

Queensland Youth: On the road and in control

Facilitator Report of Community Discussion Forums

Forum Number: 2 *Location:* Gold Coast

Number of Participants Estimated 40

Forum Panel Members:

Hon Paul Lucas, Minister for Transport and Main Roads
Mr Tony Kursius, Executive Director, Land Transport and Safety Division
Dr. Barry Watson, Senior Lecturer, CARRS Q, QUT
Inspector Danny Baade, Regional Traffic Coordinator, South East Region, Queensland Police
Gary Fites, Royal Automobile Club of Queensland
Shem Aitken, young Queenslander with direct crash experience

General Description

The forum was held in the Holiday Inn, View Street, Surfers Paradise.

The forum operated as an iterative exchange between participants and the panel using data show slides to remind participants of the key initiatives within the discussion paper. The forum was opened by the Minister who provided a brief and informative summary of the current level of safety surrounding young novice drivers in Queensland.

Key Issues highlighted by the Minister

- Novices have 2.5 times the crash rate of experienced drivers
- Is there support for greater parental involvement?
- Queensland has had a 40+% reduction in fatalities, and 20+% reduction in young road user fatalities over the last decade
- Government can't deliver road safety on its own. The community must practice and participate to improve road safety
- The major young driver issue is Inexperience (learning something for the first time), Year 1 as a provisional licensee is a critical risk period. As well some young drivers add to their inexperience risk with other behaviour. (ie. Night driving, travelling with more than 2 passengers, speeding, using mobile phones while driving, being unable to deal with other distractions, drink driving, hooning and picking up bad habits from other drivers)
- Young Drivers are safe as Learners!!!
- In Queensland there is a need to consider the special circumstances of rural youth.

Special Presentation

Participants were reminded of the personal impacts of road crashes by a special presentation from Shem Aitken who outlined the circumstances leading to his injury and the extensive impacts on his life

Major Viewpoints

Pre-Learner Phase Initiatives

Pre Learner Education Package

There was extensive discussion about the nature and need for pre-learner educational experiences. The group supported the concept in principle with some in the audience viewing the need for education at this time as a key issue. Others, including some of the young people present were not so sure that a driver education package would receive the level of priority from them while at school given the other learning priorities which faced them at this time.

First Aid Training

Participants acknowledged the intent of this initiative to establish a greater level of safety awareness amongst young people before getting behind a wheel. However the general view expressed was this should be *a low priority*. Some felt the knowledge would be beneficial if it can be used, but others identified a real difficulty with using the knowledge at a crash due to the injury and suffering occurring at the time.

Learner Licence Initiatives

120 Hours of driving experience with a logbook

Participants determined that this would increase the level of experience during the period when young drivers are safest. There were concerns that not all parents are supportive in providing opportunities for practice, and some young people are in circumstances without ready access to vehicles for practice.

There were concerns that some people would falsify log book records to meet the requirements. Others wondered whether allowing a driver with only 1 year on a full licence to supervise was providing sufficient experienced guidance for young novice drivers.

Advice was received from those involved in motor sport that young people with this interest benefited substantially from the training provided. Consequently this group felt some training in support of the practice provisions was an important element..

Education for learner drivers, supervisors and parents

Participants considered that *information and advice* about what experiences they should be providing, and at what time in the learning process these should be presented, *was very important*.

Parents particularly felt the need for substantial additional information if they were being asked to take on a key role in providing practice. There were also concerns that integrating the parents role with that of driving instructors needed to occur for greatest benefits to be achieved..

Hold a Learner licence for at least 12 months

There was no discussion of this issue and no participant raised it as a concern.

Reduce the learner licence age to 16 years

Participants understood that this initiative would allow for extended practice under the safest circumstances of supervised driving. Despite this understanding not all participants were in support of the idea. Some were concerned about the maturity of 16 year olds behind the wheel even in a supervised capacity.

This led to concerns that safety levels may be compromised by the increased number of 16 year olds on the road. These worries were not entirely overcome by the evidence from other jurisdictions of the benefits of increased supervised driving practice amongst the young..

Review of penalties and sanctions for learner drivers who break the law

The major concern of the group was that there should be consistency of enforcement to ensure that the penalties on the books applied to the majority of errant drivers. There was some support for penalties which would be designed to extend the supervised learning period of novice drivers rather than traditional fines.

There was little support identified for any extensive increase in penalties for learner drivers except a call for penalties to be such that the penalty for unlicensed driving be at least as high, or perhaps higher than other penalties so that it would work as a deterrent to unlicensed driving.

Review current Q-SAFE practical driving assessment

There was support for ensuring that the on road test be the most up to date as possible. Many participants strongly supported the need for 'real world testing' and see an effective on road test as a key component of the graduation for novice drivers from learner status to provisional licensee..

Introduce competency based training and assessment (CBTA) for learner drivers

Not all participants were able to appreciate the detail of the CBTA approach as they had not experienced this learning approach themselves. Information was provided about a learning program which has been successfully prepared for novice drivers on the Gold Coast which incorporated a CBTA methodology.

Some participants were very enthusiastic about the competency based training and assessment method and viewed it as the only logical way to take forward the process of learner driver training. The inability of existing CBTA systems to provide evidence of crash reductions however was noted

Provisional Licence Initiatives

Peer passenger restrictions

There was an extensive and constructive discussion around this initiative. The potential of good injury reductions being achieved was noted. There was concern that the concept be held to peers only and that those with family or similar responsibilities must be able to complete those responsibilities through an exemption scheme.

There was concern that the proposal would increase the number of young people driving vehicles and may lead to a reduction in the use of designated driver schemes which are a positive facet of young drivers approach to late night mobility.

There was support for the initiative from young participants, and some made the distinction between the problems associated with a group of peers as passengers compared with the positive effects on driving experienced with a single peer passenger.

This observation reflects accurately the research evidence which shows that a single passenger does not appear to compromise safety levels whereas 2 or more passengers lead to a substantially higher crash risk.

There was little discussion about whether the restriction should apply to the first twelve months only or to the full provisional driver period. Participants did note however the very high risk period in the first twelve months and the rapid improvement in that risk level into the second and third year of a provisional licence.

Late night driving restrictions

The group were not keen about this initiative. Concerns raised included the high level of inconvenience which many could see would be generated and the need to deal with minorities and people with unusual circumstances.

Many considered that such an approach was impractical and there were worries about how restrictions might be applied to older novice drivers who also face a high (but not quite as high) crash risk to young novice drivers.

Split Provisional phase (P1 and P2)

There was little discussion of this issue, although there was an acknowledgement of the need for such a provision if differential conditions were implemented for parts of the provisional licence period.

P Plates

Participants acknowledged the advice from Inspector Baade that for effective and efficient enforcement of provisions which distinguish between provisional drivers and others there would need to be a reintroduction of P plates. There was acknowledgement that this would have to happen and little concern was expressed should this occur. .

Screen based Hazard Perception test (HPT)

There was no discussion of this initiative.

Working with driving instructors after changes to the GLS

There was no discussion of this initiative

Develop an education and media campaign on driver distraction

Participants noted the influence of distractions and agreed with the implementation of a campaign targeting the whole community on the issue

Prohibit all mobile phone use for learner and provisional drivers when driving

There were strong views expressed by participants in relation to mobile phones. Most felt that a ban on usage was totally justified and should apply not only to young drivers but to all drivers and cover all types of phones (hand held and remote). Additionally there were calls for increased policing of the behaviour with many participants feeling very concerned about the safety implications of use of phones while driving

Review of penalties and sanctions for provisional drivers who break the law.

There was no discussion of this initiative beyond the comments presented in looking at penalties for drivers during the learner phase presented earlier in the evening.

Incentive and reward options for provisional drivers

This issue was not discussed directly during the evening; however comments were received during the discussion on extending learner drivers experience to 120 hours. In this context people felt some incentives for effective performance could be implemented. Ideas presented included a discount on the licence, or the road test at the completion of say 40 hours and further incentives on the cost of the provisional licence at the completion of 120 hours. These comments were in support of a voluntary approach to 120 hours of practice and need to be considered alongside the general view of the group that a compulsory 120 hours was a positive initiative

Education and Training support for provisional drivers

This issue was not discussed.

Restricting the cars that provisional drivers may drive

Participants expressed a range of views on this issue. Some felt the principle of the idea was a good one by keeping inexperienced drivers away from powerful vehicles. Others were concerned that the definitions associated with powerful vehicles were too difficult to establish with many high powered 4 cylinder vehicles able to be purchased.

There were also worries about how such a program would be enforced, although if such a restriction were applied to a part of the provisional licence phase, advice was presented that driver identification could be undertaken through the display of P plates.

One participant felt that if such a scheme were deemed valuable it could be implemented through a link to the roadworthy scheme on vehicle purchase.

Speed limit restrictions

Participants were strong in their views against this initiative. Some felt it might subject novice drivers to road rage experiences. Others felt it did not support the development in confidence required as the novice learns to drive in all traffic situations. Participants noted that the research evidence indicates that wide differentials in travel speeds is associated with greater crash risk rather than lower crash risk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Taylor', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ray Taylor
February 13 2006