

Queensland Youth: On the road and in control

Facilitator Report of Community Discussion Forums

Forum Number: 10
Number of Participants

Location: Logan City
Estimated 40

Forum Panel Members:

Hon Lindy Nelson-Carr MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport
Mr Tony Kursius, Executive Director, Land Transport and Safety Division
Dr. Barry Watson, Senior Lecturer, CARRSQ, QUT.
Inspector Owen Hertz, Traffic Coordinator, SE Region, Queensland Police
Gary Fites, General Manager External Relations, Royal Automobile Club of Queensland
Andrea Giokas, Youth representative

General Description

The forum was held in the Logan City Recreation and Sporting Club, Alba Lane, Kingston. The Parliamentary Secretary in welcoming all participants acknowledged Barbara Stone, Member for Springwood, Desley Scott, Member for Woodridge and offered apologies on behalf of John Grant, Acting Mayor Logan City.

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 Parliamentary Secretary who provided a brief and informative summary of the current level of safety surrounding young novice drivers in Queensland.

Key Issues highlighted by the Parliamentary Secretary

- 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

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 were enthusiastically involved in discussion about this package of initiatives. .

The intent of the package was embraced enthusiastically and all participants understood the intent being designed to increase road experience under conditions which were the safest available and therefore ideal to exploit.

Despite these feelings, there were concerns which most participants felt had to be addressed if the concept was to be successful. These included:

- That the total of 120 hours may not be achievable and that there were practical difficulties to be overcome. Concerns were expressed that parents may not be willing to give the time and effort required
- The need to advise, train and encourage parents in the role of supervisors of practice. .
- The need to provide information to ensure that young drivers were exposed to a variety of different experiences during the practice. Participants endorsed suggestions that a range of experiences should be outlined, or perhaps even required, but doubted that without encouragement all parents would provide the time and their vehicles for wet weather driving, freeway driving, unsealed road driving, urban traffic, late night and other situations which would be met regularly as a provisional sole licensed driver.
- Insurance coverage was seen as a problem. One participant felt companies should provide cover for all young learners on the parents, or fully licensed drivers current no claim bonus arrangements and only increase the rates if a crash occurs. Exactly the same as applies to other drivers. The very good crash record of learner drivers would support such an approach.
- The need to establish mechanisms to prevent or limit the potential of fraudulent preparation of the log book.
- 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

Some innovative approaches were raised during discussion. One participant suggested linking the 120 hours program to educational programs run in schools

Another felt that simulated experience could be used as an adjunct to the on road experience. Further suggestions included the need for some basic understanding of mechanics so that young drivers would be aware of the capabilities of their vehicle.

There were no concerns about the minimum period of 12 months for holding the learner permit or about commencing the learner permit process at age 16. A suggestion to commence the process at 15 was also raised as this would allow the minimum

learner period to be two years and provide plenty of time to extend on-road supervised practice.

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

In general participants felt there was a need to improve the practical test. Many felt that some arrangements to try to test for capabilities achieved through the longer 120 hours practice arrangement would be needed.

A major concern expressed was the need to generate consistency of testing arrangements across the state, and suggestion to help in this regard was implementing a requirement for an appropriate professional qualification for testers. The certificate 4 in training and assessment was raised as an example.

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

This initiative generated a polar response from the group. Some people were strongly apposed to the idea and felt that the concept was based on a flawed principle that 'no-one fails'. Others were supportive and pointed to the many students who were capable drivers but tended to 'freeze' under test conditions and often needed to repeat the tests a number of times to get their license.

Some who had undertaken the current Q Ride CBTA program felt it was a positive experience and involved a greater level of training than would have occurred using the current system.

One person also suggested that such an approach should be provided at the end of the provisional licence period before a person could be issued with a full licence. During discussion there were calls for the literature in the licence books to be reviewed and written in 'simple English'.

Provisional Licence Initiatives

Peer passenger restrictions

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.

Despite this participants raised a number of issues including:

- A high level of inconvenience which was foreshadowed by some young participants
- Existing car pooling and designated driver arrangements undertaken by groups of young people would be threatened
- Expected difficulties with enforcement associated with identifying those people subject to the provisions and those who were not.
- Concerns about increasing risk of personal safety were raised by some young participants.
- There was a need for exemptions for activities such as ferrying family members, work group arrangements, sports club group arrangements and the like. Participants felt that if an effective exemptions system could be developed then the idea would be worth trying for a part of the provisional licence period. Up to a maximum of 12 months was raised as a possibility..
- There would be difficulties in rural areas where other transport options did not exist

Late night driving restrictions

Similarly to the discussion around the peer restrictions, the group felt a restriction during nighttimes would be beneficial.. One participant summed up the feeling well by identifying the potential benefits of the proposal but expressing major concern about the practicalities of implementation. Concerns raised included:

- the need to deal with minorities and people with unusual circumstances through an exemptions process.
- 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 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.

One idea suggested was that the logbook approach to recording on road experience discussed in relation to learner drivers could be extended into the provisional driver phase and used in some way to build experience before solo driving in risky conditions would be allowed.

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.

Despite this support some young participants felt the wearing of plates was not a good idea and made them a target for unsafe and aggressive road behaviour by others.

Some participants were also concerned that the approach to reducing risk for provisional licence holders seemed focused on restricting access at high risk times and in risky circumstances. While acknowledging the benefits of this, these participants were seeking ideas for more positive ways to reduce risk. This led to discussion of various forms of training and educational approaches and a concern that attitudes to driving amongst some people were a key problem.

One suggestion in support of the split P plates arrangements was to go further than other jurisdictions and break the period into 3 phases, each with specific conditions and with the P1 period incorporating all the key restrictions which would be gradually reduced as experience was achieved. This was seen to be similar to the effective training used to teach pilots

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.

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. 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.

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 no discussion of this 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

Participants felt strongly there was a place for some education and training for provisional drivers. There was some support for the concept of defensive driving or off-road training programs featuring vehicle control and driving techniques.

An innovative approach to addressing this issue was outlined by a participant working in one of the local schools. He identified the issue of risk assessment and developing the skills and motivation amongst young people to minimize these risks as an approach which was being developed. The approach has parallels to hazard perception.

During discussion, other participants supported building attitudes and behaviours to safer road use amongst children in the earliest years of schooling and were concerned that activity at the point of licence was too late to impact on fundamental values and attitudes.

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

There was no discussion of these initiatives.

Pre-Learner Phase Initiatives

Pre Learner Education Package

There was no discussion of this initiative.

First Aid Training

There was no discussion of this initiative


Ray Taylor
March 13 2006