

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Gosford City Council
Name: Ms Margie Azmi
Position: Acting Manager Engineering Services
Date Received: 3/12/2007



Telephone (02) 4325 8808

Please Quote: 3989320
Ms B Madden
3 December 2007

Gosford City Council

49 Mann Street
Gosford NSW 2250
PO Box 21
Gosford NSW 2250
DX 7211 Gosford

Telephone: 02 4325 8222
Facsimile: 02 4323 2477
goscity@gosford.nsw.gov.au
www.gosford.nsw.gov.au
ABN 78 303 458 861

The Hon Geoff Corrigan MP
Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee On Road Safety (Staysafe)
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir

Please find attached a submission by Gosford City Council for the inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs addressing the terms of reference as requested.

Any enquiries or requests for further information can be directed to Council's Road Safety Officer on (02) 4325 8808.

Yours faithfully

Margie Azmi
A/Manager Engineering Services

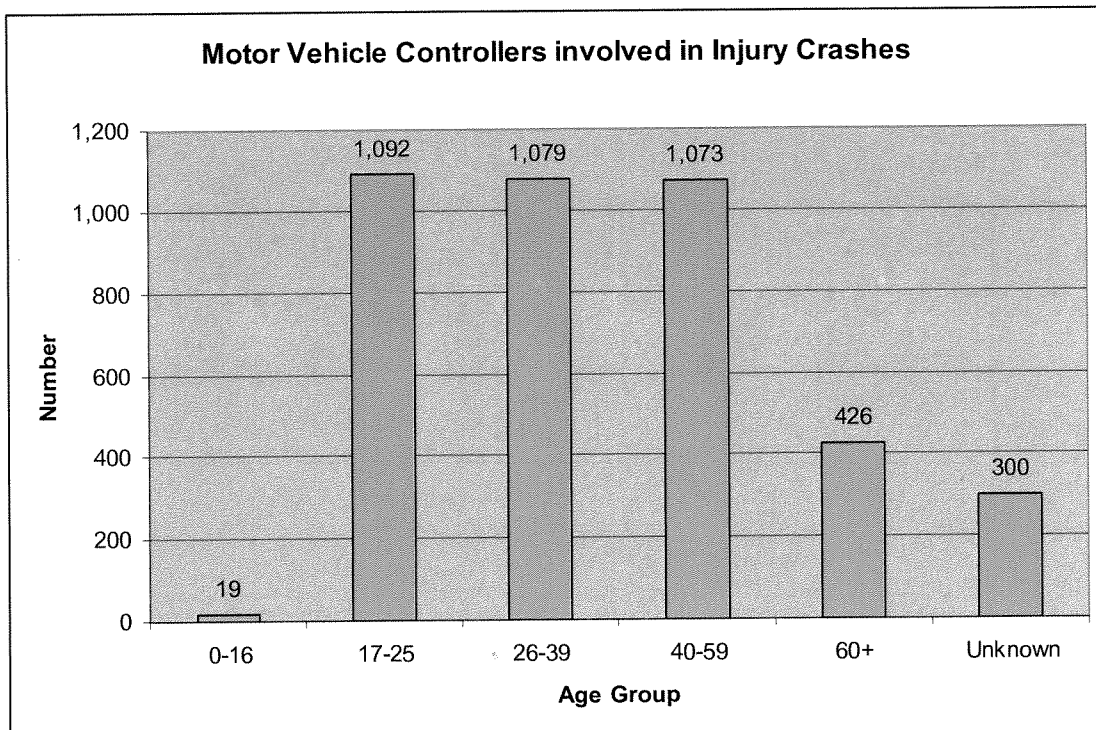
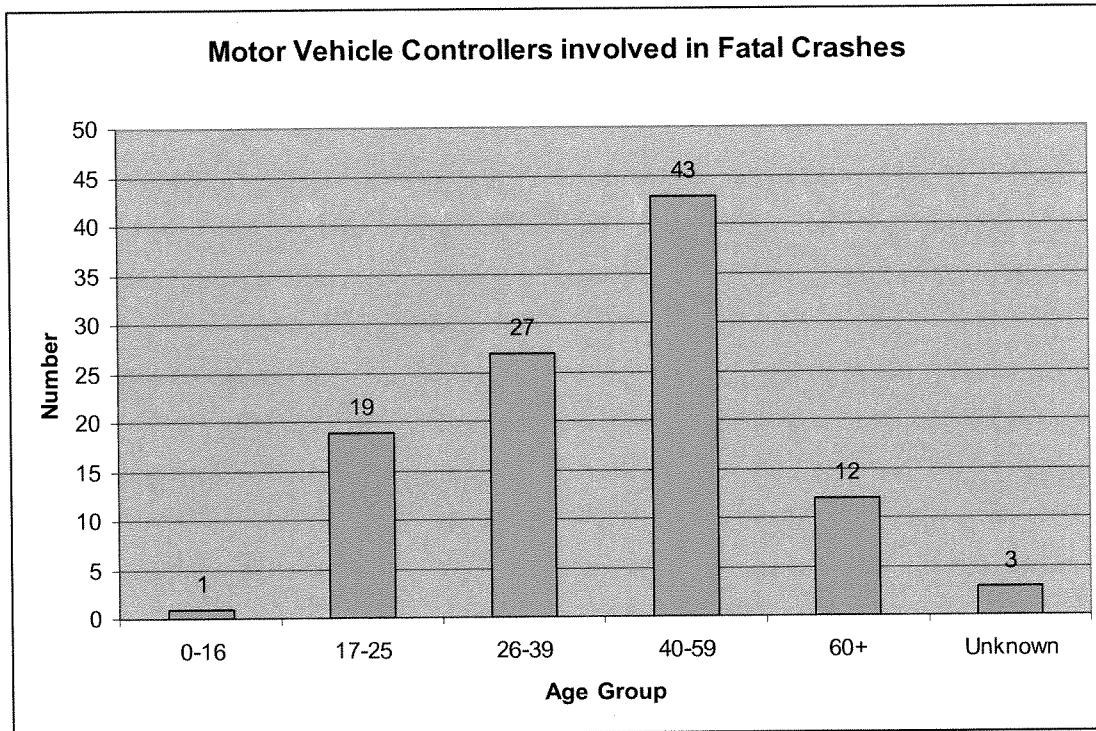


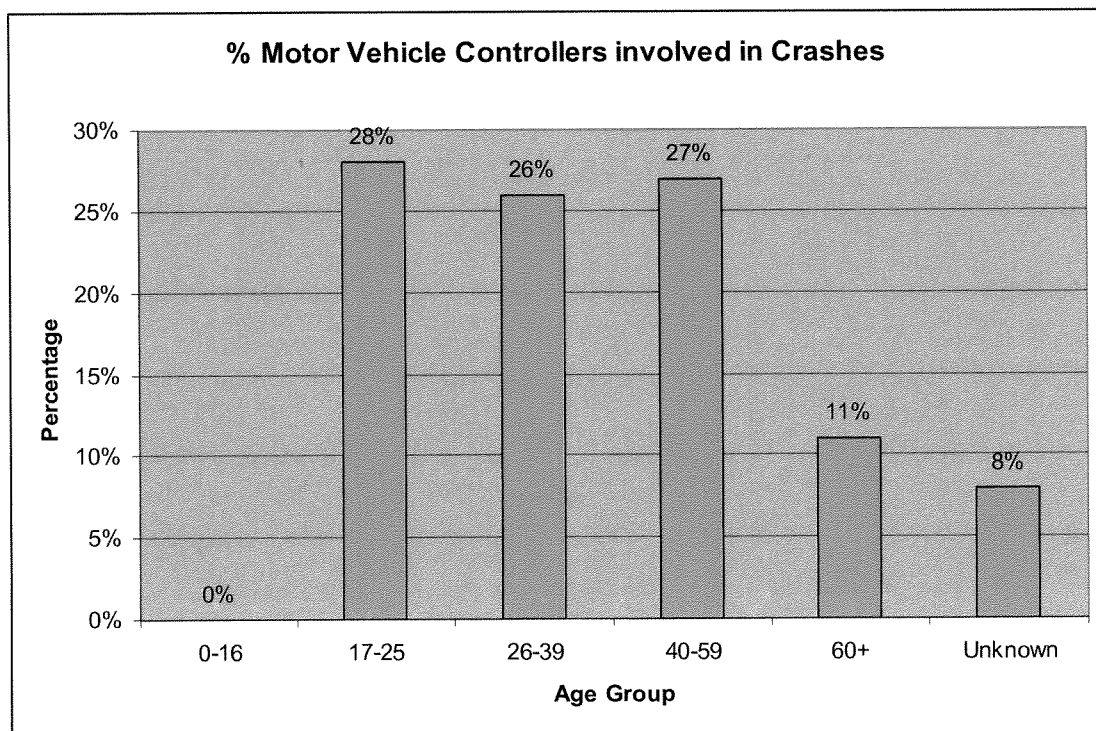
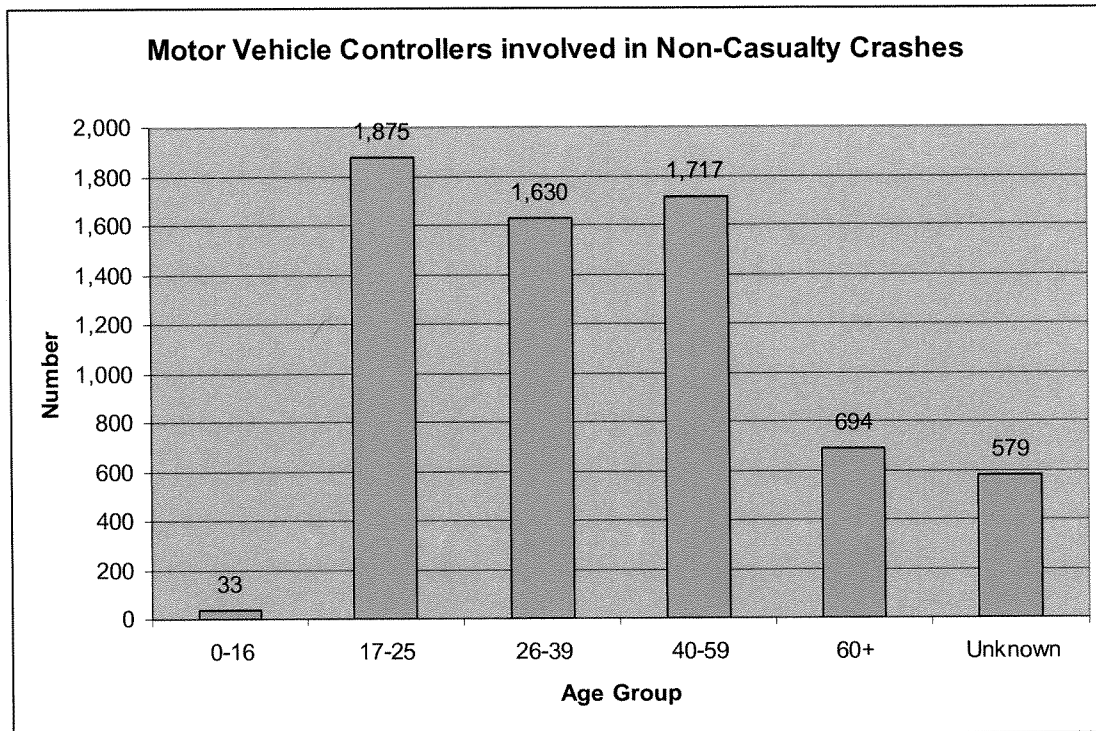
Gosford City Council

**Submission in response to request for information and comment
into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs**

A) The current incidence of road crashes involving young drivers.

The following graphs have been created using statistics for the Gosford Local Government Area (LGA) for the period 2001-2005 provided by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA).

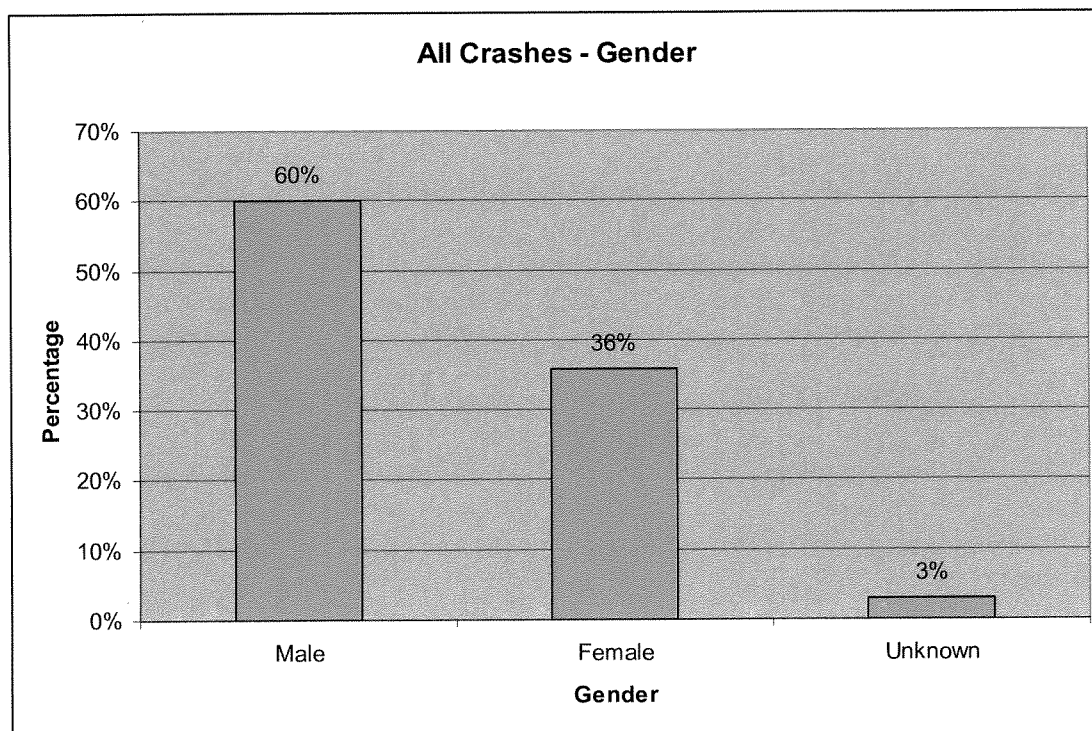
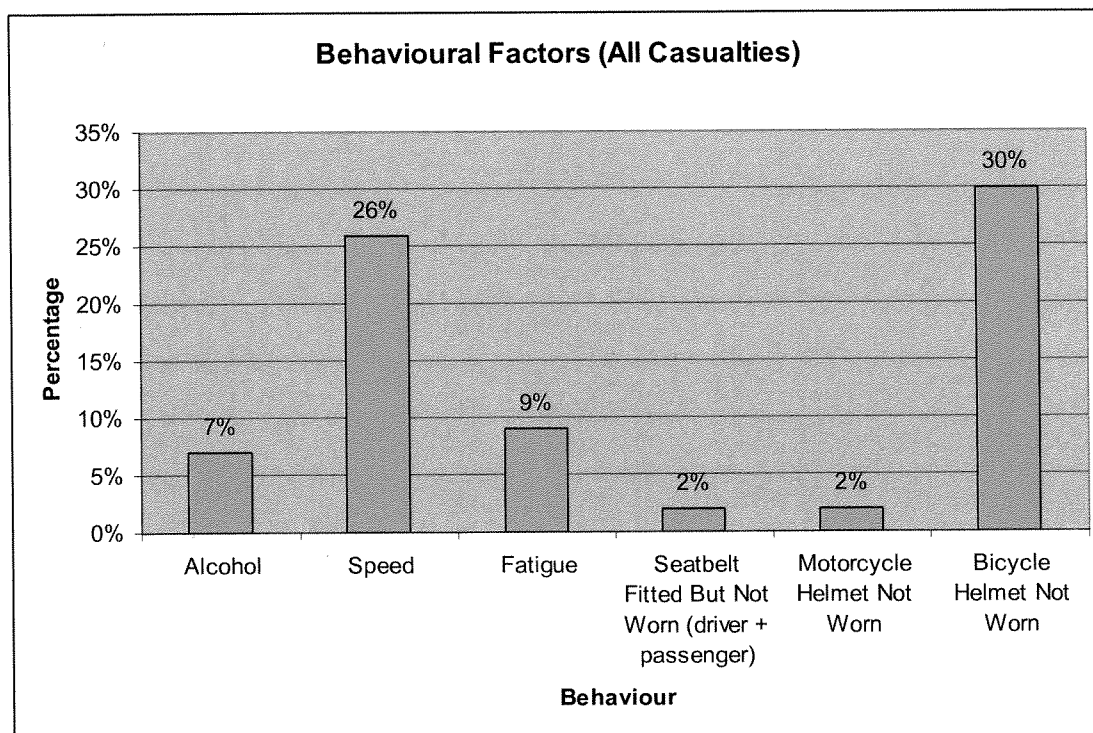




B) Underlying risks and major factors contributing to such crashes

It is considered that speeding is the most significant risk factor for crashes in the Gosford LGA over all age groups.

The following graphs have been created using statistics for the Gosford Local Government Area (LGA) for the period 2001-2005 provided by the RTA.



Local Police indicate that drink driving is also an issue in the Gosford LGA with results from RBT Units from Jan-Sept 2007 show that 1:74 people breath tested show a high Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) for their licence class compared to the state NSW average of 1:142. In another comparison with adjoining Wyong Shire Council LGA, the ratio is 1:29 people breath tested showing a high BAC for their licence class (i.e. for every 29 drivers randomly breath tested there is one driver convicted of a drink driving offence). Police also indicate that alcohol related crashes occurring within the Brisbane Water Local Area Command are highest in the northern part of NSW (i.e. from the Hawkesbury River to the Tweed border).

C) Differences in driving behaviour, crash outcomes and relevant trends

Police enforcement on rural roads is sporadic largely due to staffing and the need for high visibility on major urban roads. This may lead to non-compliance of speeding and drink driving laws and the incidence of risk taking behaviour on rural roads.

The lack of public transport on the Central Coast, in particular, late night transport, results in individuals driving with illegal Blood Alcohol Concentrations (BAC).

D) The availability of appropriateness of current diversionary and educational programs for young offenders involved in serious traffic violations.

Current programs for young offenders in Gosford is limited to the Traffic Offenders Program - a six week education and road safety awareness program co-ordinated by the Police Citizens Youth Club with offenders referred through the Magistrate at the local Court. The program involves a number of speakers conducting one 1.5hr evening presentation per week on subjects ranging from victim impact to low risk driving. Speakers include: Police, Ambulance, Acquired Brain Injury (Disability Services), Drug & Alcohol workers, Solicitors and Councils Road Safety Officer.

Each Traffic Offenders 6 week Program is attended by 60 residents (on average). From observation, around 60% of the group are usually youth aged between 18-25 yrs. When asked to indicate who has been caught for drink driving by a show of hands, a large majority of youth are included in this group.

E) The efficacy of young driver education programs and the potential for development and expansion of these programs.

Education programs are limited due to prescriptive funding guidelines imposed by the RTA under their partnership with the Local Government Road Safety Program. The RTA and Council fund the Road Safety Officer position 50:50. The RTA does not permit Council's Road Safety Officer to conduct education and road safety awareness to students within schools. Road Safety is supposed to be integrated into the schools curriculum although schools regularly contact Council to request support on this topic. 'One-off' road safety talks with young drivers are not supported by the RTA as they are considered not to be effective in changing the behaviour of young drivers.

As a result of this need in our community, other organisations within the Gosford LGA have developed programs and provide road safety talks to high school groups. These include:

- Central Coast Fire Brigades 'RescuEd Program' for Year 10 students (2 hr presentation)
- 'Youth Driver Awareness Program' for Years 10, 11 and 12, coordinated and facilitated by a group of dedicated volunteers from a variety of road safety backgrounds: Co-ordinated by a local retired solicitor (2 hr presentation)
- Rotary provide a Youth Driver Awareness Program (RYDA) (http://www.rydacentralcoast.org.au/ryda_students.html) targeting Year 11 students (2 day education program conducted over three weeks annually).

The Road Safety Officer at Gosford Council is required by the RTA to provide 3 community workshops to the parents/supervisors of learner drivers each year. The presentation and information delivered at these workshops is provided by the RTA and the Road Safety Officer attends RTA training in conducting a 'Parents of Learner Drivers' Workshop before delivering this to the community. The workshops are attended by approx. 60 parents in total each year. There are currently 4933 (RTA, June 2007) learner drivers in the Gosford LGA.

F) Other initiatives to improve young driver safety.

Considerable change has been made to the rules for L Plate and P Plate drivers but it appears that these new rules have not been made in consultation with Police. For example, if local Police pull over a car of teenagers who are breaking the peer passenger restrictions rule at 2am on the Pacific Highway, do Police ask the drunken passengers to exit the vehicle and walk home along the Pacific Highway? Police have a duty of care to the community and cannot escort youth home in their vehicle as they are not under arrest. Enforcement practicality needs to be observed, especially for rural areas.

A number of Council's in the Hunter Region conduct individual programs focused on Youth Driver Education. These programs are funded 100% by Council (outside of the Local Government Road Safety Program) and the concept of the programs is often not ideologically supported by the RTA. It depends on the individual Council's availability of additional funding to be able to provide this information/education to the youth community. This is seen as an inequity.

The Central Coast has a growing population and limited late night transport options after 12am. There are around 90 taxis on the Central Coast servicing an area from Budgewoi to the north to Mooney Mooney in the south. On a weekend, not all of these taxis are 'on-duty'. Busy late night centres such as Terrigal, having several licenced premises open until 3am, is not located on a train line and transport home from these venues is limited to taxi's or the venue's courtesy bus, which often cannot cope with the amount of patrons wishing to use the service. Local, privately owned, bus companies (Busways and Redbus) do not provide a late night service for the Central Coast.

After the withdrawal of funding by the RTA and Ministry of Transport for the 2007/08 financial year for the provision of the Summer Night Owl Bus on the Central Coast, Gosford and Wyong Council's are unable to continue supporting this service. Gosford Council does not see it as their core business to provide local late night community transport to reduce fatalities for drink driving, however, Council and local Police are often witness to the effects that lack of late night transport (11pm - 5am) has on the youth of our community and are compelled to respond to this issue. Accidents involving injuries and fatalities do not only affect local families, they affect the whole community. They are not isolated incidents and the trauma of these events are far reaching - from those directly involved in the accident to the rescue workers, Police, ambulance, health services, friends and work colleagues.

G) Any other relevant matters.

Gosford Council is in constant dialogue with local schools and the youth community. During a Central Coast Youth Forum held earlier in the year, those present indicated that they would like more information on 'How to get their L-Plates and P-Plates'. Most participants knew they had to go the RTA to get their learners permit but were

not sure what stages they would go through to get their licence and what types of tests were involved to pass into the next stage. They also felt they needed information about buying a car including options for insurance and what steps need to be taken to get a car registered.

Generally, youth consider having a licence as a given right instead of a privilege (i.e. something that you need to earn, build respect for and take seriously).