first six to twelve months.
9. a re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland provisional licence holders to display 'P' plates, as well as learner licence holders to display 'L' plates, on the vehicles they are driving.
10. the introduction of a hazard perception test, as part of the licensing process, for provisional drivers.
11. that no changes be made to the existing minimum age licensing requirements.
12. that provisional drivers who are driving for appropriate activities, or whilst driving under appropriate supervision, be granted exemption from additional restrictions aimed at reducing age-related high-risk recreational driving.
13. that provisional drivers over the age of 21 years be granted exemption from additional restrictions aimed at reducing age-related high-risk recreational driving.
14. that a State working group consisting of relevant stakeholders be established to address the final recommendations of the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's inquiries into:
  - reducing the road toll for young Queenslanders – is education enough?; and
  - provisional driver and rider licence restrictions.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This submission provides RACQ's comments in response to the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's terms of reference for its inquiry into provisional driver and rider licence restrictions. The inquiry terms of reference are as follows (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 2003):

- Whether the current graduated licensing system in Queensland for provisional licence holders should be revised to give novice drivers and riders a more staged progression from supervised learner driving to an unrestricted, open licence;
- If so, what changes or additional stages should be introduced;
- Whether additional licence restrictions for probationary drivers and riders should be introduced in Queensland; and
- What impacts these additional licence restrictions would have for employment and recreation opportunities and the general mobility of novice drivers and riders.

RACQ believes it would be inappropriate to suggest the inclusion of an additional stage or system of incentives and restrictions at the provisional licence level as the sole answer to producing safer drivers, particularly as recent research shows that the greatest benefits in crash reductions amongst young drivers can be achieved by exposing the learner driver to more driving experience whilst under supervision before they take their driving test and start driving solo (as referred to in Sherwood: 2002, p.223).

Conversely, it would also be inappropriate to suggest that gaining more driving experience at the learner stage is the one and only solution to reducing crashes amongst young provisional drivers. This is because young provisional drivers, particularly when they initially start driving solo, are still faced with the other effects of youthful motives on driving performance and crash risk, as highlighted in an earlier RACQ submission to the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (RACQ Traffic and Safety Department: 2003, p.2), such as:

- The association between age and risk taking, e.g., motivation to drive fast to impress peers; and
- The disproportionate amount of driving under high-risk conditions, e.g., at night, at weekends, with passengers, after drinking alcohol, using drugs.

This further demonstrates the need to take a holistic approach when reviewing the current graduated licensing system. While the terms of reference for the inquiry are limited to the provisional stage of the current Queensland graduated licensing system, RACQ believes it is essential that the impacts of any proposed changes to the provisional stage are considered in the context of the whole graduated licensing system, including how the learner stage may be affected and vice versa.

## 2.0 TWO-STAGE PROVISIONAL LICENSING

*Whether a two-stage provisional licensing system should be introduced in Queensland, what should be contained in each stage and how successful completion of each stage should be monitored*

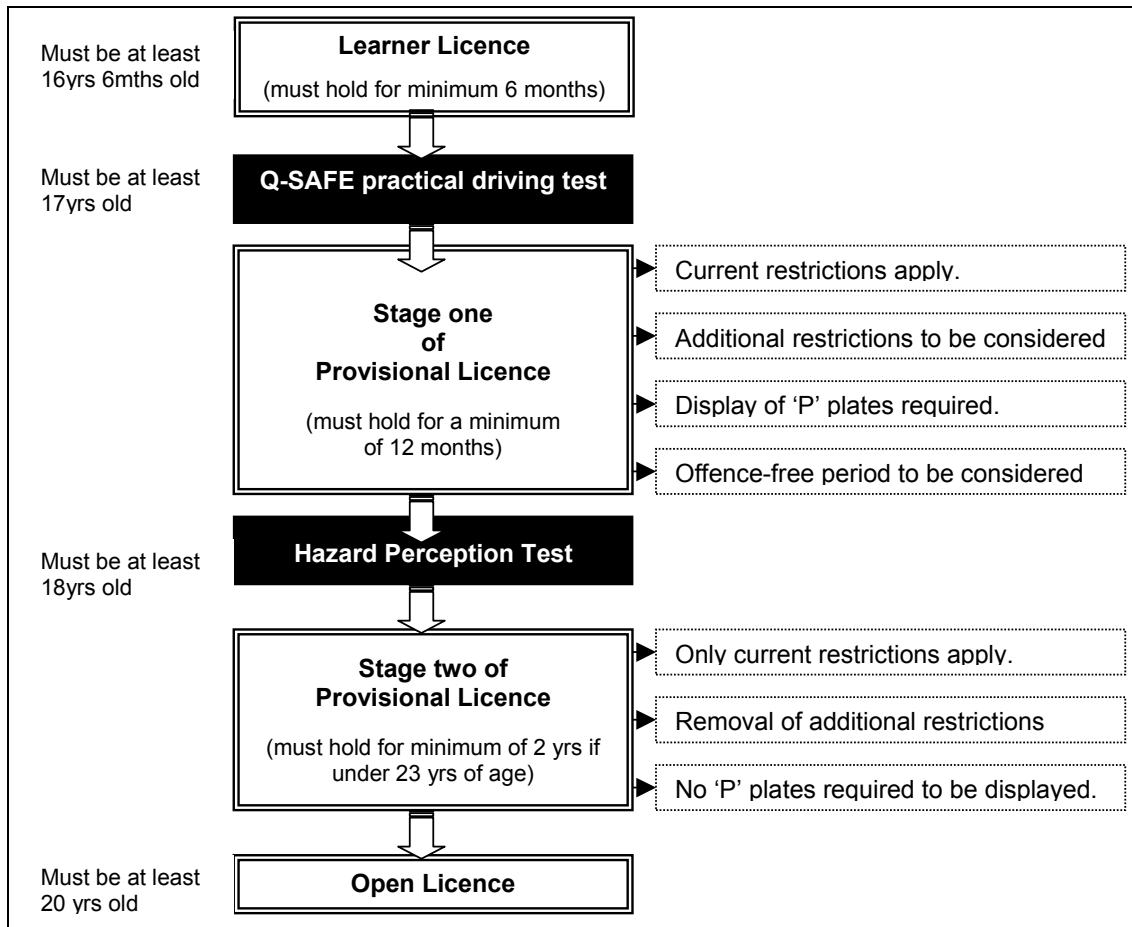
The provisional licence period has great potential to provide a three-year window of opportunity for gradually increasing exposure of novice drivers to the driving environment. The RACQ sees merit in introducing a separate stage with extra restrictions to address the high-crash risk period for provisional drivers who are driving unsupervised for the first time.

As the probationary period is three years for drivers under the age of 21 years, a two-stage provisional licensing system for Queensland warrants careful consideration. Without a two-stage system, RACQ believes that many of the restrictions would be impractical and socially unacceptable if they were to be valid for three years.

Furthermore, introducing additional restrictions in the six-month learner period would also be inappropriate considering the low crash risk associated with a learner driver whilst under supervision. On the contrary, RACQ would be encouraging learner drivers to get as much experience as possible in a broad range of situations whilst under supervision, including driving at night, in wet weather and towing.

There are a number of alternatives for how a two stage provisional licensing system could work. The flowchart in diagram 1, as well as the following sections, provides a suggested outline of how this two-stage provisional licensing system could work. The RACQ believes that a more detailed and comprehensive investigation of a two-stage provisional licensing system would be more appropriate as a task of the proposed State Working Group, as discussed in section 5.0.

**Diagram 1: Example of a Two-stage Provisional Licensing System.**



## **2.1 Stage one of the provisional licence**

### **2.1.1 Existing restrictions**

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 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. Offence-free periods is discussed in further detail in section 4.0.

### **2.1.2 Additional restrictions**

RACQ would see this 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. RACQ would also prefer any additional restrictions to be included in this stage.

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, A.F. & Ferguson, S.A.: 2002, p.ii10). Section 3.0 of this submission provides further discussion on additional restrictions raised in Issues Paper No.7 by the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (2003).

To both 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 3.7.

### **2.1.3 Duration of stage one and progression to stage two of provisional licence**

These restrictions should be lifted once a novice driver has satisfied the criteria and passed a hazard perception test. All but the existing restrictions would be lifted and there would no longer be a requirement to display a 'P' plate.

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

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

The make-up of these criteria 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.

## **2.2 Stage two of the provisional licence**

### **2.2.1 Restrictions**

This stage would be the same as currently exists for Queensland provisional drivers. The RACQ does not see the need to introduce any further enhancements to this stage as it sees the current restrictions as being appropriate.

### **2.2.2 Duration of stage two and progression to open licence**

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 high-risk or illegal driving behaviours. The RACQ is unconvinced that an additional test to progress from a provisional licence to an open licence is warranted.

## **2.3 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends the consideration of a two-stage provisional licensing system aimed at minimising the initial high-risk period for newly-licensed provisional drivers.

## **3.0 RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED ON HOLDERS OF PROVISIONAL LICENCES**

Evidence suggests that the probationary licence holders' crash risk is at its highest when they are initially issued with a licence and start driving unsupervised. In Nova Scotia, the crash rate for novice drivers during the first month of licensure was 241 per 10 000 compared with 107 per 10 000 at nine to ten months. The crash rate declined more gradually through the next 24 months (Williams, A.F. & Ferguson, S.A.: 2002, p.ii10).

It is during this period that RACQ believes that additional driving restrictions would have the greatest benefit, particularly in the first few months while they are gaining their initial experience when driving unsupervised. Therefore, the RACQ supports the use of further restrictions that gradually increase the novice drivers' exposure to the driving environment during the highest risk periods.

These restrictions could be imposed upfront or as part of a penalty only after the novice driver has shown irresponsible behaviour. The removal of these restrictions, based on performance, can also act as motivational tools for safe driving. For example, as an incentive a provisional licence holder may receive a reduction in period that a P-plate must be displayed if they satisfactorily complete:

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

Under the GLS scheme in NSW, some restrictions on new drivers are relaxed as they progress through the various licence stages. This shields drivers from hazards in the early licensing stages and exposes them to more challenging driving conditions only after they have demonstrated that they are ready (Roads and Traffic Authority: 2002).

It is acknowledged that young drivers with exemplary driving records may feel disadvantaged by further restrictions (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 1996, p.70). However, a 1994 study by Crittendon and Drummond (as in Baldock, M.: 2000, p.14:) using Victorian crash and licensure data, concluded that “countermeasures aiming specifically at problem young drivers rather than young drivers as a whole would not be effective.” The RACQ believes that for restrictions to be effective, they need to apply to all young novice drivers.

Various restrictions have been adopted by other Australian states and overseas jurisdictions as measures to limit the exposure of novice drivers to high-risk situations.

With the consideration of all restrictions, RACQ believes it is imperative that they still allow opportunities for novice drivers to practise and develop their skills, rather than serve to reduce exposure in a safer driving environment, i.e., driving whilst under supervision.

RACQ recommends a comprehensive review of the existing Queensland driver licensing system to consider further restrictions and incentives that gradually increase the provisional drivers’ exposure to the driving environment during the highest risk periods.

The next section of this submission discusses RACQ views on some of the more common restrictions used by licensing authorities in other jurisdictions.

### **3.1 Night driving curfews**

*Whether a night driving curfew should be introduced for drivers and riders with provisional licences in Queensland, how it should be applied and the hours it should cover.*

Research 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, M.: 2000, p.22; & Williams, Allan F.: 2000, p.4).

In 1994 Ontario introduced a night driving curfew. This was evaluated in 1998 and showed a 62 percent decline in appropriate crashes (Jim Langford: 2002, p.39). 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.

#### **3.1.1 Night-time curfew periods**

There is general consensus that curfew periods should start before midnight, as restrictions beginning after would involve too few crashes to yield either statistically or practically significant changes (McKnight, A.J. & Peck, R.C.: 2002, p.ii34). In the United States, starting times range from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. (Williams, Allan F.: 2000, p.4).

#### **3.1.2 Concerns with night driving curfews**

There has been a concern raised in the past that the unpopularity of curfews means they are frequently and easily violated (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 1996, p.72). An overseas study of novice driver attitudes suggests that non-compliance may be the result of novice drivers believing that their chances of being apprehended or cited are very small (McKnight, A.J. & Peck, R.C.: 2002, p.ii34). 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, A. F. & Mayhew, D.: 2003, p.5).

Williams, Allan F. (2000: p.4) summary of night driving restrictions in the United States 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.”

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 (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 1996, p.67). The RACQ believes many of these concerns will be largely alleviated with the granting of exemptions from this restriction, as discussed in more detail in section 4.0. However, the viability of this sanction is clearly dependent 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.

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

In general, RACQ would not be opposed to restricting unsupervised night driving during a specified time-period for provisional licence holders aged under 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 greatest effect if accompanied by passenger restrictions.

### **3.1.3 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends that night driving curfews be considered for provisional drivers.

## **3.2 Passenger restrictions**

*Whether passenger restrictions for novice car drivers should be introduced, how they should apply and what exemptions should be included.*

Research tends to suggest that the crash risk, for young novice drivers and passengers, is much higher when in a vehicle carrying multiple passengers then compared to when driving on their own. 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, M.: 2000, p.9). Furthermore, this elevated risk with passengers is present during night and day (Williams, Allan F.: 2000, p.5).

### **3.2.1 Different types of passenger restrictions**

There are various ways in which different overseas jurisdictions have applied passenger restrictions to novice drivers, including (Williams, A. F. & Mayhew, D.: 2003, p.5):

- No passengers allowed;

- No teenage passengers allowed; and/or
- Limits on number of passengers allowed, usually two occupants including the driver.

Exemptions may be granted if passengers are family members, or there is also an older adult passenger present.

### **3.2.2 Concerns with passenger restrictions**

The concerns raised about passenger restrictions are similar to those raised about night driving curfews regarding 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, A. F. & Mayhew, D.: 2003, p.5).

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, as discussed in section 4.0.

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

- personal safety of young women if forced to travel alone (Williams, Allan F.: 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 (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 1996, p.73); 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, Allan F.: 2001, p.5).

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 means to do their activities in most cases (Williams, Allan F.: 2001: p.7). Furthermore, there was only a small percentage of parents who found the restrictions of a frequent or major inconvenience (Williams, Allan F.: 2001: p.7).

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, Allan F.: 2000, p.5). Therefore, RACQ would not be opposed to the introduction of passenger restrictions for novice drivers aged under 21 years of age.

There would need to be further discussion on what type of passenger restrictions would be appropriate for Queensland, particularly when considering non-metropolitan areas with limited transport options.

### **3.2.3 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends that passenger restrictions be considered for provisional drivers.

### 3.3 Vehicle power restrictions

*Effectiveness of existing engine capacity restrictions on motorcycle riders, and whether power to weight and/or engine capacity to weight restrictions should be introduced in Queensland.*

Some suggestion has been made about imposing vehicle 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, p.29).

A previous Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (1996; p.73) report mentioned that there was a concern that such a restriction would, "prevent many novices from gaining experience driving their parent's cars, often the only cars to which they have access". Therefore the RACQ would be opposed to the imposition of vehicle restrictions for learner drivers, as it is preferred that they gain as much varied driving experience as possible whilst they are under supervision.

Efforts to reduce probationary drivers' exposure to risk are admirable, but considering the acceleration rates and top speeds of most vehicles (regardless of engine capacity and power), the RACQ believes this could have minimal effect as highlighted by a previous Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee (1996: p.73) report which states, "...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."

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 the interpretation of this regulation is difficult, although VicRoads does publish a list of cars that do not comply.

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.

#### 3.3.1 Recommendation

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

### 3.4 Towing restrictions

*Whether towing restrictions for provisional licence holders should be introduced in Queensland.*

Based on the extra demands towing places on a driver, coupled with immaturity and inexperience, the RACQ would not be opposed to the introduction of a towing restriction for provisional drivers prohibiting them from towing larger trailers (with an unladen weight greater than 250kg) such as horse floats and caravans. A similar restriction already

applies to first year provisional licence holders in the ACT and NSW (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 2003, p.5).

While no such test or official training is readily available to ascertain whether a driver is competently able to tow a trailer, the RACQ believes that there is benefit in restricting a novice driver in towing until they have further developed their judgement, cognitive and hazard perception skills and become more accustomed to driving unsupervised under normal circumstances.

As with the other restrictions discussed in this section, there would be exemptions where this restriction would not apply, i.e., under the supervision of a responsible, fully-licensed adult driver.

### **3.4.1 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends the consideration of a towing restriction prohibiting provisional drivers from towing a trailer with an unladen weight greater than 250kg (as similar to first year P1 licence holders in NSW).

## **3.5 Speed restrictions**

*Whether speed restrictions should be introduced for provisional licence holders.*

Although there are still some Australian states and territories that have retained speed restrictions, 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 (RACQ Traffic and Safety: 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." (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee: 1996; p.72).

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.

### **3.5.1 Recommendation**

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

### **3.6 Offence-free periods**

*Whether the Queensland driver licence system provides adequate incentives to encourage provisional licence holders to drive and ride safely, and to abide by the road rules.*

The RACQ believes an introduction of an offence-free period during the stage-one provisional licence would dissuade drivers from engaging in high-risk driving behaviours and to abide by the conditions of their licence. The offence free period could apply to the conditions of the stage one provisional licence, the obeying of the road rules, or both.

The RACQ believes that for offence-free periods to be effective, as with the imposition of driving restrictions, there needs to be recognition amongst the targeted group that there is a high likelihood of being detected if they disobey the road rules and/or the conditions of their licence. It is also important that the target group is aware of, and understands, the different restrictions and the penalties that apply for a breach of these restrictions.

#### **3.6.1 Offence-free periods as a penalty**

Failure to comply with the licence conditions or the committing of serious traffic offences would mean an extension of the period on which a novice driver is to remain on their stage one provisional licence. This type of penalty would provide strong motivation for safe driving amongst novice drivers (Williams, A. F. & Mayhew, D.: 2003, p.7).

#### **3.6.2 Offence-free period as an incentive**

Alternatively, the existing demerit point scheme could be retained with an offence-free period used as an incentive to reduce the probationary period if the driver remains crash-free/offence-free, e.g., a stage one provisional driver could progress to a stage two provisional licence after nine months instead of twelve months. However, there would need to be reassurance that the minimum duration of the stage-one provisional licence would still be sufficient to optimise the benefits of the restrictions if early advancement to the next stage were to apply. The RACQ believes the duration should last at least six months, which would be consistent with the learning curve of new drivers, which shows its greatest improvement during the first few months of solo driving.

#### **3.6.3 If the current graduated licensing system remains unchanged**

Finally, consideration of an offence-free period prior to the obtaining of an open licence would require proof that the existing demerit point scheme for provisional drivers does not provide a sufficient disincentive for drivers not to engage in risky behaviours. It must also be noted that there was recently an increase in penalties aimed at reducing the number of unaccompanied learner drivers and people who drive outside the conditions of their licence. From Thursday 17 April 2003, traffic penalties increased for unaccompanied learner drivers to 1 point and a \$120 fine. As well, failure to comply with any licensing condition attracted a 1-point and \$75 fine (Queensland Transport: 2003).

#### **3.6.4 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends that offence-free periods be considered for the introductory phase of the provisional licence period for provisional drivers, i.e., the first six to twelve months.

### 3.7 P-plates

*Whether provisional licence holders should be required to display P-plates in Queensland. If not, the committee invites comments on other means that police may use to identify provisional licence holders for enforcement.*

At present, Queensland is the only state where “L” and “P” plates are not required to be displayed by learner and provisional drivers. The RACQ has previously called for the re-introduction of ‘L’ and ‘P’ plates due to the potential advantages offered by such a visible means of identifying learner and provisional drivers, including (RACQ Traffic and Safety Department: 1995):

- 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 ‘L’ and ‘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 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 – ‘L’ and ‘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, size of vehicle, etc., then compulsory ‘L’ and ‘P’ plates would be necessary to supplement this initiative; 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. It is a device which can be easily attached, changed or removed if other drivers using the vehicle are not in the defined novice driver category.

The current licensing conditions for learner and provisional licence holders may not warrant, in terms of enforcement, the displaying of identification plates. The only current condition that may be assisted with the display of identification plates would be the requirement for learner drivers to be accompanied by an open licence holder.

However, if the existing graduated licensing system were to be enhanced with additional measures, such as passenger and night-driving curfews, there would need to be a re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland learner and stage one provisional licence holders to display “L” and “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 (RACQ Traffic and Safety: 2003; p.14).

The previous Travelsafe committee (1996: p.76) report, on Driver training and Licensing, considered the potential benefits to be derived from displaying ‘L’ and ‘P’ plates to far outweigh the minimal costs and inconvenience factors, and recommended that, “provisions requiring the display of ‘L’ and ‘P’ plates on vehicles being driven or ridden by learners and novices should be reintroduced.”

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

### **3.7.1 Recommendation**

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

## **3.8 Exit tests**

*Whether an exit test such as a test of hazard perception skills should be introduced at the end of the provisional licence stage to gain an open licence.*

The RACQ believes that the existing progression from the current provisional licence to an open licence is inadequate, as there is no further evaluation or assessment of the driver once they have passed the Q-SAFE practical assessment to progress to the provisional stage.

Anecdotal feedback from driving schools and clients suggest there is little encouragement for a new driver to gain experience over and above what is required under the Q-SAFE practical assessment. The RACQ believes the Q-SAFE test does not provide the opportunity to assess whether a driver is suitably experienced to drive unsupervised at night, on unsealed or high-speed roads, and/or in wet weather conditions.

Under the Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS) in New South Wales, new drivers are required to pass four tests, including a hazard perception test, before finally graduating to an unrestricted licence. The four tests are as follows (Roads and Traffic Authority: 2002):

- The computer-based Driver Knowledge Test (DKT) – must be passed before obtaining a learner licence.
- The Driving Ability Road Test (DART) – must be passed before graduating to a provisional P1 licence.

- The Hazard Perception Test (HPT) – must be passed before graduating to a provisional P2 licence.
- The Driver Qualification Test (DQT) – must be passed before graduating to an unrestricted licence.

While the RACQ is not suggesting Queensland adopt the same test requirements as NSW's GLS, it does support the introduction of a hazard perception test as the exit test for first-stage provisional drivers moving onto the second stage of the provisional licence. This type of test would emphasize the cognitive aspects of the driving task, which RACQ believes tends to be not adequately addressed in the current Queensland licensing system.

The RACQ believes the inclusion of an additional test would help to identify young novice drivers who have not practised or gained sufficient experience to become competent to drive without the restrictions of a stage-one provisional licence.

Further testing and expansion of the provisional stage would also reduce the perception that once a person passes their driving test to obtain their 'P' licence they have learnt all that they need to know. Extra testing for specific areas of driving will reinforce the need that while a driver is on their 'P' they are still in the learning stage, but rather than car control skills, they are learning perception, judgement and behaviour skills that they can only gain through experience.

However, dependent on the evaluation of the New South Wales Graduated Licensing Scheme, there may be a need to consider an exit test for stage two provisional drivers going onto their full open licence.

### **3.8.1 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends the introduction of a hazard perception test, as part of the licensing process, for provisional drivers.

## **3.9 Minimum licensing age**

The RACQ does not believe there is a need to change the existing minimum age licensing requirements.

### **3.9.1 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends that no changes be made to the existing minimum age licensing requirements.

## **4.0 EXEMPTIONS FROM RESTRICTIONS**

As the intent of a majority of the aforementioned restrictions is to curb high-risk recreational driving by novice drivers aged 17 to 21 years old, it is important that older drivers and essential/legitimate activities are not unintentionally affected (Williams, A. F. & Mayhew, D.: 2003, p.5).

The RACQ believes the granting of exemptions would be necessary to minimise the social and mobility impacts for novice drivers engaging in non-recreational driving. In the United States, work travel and a variety of other activities considered essential are exempt under night driving laws (Williams, Allan F.: 2000: p.6).

While there would obviously need to be further discussion on the type of activities that should be exempt, it would be expected that driving would be allowed in most cases for work-related travel and driving whilst under the supervision of a responsible fully-licensed adult. In addition, the RACQ believes restrictions aimed at reducing problems associated with immaturity should not be applied to mature age drivers.

Such exemptions would also assist in neutralising resistance and opposition from parents and novice drivers if it was clear that the aim was to reduce high-risk recreational driving (McKnight, A.J. & Peck, R.C.: 2002, p.ii34).

#### **4.1 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends that provisional drivers who are driving for appropriate activities, or whilst driving under appropriate supervision, be granted exemption from additional restrictions aimed at reducing age-related high-risk recreational driving.

RACQ recommends that provisional drivers over the age of 21 years be granted exemption from additional restrictions aimed at reducing age-related high-risk recreational driving.

### **5.0 FORMATION OF STATE WORKING GROUP**

There is a danger that, once the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's findings and recommendations are made, there will be a future reoccurrence of the same issues and concerns if they are not adequately addressed. RACQ observes that there was no mention made of the previous 1996 Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee Report on Driver Training and Licensing. RACQ would be interested to know if there was any official follow-up made of the report recommendations.

In order to ensure that the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's final recommendations from this inquiry are properly addressed, the RACQ believes that the formation of a State Working Group is needed. It would be preferable if the proposed State Working Group also addressed the final recommendations of the recent inquiry into reducing the road toll for young Queenslanders.

This working group would ideally be chaired by Queensland Transport and would consist of representatives from major stakeholders involved in the driver training and licensing process. This group would function in a similar manner to the current Queensland Drug Driving Prevention Working Group, which is addressing the recommendations of a previous report into drug driving in Queensland.

#### **5.1 Recommendation**

RACQ recommends that a State working group consisting of relevant stakeholders be established to address the final recommendations of the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's inquiries into:

- Reducing the road toll for young Queenslanders – is education enough?; and
- Provisional driver and rider licence restrictions.

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