



SUBMISSION

TO

TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE:

Reducing the Road Toll for young Queenslanders
– Is education enough?

Prepared by:

Traffic and Safety Department, The Royal Automobile Club of Queensland Limited

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Summary of Recommendations

The RACQ recommends:

- that the risk factors relating to the different types of crashes, together with traffic offence and licensing data and insurance claims, be analysed to:
 - define how well young drivers are performing against the norms for behaviours/manoeuvres for all Queensland drivers;
 - help identify any prevailing trends or driver profiles; and
 - monitor different attitudes and motivations towards driving.
- further investigation to determine whether the problem is with novice drivers generally, or specifically with young male drivers.
- that school-based road safety education 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.
- better promotion of the “Ready to Guide” and “Your Keys to driving in Queensland” publications to instructors, family and friends to encourage more learner drivers to gain their licence through a structured approach.
- on an ongoing basis, 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.
- that young drivers, when deciding what type of post-licence driver education course to attend, be guided towards those 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.
- that guidance and feedback be provided to driver training and education providers to ensure that the process, methods, content and outcomes for their training programs reflect best practice.
- consideration of incentives to encourage young drivers to refresh and update their knowledge and skills on a regular and continual basis by attending appropriate post-licence driver education courses.
- a comprehensive review of the existing Queensland driver licensing system to consider further restrictions and incentives that gradually increase the novice drivers’ exposure to the driving environment during the highest risk periods.
- that learner drivers be required to obtain experience in a variety of conditions and environments by recording a minimum number of supervised driving hours in a log book.
- consideration of a competency-based training option for learner drivers to obtain a probationary driver’s licence.
- the introduction of a hazard perception test, as part of the licensing process, for provisional licence holders.

- a re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland learner and provisional licence holders to display “L” and “P” plates on the vehicles that they are driving.
- a more visible police patrol presence, assisted by on-road links to relevant databases, to address unsafe driving behaviours amongst young drivers.
- that recidivist drivers be forced to undertake a driver improvement program, provided that the program is able to show reductions in crash involvement and traffic violations for those who attend.
- consideration by insurance companies of a removal or reduction in the age excess, which may apply when learner drivers are driving while under supervision.

1.0 Introduction

As Queensland's leading advocate for the motorists with over one million members, many of whom belong to the 17-24 age category, the RACQ has a strong interest in reducing the incidence of novice drivers and riders involved in the road toll.

Therefore, the RACQ has prepared this paper in response to the Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee's invitation for submissions for its' inquiry into *Reducing the road toll for young Queenslanders – is education enough?*

This submission has been set out according to the inquiry's four points for examination, which have been identified as follows (Pearce; 2003):

- The involvement of novice drivers and riders in crashes, and the factors contributing to their crashes;
- The human and economic costs of novice driver and rider crashes in Queensland;
- What, if any, additional driver/rider training and education should be provided to novice drivers and riders; and
- What, if any, other measures should be taken to reduce novice driver and rider crashes in Queensland.

It should also be kept in mind that the RACQ is currently involved in the process of developing its *Road Safety Policy* document, which will be the basis for the club's stance on future directions for road safety. As part of this process, RACQ members and other stakeholders are being asked for feedback on a range of road safety issues, including young drivers. The public release of the RACQ *Road Safety Policy* document, as well as the results of the feedback, will be later this year.

1.1 Scope

This report primarily discusses issues concerning young drivers of motor vehicles. However, it is recognised that a number of issues also relate to young motorcycle riders.

In this submission, the following terms have been defined to reduce confusion about their interchanged use in different contexts. For the purposes of this discussion:

- Driver training is related to car control or to the techniques of handling a vehicle; and
- Driver education may include some aspects of driver training but extends to a fuller knowledge and understanding of the driving task in all its complexity.

2.0 The involvement of novice drivers in crashes, and the factors contributing to their crashes.

In Australia, novice drivers are over-represented in road crashes. Statistics show 17-24 year olds have a higher level of driving risk than more experienced drivers and continue to be the most over represented age group amongst drivers and riders in the road toll.

In 2001, in Queensland alone there were 84 young adult fatalities in the 17-24 age group. This accounted for 26 percent of the year's total road fatalities while representing only 13 percent of the total population of Queensland.

In 2001, road users aged between 17 to 20 years recorded a fatality rate per 100 000 persons of 23.4, which was more than two and a half times the state average of 8.9 (Queensland Transport: 2002, p.10). For road users aged between 21 to 24 years, the fatality rate was 13.6 percent.

2.1 Contributing Factors

As supervised learner drivers, young people have a low crash risk. But within the first year of solo driving, they reverse that trend. RACV (Public Policy Department: 2002, p.28) states that first year probationary drivers are three times more likely to have a crash than experienced drivers.

Conversely, after three to five years behind the wheel, young people turn into much more competent drivers. Ultimately it may take some 20 to 30 years following licensing to achieve the safest driving levels (Langford: 2002, p.34).

According to Watson (as quoted in Bishop: 2002, p.6), the main dangers for young drivers are age-related factors such as bravado, peer pressure, risk-taking and inexperience in anticipating other motorists' mistakes or appreciating hazards on the road.

It is generally agreed amongst road safety researchers that in the initial years of driving, the younger the age of the driver, the higher the crash risk. This is due to the effects of youthful motives on driving performance and crash risk (Langford; 2002, p.34), such as:

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

The young driver tends to take more risks even though they may not consciously perceive the actions to be risky - due to driver aggression, over-confidence, social characteristics, motivation and reason for trip, e.g., 40 percent of drivers in fatal speed related crashes are young males aged 17-24 years (Queensland Transport: 2002, p.40). They usually see risks more as a thrill than a threat, and a crash as bad luck – or someone else's fault.

Other research and studies on young drivers also commonly support the view that young drivers in the under 25 age group are more likely to exhibit risky attitudes and behaviours when driving than older drivers (Faulks, I; Smith, K.B. and Smith, K.P: 1997; & Elliott and Shanahan: 1994; & Traffic and Safety Department: 1995; & Catchpole, Cairney & Macdonald: 1994).

Accordingly, young drivers are also more likely to admit to taking more risks, as highlighted by a recent AAMI survey. In this survey, young drivers were more likely to admit that they (AAMI: 2002, p.2):

- cut off other drivers;
- tailgated and flashed their headlights at other drivers;
- ignored restricted speed zones, such as suburban roads, school zones and roadworks;
- believed that it was necessary to take risks when overtaking;
- drove too close to other vehicles; and
- used a mobile phone (without hands-free kit) while driving

Men and women aged 18-24 years were also found to behave the most aggressively on the road (AAMI: 2002, p.2). Their aggression was expressed in a range of ways, from using abusive gestures to dangerous driving behaviour such as tailgating.

The RACQ believes that the risk factors relating to the different types of crashes need to be analysed, together with traffic offence and licensing data and insurance claims to:

- define how well young drivers are performing against the norms for behaviours/manoeuvres for all Queensland drivers. For instance, RACQ insurance statistics show young driver over-representation in head-on and overtaking crashes, and rear-end collisions where the young driver was following too closely;
- help identify any prevailing trends or driver profiles, e.g., lifestyle features, geographic differences, types of road environments, whether a higher proportion of young 'problem' drivers are on the road at night, particularly at weekends; and
- monitor different attitudes and motivations towards driving, e.g., work trip versus recreational driving; peer pressure affects impairment by alcohol or drugs, unlicensed driving, driving unregistered vehicles, speeding, driving unrestrained.

2.2 Young male drivers v's young female drivers

Of particular concern is the high percentage of young male fatalities within the 17-25 age group, as highlighted by the Queensland road crash statistics for 2001, where fatalities (Queensland Transport: 2002):

- in the 17-20 years age bracket - 42 were male, 9 were female, 20 were male drivers, 2 were female drivers, 3 were male motorcyclists.
- In the 21-25 years age bracket - 24 were male drivers, 2 were female drivers and 5 were male motorcyclists

The preceding statistics show that males in the 17-25 years age bracket are over 5 times the number of driver fatalities for females in the same age bracket. Furthermore, RACQ Insurance (2002, p.1) statistics indicate male drivers between 18-20 years are 86 percent more likely to be "at fault" in a collision than females in the same age bracket.

According to research commissioned by AAMI (2002, p.2), the differing attitudes between the genders towards drink-driving, drugs, speeding and risk-taking may provide the reasons behind why so many more young males are killed in road crashes than young females. For instance, young males were more likely to (AAMI: 2002, p.2):

- take the risk of driving a short distance after “having a couple of drinks too many”;
- drive faster than the speed limit if they would not be caught;
- admit to sneaking across red lights if no other cars were in sight; and
- believe that “you have to take a bit of a risk when overtaking”.

RACQ believes further investigation is needed to determine whether the problem is with novice drivers generally, or specifically with young male drivers. The RACQ believes that there may be a specific need to identify countermeasures that will target novice male drivers in the areas raised above, particularly so if there is evidence to suggest that males are consistently taking more risks than female drivers.

3.0 The human economic costs of novice driver crashes in Queensland.

Based on estimated costs of crashes devised by the Bureau of Transport Economics (2001), the 84 young driver fatalities (17 to 24 years of age) in Queensland alone had an economic cost of approximately \$143 million in 2001.

In addition, RACQ Insurance (2002, p.1) analysis of claims in 2001 suggests 18-25 year old drivers account for 23% of the cost of collisions, with 18-25 year old males having a 23% increased average cost of claim higher than 18-25 year old female drivers.

The human economic cost of road crashes affects not only the individual crash victims involved in the crash but also their families, friends and employers. These costs include (Blincoe, L.; Seay, A.; Zaloshnja, E.; Miller, T.; Romano, E.; Luchter, S. & Spicer, R.: 2002, p.5):

- medical care in the form of insurance payments, uncovered costs and uninsured expenses;
- higher insurance premiums and through the diversion of medical resources away from other medical needs;
- lost productivity experienced by an individual and others when the victim dies prematurely or experiences a short or long-term disability;
- immediate economic hardship suffered by victim’s dependents in the loss of income and other contributions; and
- welfare support for the victim or their dependents.

The inclusion of these ‘hidden’ costs should be made mandatory when governments are considering their budget priorities, as the RACQ believes not enough of the revenue collected from motorists is returned to making the roads safer for all road users. The RACQ believes there needs to be a funding commitment from all levels of Government, in

relation to the Queensland and National Road Safety Action Plans, if there is to any real progress made in reducing the overall road toll.

If we are to reduce the social and economic costs of young driver fatalities, it is essential that there is a 'whole of government' approach taken when developing and implementing strategies to improve the safety of young drivers aged between 17 and 24 years. It is also essential that there is effective coordination and integration with relevant non-government stakeholders, such as the RACQ.

4.0 What, if any, additional driver/rider training and education should be provided to novice drivers.

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.

As highlighted in Section 2, inappropriate driver behaviour is a major contributing factor to young adults' involvement in road crashes and it can take many years to develop a positive and responsible approach towards driving. This approach includes:

- staying alert;
- avoiding risk-taking behaviours;
- managing the space around their vehicle;
- driving according to prevailing road, traffic, and weather conditions;
- applying common sense and courtesy when sharing the road with other road users;
- sound observation and judgement skills;
- hazard recognition and risk avoidance skills;
- making good decisions quickly;
- responding appropriately; and
- refreshing skills, knowledge and awareness throughout the driving career.

Instilling and maintaining a safe driving behaviour, particularly in the 17-24 year age group, requires more than being exposed to compulsory driver education at licence age in secondary school or attending a defensive driving course. The RACQ believes the development of a positive and responsible approach towards driving begins, and should be fostered, from an earlier age than the current minimum of 16 years and 6 months at which a person can obtain their learner licence.

The RACQ believes all stages in the steep learning curve for novice drivers can be improved upon. For the purpose of this discussion, these stages have been separated as follows:

4.1 Road safety education in Schools

Parents and schools 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, p.8).

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.

With the delivery of road safety education, RACQ preferred the separation of roles between the primary/secondary and driver trainers/driving schools. These roles were also summarised by the RACQ Traffic and Safety Department (1995, p.5) in a previous report, as follows:

- pre-schools, primary and high schools to establish the foundations for road safety education, where children are taught from an early age to think and act safely in the traffic environment; and
- qualified driver trainers or commercial driving schools teach the practical driving task around the strong road safety framework previously established at school.

4.1.1 Delivery and content of road safety education in schools

The RACQ believes there is a poor level of awareness and/or utilisation by schools of existing road safety information and educational resources. The delivery of road safety education in Queensland schools appears inconsistent in method and content, with decisions primarily left to individual teachers or individual schools. This is despite the availability of quality teacher's resources that have been either developed or adapted for use by Queensland schools by Queensland Transport, e.g., Schoolsafe Kits and www.roadsafety.net website.

The RACQ's role in delivering road safety education to schools is presently limited to 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.
- **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.

However, RACQ is currently investigating options on how it can play a more active part in this area.

At present, there are provisions for the inclusion of road safety education in Years 1 to 10 via the Health and Education Syllabus and the Studies of Society and Education Syllabus. However, the Senior School Syllabuses (Years 11 and 12) do not specifically include road safety education (School Road Safety Education Strategic Reference Group: 2002).

In addition, students in their final years (11 and 12) are already faced with a heavy workload and the full benefits of pre-licence education may be lost, as students place more importance in obtaining a good “Overall Position Score”. This reinforces the need to provide pre-licence education to children at an early age, which focuses on gradually educating them on driver attitudes and behaviour, as well as road safety when not driving a vehicle (as a passenger, pedestrian and/or cyclist).

Last year, the School Road Safety Education Strategic Reference Group was established by the Queensland Government to provide advice on two specific terms of reference, as follows:

- Road Safety Education in the school curriculum in Years 1 to 10; and
- Strategies for inclusion of Road Safety Education and Student Driver Education in the senior school (Years 11 and 12).

It is hoped that this working group will provide the impetus for a coordinated approach by government, non-government agencies, schools and the local community in addressing road safety education to school age children.

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.

4.2 Education in the Learner Stage

Research by Gregersen (as referred to in Sherwood: 2002, p.223) shows that the key to reducing provisional licence holders from being involved in crashes is to increase young drivers’ experiences whilst under supervision before they take their driving test and start driving solo. Therefore it is important that learner drivers receive as much varied on-road experience as possible during the learner period whilst under supervision.

This experience allows young drivers to nurture the following:

- physical skills (mastering vehicle controls and ability to manoeuvre the vehicle properly);
- cognitive skills (lane changing and obeying road rules); and
- perceptual skills (hazard avoidance and changing conditions).

Driving schools, family and friends play an important role in providing the opportunity for this supervised experience to be gained, as well as the means to ‘clamp’ down on any dangerous practices (Bishop: 2002, p.6).

4.2.1 A structured approach to learning to drive

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 believes this is best achieved when a professional driver trainer is used in conjunction with family to prepare the learner driver. As explained by Sherwood (2002, p.223), 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 DriveSchool’s *Parent Plus* program that offers learners a free lesson if a parent attends one of their learner’s first lessons (Public Policy Department: 2002, p.28).

The RACQ recognises that there will be certain impediments to all learner drivers accessing professional driving lessons. In these instances, the RACQ believes the “Ready To Guide” offers an invaluable tool to parents/carers in instructing them on how to teach the young to drive with or without the assistance of a qualified driver trainer.

4.2.2 “Ready to Guide” booklet

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.

In Queensland, Queensland Transport provides the “Ready To Guide” booklet. This resource is attached to the “Your keys to driving in Queensland” publication and provides the following (Queensland Transport: 2000):

- a step-by-step guide to being a driver 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 and use of both the “Ready To Guide” and “Yours Keys to Driving in Queensland” publications is lacking amongst the target audience, i.e., learner drivers and their family/friends; and
- learner drivers and their tutors may be using outdated copies of the “Your Keys to Driving in Queensland” publication.

This lack of awareness may be in part due to poor promotion of the publications to their target audience, e.g., many past Queensland Transport media statements in the newspapers, highlighting the need for learners to gain as much driving experience under supervision as possible, have failed to mention the “Ready to Guide” or “Your Keys to Driving in Queensland”.

RACQ believes these two publications, in particular the “Ready to Guide” need 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 access to a current edition of the aforementioned publications.

4.2.3 Driver education programs and courses for pre-licence drivers

More recently, there has been increasing attention given to 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)

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).

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* 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, p.76).

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.

For this to happen 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, recently held in Brisbane, highlighted the frustration and lack of communication being experienced by the training providers (Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee & 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.

4.3 Education in the Post licence Stage

For new drivers, it is the lack of experience and maturity that are the major contributing factors to crashes, making provisional licence holders in their first year of solo driving the group most at risk. So there is a need to continue the educational process, as well as identify and reinforce positive driver attitudes learnt during the learner phase, past the post-licence stage.

Unless positive attitudes and safe driving behaviours are reinforced on a regular basis, the benefits of receiving such advice and training are of little long-term value - as highlighted by previous studies comparing the crash risks between participants and non-participants of such courses.

4.3.1 Participation in post-licence driver training and education programs

Exposure to further training at this stage reinforces safe driving habits which may have seemed abstract or meaningless at the time of obtaining their licence, when they were more motivated by vehicle-control skills and learning road laws to pass the written and practical driving tests. Additionally, exposure to further driver training provides an opportunity to impart positive driving behaviour, hazard perception and cognitive skills to young drivers.

Carefully designed education/training courses, one-on-one driver assessments and group workshops can help the driver identify their own strengths and weaknesses and improve driving attitude and behaviour by incorporating exercises tailored to individual needs which can then be practised in everyday driving.

Through its Driver Education Unit, the RACQ offers young drivers a range of services and programs to check for any driving weaknesses and improve the individual's driving attitude and behaviour. These range from a one-on-one driver assessment to a full-day driver education program.

RACQ also encourages employers and fleet managers to consider and invest in appropriate workplace-based driver education/training courses, along with the development and implementation of safer driver policies and incentive/reward schemes for their drivers.

Unfortunately, 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 an accident situation but ten times more likely to allow themselves to get into it (Job: 1992).

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 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.

Also, in the context of the driver training and education providers there needs to be guidance provided to ensure that the process, methods, content and outcomes for their training programs reflect best practice.

4.3.2 Barriers to participation

At present there is a general reluctance or inability for drivers to undertake appropriate post-licence courses, let alone on a regular basis. Reasons may include:

- financial constraints – unable to afford the cost of the course(s);
- no legal requirements;
- distance/location – proximity to training providers; and
- lack of motivation – why do more than is necessary.

Therefore, short of compulsory attendance, the RACQ believes the best way to encourage drivers to refresh and update their knowledge and skills on a regular and continual basis is to offer incentives that offset the costs of participating in such programs.

5.0 What, if any, other measures should be taken to reduce novice driver and rider crashes in Queensland.

5.1 Enhancements to the Graduated Licensing Scheme

A system of graduated licensing is a valuable opportunity to manage exposure of young and inexperienced drivers to the road system by imposing restrictions. While Queensland has a basic graduated licensing system, i.e., learner and provisional licensing stages with licence conditions, the RACQ believes additional safety benefits would be achieved through further enhancements.

These enhancements include the following:

5.1.1 Minimum driving hours gained under supervision

It is important to shift the emphasis away from obtaining the licence as quickly and cheaply as possible.

The NSW graduated licensing system requires learner drivers to record a minimum of 50 hours driving practice in a logbook (McDougall: 2002, p.174).

In Victoria, the RACV and VicRoads, encourages all novice drivers to get at least 120 hours of supervised on-road driving experience as learners. Research shows that learners with 120 hours of practice have been found to decrease their crash risk by 30 percent after licensing (VicRoads: 1998, p.4).

The RACQ believes Queensland should follow the lead of other states, such as NSW and Victoria, in setting a minimum number of driving hours a learner driver should gain whilst under supervision.

5.1.2 Night-time Curfews

In 1994 Ontario introduced a night-time 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-time driving restrictions, amongst other initiatives, and this yielded 23 percent and 12 percent reductions in injuries amongst 15-19 years olds and 20-24 year olds respectively.

Research shows small but significant reductions in night-time crashes in jurisdictions with night-time driving restrictions (McKnight: 1992). A restriction lasting only for the first six months might be acceptable and would be consistent with the learning curve of new drivers, which shows its greatest improvement during the first few months of driving.

RACQ believes that a driving curfew may provide benefits in reducing exposure to road crashes, but could be associated with social and mobility ramifications. However, this could also be used as an incentive to reduce the probationary period if the driver remains crash-free/offence-free in a specified time-period.

5.1.3 Competency-based training

The RACQ supports in principle the need for a competency-based training option for learner drivers in Queensland. The RACQ believes this option provides a formal learn-to-drive process where learner drivers can 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. Competency-based training is presently available in South Australia as an alternative to undertaking the normal steps to gaining a licence. 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.

In Queensland, *Precise Driver Training* on the Gold Coast is currently offering a driver education and competency-based driver training program to high schools, but participants are still required to pass the Q-SAFE practical driving test. However, the RACQ recognises that many learner drivers would not undertake the competency-based training path unless there were worthwhile incentives, to do so to offset the additional costs and extra training that would be required, such as that provided by the South Australian example.

In New Zealand, where the government is about to introduce a competency-based training option, successful participants will be able to gain access to a range of incentives offered as part of the AA Driver Education Foundation's *Alchemy Driver Programme* (AADEF: 2002). The *Alchemy Driver Programme* is an incentive based programme for drivers in the 15-24 year age group. It employs a points system to encourage drivers to complete competency-based activities delivered by approved providers. Points entitle participants to redeem rewards such as insurance benefits.

5.1.4 Further testing for probationary drivers

The probationary 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 believes that the existing process to obtain 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 at the end of the learner 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.

The RACQ supports the introduction of a hazard perception test for provisional licence holders. This type of test would emphasise the cognitive aspects of the driving task, which RACQ believes tends to be ignored in the current Queensland licensing system.

5.1.5 Incentives, Restrictions and Penalties

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

In addition to the existing restrictions on learner and probationary drivers, 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. Some common restrictions include:

- Increasing minimum age;
- Increasing the minimum period of supervision;
- Reintroducing L and P plates;
- Enforcing curfews;
- Other young adult passenger limitations;
- Engine capacity;
- Differential speed restrictions;
- Reduced tolerance of driving infringements; and
- Penalty differences.

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, 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).

There needs to be further discussion on what restrictions would have the desired effect on controlling a novice driver's exposure to risk. RACQ's views on some of the listed restrictions were discussed in detail in a previous report RACQ submitted to Travelsafe in 1995. A copy of this report is available on request.

The RACQ recommends a complete review of the existing Queensland driver licensing system to consider the measures as listed. This review should also consider the impact that individual measures may have on the incidence of illegal driving due to the perceived added difficulty in obtaining a licence.

5.2 “L” and “P” plates

If the existing graduated licensing system were to be enhanced with additional measures, as outlined previously, there would need to be a re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland learner and provisional licence holders to display “L” and “P” plates on the vehicles that they are driving. At present, Queensland is the only state where “L” and “P” plates are not required to be displayed by learner and provisional drivers. 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.

5.3 Enforcement/Penalties

According to Townsend (1990) education is less effective than enforcement and engineering in producing road safety benefits. He stated (Townsend: 1990) that the best driving training programs can offer is temporary improvement in driving knowledge and reduced violations but rarely reduced crash records especially for novice drivers. Therefore, it is important that education-based countermeasures aimed at informing young drivers of inappropriate driving behaviour be supported by enforcement and vice-versa in order to deliver 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 target not only the fatal 4 but other offences and risky behaviours such as aggressive driving, following too closely, weaving and inattention.

Above all, highly visible means of on-road enforcement would increase the perception and 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 these penalties could be

assisted by expanding programs which 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 restrictions durations extended if the offender is a probationary licence holder, but the RACQ believes sufficient penalty differences already exist in the form of fewer demerit points for probationary and learner licence holders. Any further restrictions should only apply after a first offence has been committed, rather than imposing blanket restrictions on all novice drivers.

As part of penalties, recidivist drivers should be forced to attend driver improvement or rehabilitation courses, provided that such courses can be shown to reduce accident involvement and violations for those who attend.

5.4 Waiving of Age Excess on Insurance Policies for Learner Drivers

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 driver gaining extra supervised driving experience may lie in the age excess present on most insurance policies.

To the RACQ's knowledge there are only a few insurance companies that provide the option of waiving the age excess, e.g., RACV Insurance in Victoria publicises that they waive the age excess for learner drivers to encourage more early supervised driving experience (Public Policy Department: 2002, p.28).

RACQ believes insurance companies should be encouraged to reduce, or remove, the age excess which may apply when learner drivers are driving while under supervision, so this no longer acts as a deterrent to obtaining as much practical experience as possible in the family car.

5.5 Engineering

The RACQ believes that all drivers, particularly young drivers, would benefit from cost-effective traffic engineering countermeasures which can reduce the incidence and consequences of driver error. These include:

- audible road edgelines;
- roadway delineation and raised pavement markers;
- systematic removal or protection of roadside hazards;
- widening and sealing of road shoulders;
- enhanced road signing procedures and intersection controls, e.g. roundabouts and traffic signals;
- skid resistant and other road surface improvements; and
- regular road safety audits.

5.6 Vehicle Restrictions

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 (Public Policy Department: 2002, p.29).

While 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.

RACQ would prefer the emphasis be towards the purchase of safer vehicles. In this regard, the RACQ produces a Car Buyer's Guide to inform members and the community of the issues involved in buying a car. 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.

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.

RACQ does not support the imposition of vehicle restrictions (with the exception of the towing of trailers etc.) for learner drivers, as it is preferred that they gain as much varied driving experience as possible whilst they are under supervision.

6.0 Recommendations

To better understand the involvement of novice drivers in crashes, and the factors contributing to their crashes, the RACQ recommends:

- that the risk factors relating to the different types of crashes, together with traffic offence and licensing data and insurance claims, be analysed to:
 - define how well young drivers are performing against the norms for behaviours/manoeuvres for all Queensland drivers;
 - help identify any prevailing trends or driver profiles; and
 - monitor different attitudes and motivations towards driving.
- further investigation to determine whether the problem is with novice drivers generally, or specifically with young male drivers.

In considering what additional driver/rider training and education should be provided to novice drivers, the RACQ recommends:

- that school-based road safety education 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.
- better promotion of the "Ready to Guide" and "Your Keys to driving in Queensland" publications to instructors, family and friends to encourage more learner drivers to gain their licence through a structured approach.

- on an ongoing basis, 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.
- that young drivers, when deciding what type of post-licence driver education course to attend, be guided towards those 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.
- that guidance and feedback be provided to driver training and education providers to ensure that the process, methods, content and outcomes for their training programs reflect best practice.
- Consideration of incentives to encourage drivers to refresh and update their knowledge and skills on a regular and continual basis by attending appropriate post-licence driver education courses.

In considering what other measures should be taken to reduce novice driver and rider crashes in Queensland, the RACQ recommends:

- a comprehensive review of the existing Queensland driver licensing system to consider further restrictions and incentives that gradually increase the novice drivers' exposure to the driving environment during the highest risk periods.
- that learner drivers be required to obtain experience in a variety of conditions and environments by recording a minimum number of supervised driving hours in a log book.
- consideration of a competency-based training option for learner drivers to obtain a probationary driver's licence.
- the introduction of a hazard perception test, as part of the licensing process, for provisional licence holders.
- a re-introduction of legislation requiring Queensland learner and provisional licence holders to display "L" and "P" plates on the vehicles that they are driving.
- a more visible police patrol presence, assisted by on-road links to relevant databases, to address unsafe driving behaviours amongst young drivers.
- that recidivist drivers be forced to undertake a driver improvement program, provided that the program is able to show reductions in crash involvement and traffic violations for those who attend.
- consideration by insurance companies of a removal or reduction in the age excess, which may apply when learner drivers are driving while under supervision.

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