

Queensland Youth: On the road and in control

Facilitator Report of Community Discussion Forums

Forum Number: 5 *Location:* Cairns

Number of Participants Estimated 35

Forum Panel Members:

Hon Paul Lucas, Minister for Transport and Main Roads
Mr Tony Kursius, Executive Director, Land Transport and Safety Division
Dr. Ron Christie
Inspector Bob Waters, Traffic Coordinator, Northern Region, Queensland Police
Snr Sgt Peter Farbaeck, Queensland Police
Gary Fites, Royal Automobile Club of Queensland
Nick Benjamin, young Queenslander with direct crash experience

General Description

The forum was held in the Brothers Leagues Club, Corner Anderson and English Streets.

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. (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.

Major Viewpoints

Pre-Learner Phase Initiatives

Pre Learner Education Package

The group supported this concept in principle however some felt there was limited capacity for its implementation. There was an innovative suggestion that a package could be based on a computer simulation. One participant strongly endorsed the concept and outlined six areas of possible content. These included

1. Risk Management
2. Attitudes and their development
3. Understanding the process of learning
4. Involving parents
5. Responsibility and what it means
6. Consequences of unsafe behaviours

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 lower priority. Again, information was presented by younger participants that some form of first aid training was conducted in schools already.

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.

- . While supporting the approach, there were concerns:
 - that the total of 120 hours may not be achievable and that there were practical difficulties to be overcome. Many felt this translated to 2 ½ hours of driving per week which would not be sustained.
 - The need to advise, train and encourage parents in the role of supervisors of practice. There was a suggestion that providing a refresher experience for parents with a driving instructor may be one way to limiting the potential for contradictory information being provided to the learner driver.
 - The need to provide information to ensure that young drivers experienced a variety of different experiences during the practice.
 - The need to establish mechanisms to prevent or limit the potential of fraudulent preparation of the log book. One participant felt that the licence inspectors would be able to easily identify those who claimed substantial practice and had not done so.
 - The need to put in place special arrangements to ensure opportunities for access to vehicles and licensed drivers were available for disadvantaged, remote and unsupported indigenous youth
 - The need to overcome issues of inequity which might occur through differential access to support and vehicles. The suggestion that driving

instructor sessions might be counted at a higher value than practice hours – say 2:1 or 3:1 was seen as constructive.

There were no concerns about the minimum period of 12 months for holding the learner permit and no one raised a concern about commencing the learner period at 16. One participant however did feel there was a good opportunity to raise the licensing age to 18, believing that 17 was too young.

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

There was no discussion of this initiative.

Review current Q-SAFE practical driving assessment

This issue was addressed in some detail. Many participants who were experienced driving instructors spoke enthusiastically supporting the need for an upgraded system. There was support for a standardised approach. One participant felt this was the opportunity to implement two tests, one at the start of the learner period and one at the end. Defensive driving concepts were supported by some participants.

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

This initiative was also a popular one for discussion. The concept of establishing a more standardised learning regime was seen to be beneficial; however it was unclear whether participants generally supported the notion of progressive assessment resulting in endorsed instructors issuing the provisional licence.

One participant felt that the principle of instructors and trainers also undertaking the assessment and issuing the licence was not appropriate. Experiences in relation to the Q Ride motorcycle licensing CBTA approach were mixed with some expressing concerns that the number of novices undertaking the traditional approach had reduced substantially.

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 and many participants felt that if problems could be addressed the idea would be worth considering.

One participant however felt strongly that the key to safe driving was personal responsibility and the capacity to resist pressures for unsafe action from mates, rather than being protected from the effects.

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 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. Additionally some participants felt personal safety might be compromised where group travel would not be permitted.

The general group view tended to support the approach and as well there was a general endorsement of applying such restrictions as a penalty to offending drivers.

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.
- Concerns about personal safety
- 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

Some people felt it might be appropriate to try the restriction for a year as a provision in the P1 licensing phase, but there was little support for extended provision across the whole of the provisional licence period.

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

This idea was generally supported provided there was 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 supported the idea as a method to assess progress with safe driving. Comments raised included that the approach should be viable, it was a valuable component of the process and it should be good.

One participant felt the test should be applied to all novice drivers subject to driving infringements as a method to assess their progress generally and on hazard perception in particular.

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.

This issue raised strong views. Many participants felt distractions were a real problem and endorsed action to address them. Concerns about all hand held devices were raised and people acknowledged the role of mobile phones and supported the concept.

One participant spoke enthusiastically and identified that concentration on the driving task was undermined by use of the mobile phone either in hands free or hand held method.

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

Education and Training support for provisional drivers

There was no discussion of this initiative as formal initiative but discussions of the methods surrounding the amendments to Q Safe practical test and the CBTA methods suggested to apply at the end of the learner licence period reflected many participants views about the nature of educational programs which might be suitable.

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

There was no discussion of this initiative

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

Ray Taylor
February 27 2006