

Queensland Youth: On the road and in control

Facilitator Report of Community Discussion Forums

Forum Number: 3 *Location:* Mackay

Number of Participants Estimated 90

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
Snr Sgt Richard Turner, Mackay Distract Traffic Unit, Central Region, Queensland Police
Gary Fites, Royal Automobile Club of Queensland
Kerry Truloff, young Queenslander with direct crash experience

General Description

The forum was held in the Entertainment Centre, Cnr Gordon and Alfred Sts, Mackay..

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. A feature of this forum was the participation of Year 11 and 12 students from Mackay Christian College, Pioneer High School and North High School.

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. (i.e. 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 Kelly Truloff who outlined the circumstances leading to her crash.

Major Viewpoints

Pre-Learner Phase Initiatives

Pre Learner Education Package

The group supported this concept in principle however there was little discussion and the idea did not receive the same level of attention as other initiatives

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 encouraged but not required. Information was presented which showed that some form of first aid training was already being conducted in schools

Learner Licence Initiatives

A package of measures, including 120 Hours of driving experience with a logbook, Education for learner drivers, supervisors and parents, holding the learner licence for at least 12 months and reducing the licence age to 16 years.

Participants determined that this would increase the level of experience during the period when young drivers are safest. There were concerns that the total of 120 hours may not be able to be achieved and that there were practical difficulties to be overcome..

There were concerns that some people would falsify log book records to meet the requirements. Others considered a check on progress after 6 months would be a sensible provision, and there were concerns that the higher risk experiences may not be undertaken with parents reluctant to provide driving opportunities during clearly higher risk circumstances. There was support for any initiative which might generate the potential of additional lessons being available to novice drivers.

Parents 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..

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

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, and in fact there was a call for incentives rather than penalties as a support for the learning process. Participants raised the idea of facing young drivers with those who had experienced crashes so that the consequences of a crash could be absorbed could be included in any penalty regime for offenders during their learner period.

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. Some participants raised the issue of potential increase in costs, but it was not highlighted as a burning issue. Some driver trainers in the group felt there were many variables to be considered and this posed some difficulty on the task.

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

There was little discussion of this initiative

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.

Concerns raised included the following:

- It would appear to cut across the operation of designated driver initiatives which young people felt were working well and were effective.
- There would be an increase in the number of young drivers on the road with a concern that this might increase the number of crashes.
- There was a need for exemptions for activities such as ferrying family members, work group arrangements, sports club group arrangements and the like. Many participants felt this would result in a complex system to administer.
- There would be difficulties in rural areas where other transport options did not exist and where the costs of increasing the number of vehicles going to a location would be increased substantially to meet with the requirements

Some participants felt that having a person beside them in the car actually helped the safety of their driving and this was confirmed by advice provided on the research which shows that elevated crash risks occur with two or more passengers but not one.

Because of the effects of peer influences, one participant felt the key issue was alcohol impairment amongst passengers and supported allowing the carriage of passengers provided they were also subject to a zero BAC requirement like the drivers. This idea was not followed up for any of the practical issues which might apply.

Some participants felt the initiative might be able to apply for 6 months with appropriate exemptions.

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
- the need to deal with minorities and people with unusual circumstances.
- The high level of complexity required to deal with exemptions
- The difficulty for people working shift hours and the need for them to seek exemptions

- The general lack of public transport to use as an alternative
- Concern that other issues were more important, such as excessive speeding
- A concern that those who were both mature and responsible were being restricted along with those of higher risk.

The only positive responses recorded included the idea that it might work in major towns and perhaps could be applied for the first six months of the provisional licence period in this context.

Split Provisional phase (P1 and P2) incorporating the use of P plates

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. Some suggested a 6 month period if it linked with a passenger restriction requirement. There was support for the need for a community education campaign to explain the role of P plates and to encourage supportive on-road actions by other drivers.

Screen based Hazard Perception test (HPT)

There was some discussion of this initiative. Most participants felt it made sense to apply such an approach, although some were keen to see it in the learner stage, rather than as a test of performance from the P1 to the P2 licence

Working with driving instructors after changes to the GLS

There was no discussion of this initiative

Initiatives aimed at driver distraction including an education and media campaign on driver distraction and prohibiting mobile phone use for L and P drivers.

There was strong support for this package, although many participants felt other hand held devices had the same potential for distraction as mobile phones and perhaps should be treated in the same way. Reference was made to the large number of gadgets now appearing in cars and the distracting influence they were likely to have.

Review of penalties and sanctions for provisional drivers who break the law and incentive and reward options for provisional drivers

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 afternoon.

Education and Training support for provisional drivers

This issue was not discussed.

Other provisional licence restrictions including restricting the cars that provisional drivers may drive and speed limit restrictions

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.(i.e WRX's)

One participant felt that if such a scheme were deemed valuable it could be implemented through an encouragement provided by insurers which made high powered vehicles excessively costly and low powered vehicles much cheaper for novice drivers to purchase.

There was little support for differential speed limits to apply to young drivers. Some felt it might subject novice drivers to road rage experiences and others felt it would be better to provide a tighter demerit points regime in relation to speed offences if this was the issue being addressed. 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 26 2006