

Major Viewpoints

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

Despite this potential for a positive perspective, participants raised a number of issues which they felt were significant and perhaps not easily addressed, these included:

- Concern for young people who could be left without transport after breaking peer passenger restrictions.
- Concern that there may be increased risk of injury from more cars on the road. While participants accepted the existing research information showing a net benefit in other countries, many felt this would need to be proven in Australia
- Concern for the potential of lower personal safety, especially for young women potentially stranded at night after events and activities.
- 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
- One young participant with a mature and sensible approach to driving was concerned that those showing these character traits were potentially being disadvantaged in order to protect the first period of driving for others.

Some innovative ideas were raised during discussion. One participant suggested applying the restriction on Friday and Saturday nights on the assumption that this correlated with higher crash periods and greater levels of driving in high risk periods.

While people acknowledge the suggestion from other groups that the approach might be applied to traffic offenders as a penalty, there was not overwhelming support for this suggestion.

Late night driving restrictions

Some participants were not keen about this initiative. One participant summed up the feeling by identifying the potential benefits of the proposal but expressing major concern about the practicalities of implementation. 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 fact that in many instances the system would need a high level of parental support to pick up children at night and that many parents may not be sufficiently motivated to help at the levels required.

- 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
- A general view that enforcement difficulties would be substantial for police and that if the system were not enforced it might fall into disrepute.

There was a stronger view about this initiative being applied to offenders, with some believing that the 'hoons' amongst young people should be subject to these types of restrictions.

There was also a call for some more positive incentives to assist young people during the first difficult years of driving. No specific suggestions were presented but the concept was raised amidst a concern expressed by one participant that most of the provisions designed to improve young peoples safety result in greater controls and restrictions of mobility.

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. In response to direct questions young participants in the audience appeared unfazed by the potential of wearing P plates and understood the need for identification in the case of differential conditions being applied to part of the provisional licence period.

Screen based Hazard Perception test (HPT)

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 the issue of hazard recognition was a key factor in safe driving. This latter point was emphasised often during the evening by those involved in the driver training industry.

There were questions about where the test might be most effectively employed. People recognised the rationale for the suggestion that it be placed at the end of the P1 period to act as a check of progress prior to moving on the P2. Others felt it should be applied earlier in the licensing process perhaps even as an entry test prior to receiving a learners permit.

The issue of costs was raised and some participants were concerned should the test result in a substantial increase in the total costs associated with generating a licence.

Participants were opposed to any automatic progress of drivers from the P1 to P2 phase and supported the idea of a test at this point. The general feeling was expressed that if drivers failed the test at this time, then it showed they were not ready and should remain on their current level for a further period before taking the test again.

Working with driving instructors after changes to the GLS

There was general understanding and support for this idea. One participant felt there was an urgent need to generate some consistency in driver training across the industry and felt that the current arrangements allowed the potential for subjectivity from individual instructors to operate to the detriment of individual learners.

There was also recognition that if a closer understanding was to be achieved between instructors and parents then both groups would need assistance, training and education about the changes and the roles expected of each.

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.

Some participants felt that the level of use of phones was so ubiquitous that a campaign and law to ban their use while driving would face a tough time. Police identified that enforcement was an issue which would need to be addressed and different methods trialled.

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.

A potential leadership role for the corporate sector was outlined by one participant who advised that a large national company had banned all staff from turning on their phones during the drive to and from work as an occupational health and safety initiative.

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 a 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.

During discussion on a number of initiatives, individual participants spoke very supportively about their experiences with defensive driving and advanced driving programs. Comments also included support for program content such as vehicle mechanics and loss of control training.

Information about the very robust international research on the lack of overall safety benefits in the form of lower crash rates from drivers undertaking these courses compared to those not taking the courses was provided.

Despite this information some participants still felt their own personal experience was very rewarding and could not accept that a similar effect would not apply to others.

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

In general participants felt the real issue is the driver and not the car. Many raised the practical difficulties of identifying a powerful vehicle and were concerned that the Victorian and NSW schemes appeared not to be operating trouble free.

Worries were also expressed about circumstances where there was only one family car for use and it happened to fall into the high powered category. There were also major concerns about the difficulties of enforcement and the need for a continually updated list of vehicles on the restricted list to be easily at hand for operational police.

There was little discussion of the idea of speed restricting novice drivers and participant reaction suggested many in the group were aware of the research suggesting that crash rates actually increase where traffic flows include vehicles operating at widely divergent speeds.

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.

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 - 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 limit the potential for contradictory information being provided to the learner driver.
 - The need to provide information to ensure that young drivers were exposed to 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.
 - The difficulty of overcoming parental apathy which some participants said was a feature of parents' response to young driver training now and would be a major obstacle in a system requiring parents to devote more time to supervised practice.

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 was concerned that the proposed approach would increase the cost of obtaining a licence and was seeking information on how it could be structured to keep the costs within reasonable limits.

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

Participants generally supported the idea of progressive improvement to the on road driving test as a step in checking the progress of a young driver. Most discussion concerned the potential for support for the learning process before a person was able to qualify for the learners licence.

There were calls for schools to be more substantially involved in a pre-learner period and for TAFE to provide some pre-learner practical courses.

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

This initiative was also a popular one for discussion. Many driving instructors were strongly opposed to the idea. One participant felt the approach should not be introduced without a test at the end of the process as a check on the competency achievements of the students and the quality of training provided by the instructors.

There were concerns that the progressive training and testing approach might well cost more, and that current business may be affected.

Because of the technical nature of the issue there were few comments from those not in the driver instruction industry, those who did comment noted the potential for the approach being implemented alongside the traditional program and that it benefited those people who had difficulty showing their expertise in a single end of program examination.

Pre-Learner Phase Initiatives

Pre Learner Education Package

There was no discussion of this initiative specifically, however during discussions on the nature of education programs suitable for provisional licence drivers a number of participants felt there was a need for some introductory information, probably delivered through schools, before young people were able to drive on roads

First Aid Training

There was no discussion of this initiative



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