

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Motor Accidents Authority
Name: Ms Carmel Donnelly
Position: Deputy General Manager
Date Received: 5/12/2007



**MOTOR ACCIDENTS
AUTHORITY**

Submission

to the

**Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and
Education Programs**

Conducted by the

**Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on
Road Safety (Staysafe)**

November 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Motor Accidents Authority Perspective	3
1.2	Terms of Reference	3
2	INCIDENCE OF YOUNG DRIVER CRASHES IN NEW SOUTH WALES	3
2.1	Compulsory Third Party Claims Data	4
2.1.1	<i>Gender</i>	5
2.1.2	<i>Location</i>	5
2.1.3	<i>Cost of Claims</i>	6
2.1.4	<i>Impact on Compulsory Third Party Premiums</i>	6
2.2	Lifetime Care and Support Scheme	6
3	RISKS AND MAJOR FACTORS OF YOUNG DRIVERS CRASHES	7
4	YOUNG OFFENDER PROGRAMS	7
4.1	New South Wales Sober Driver Program	7
4.2	Traffic Offenders Programs	8
5	YOUNG DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS	8
5.1	Motor Accidents Authority Initiatives	8
5.1.1	<i>Arrive alive Initiatives</i>	8
5.1.2	<i>Cross Sectional Initiatives</i>	9
6	INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY	11
7	REFERENCES	11

1 Introduction

1.1 Motor Accidents Authority Perspective

The Motor Accidents Authority (The Authority) is the regulator of the Compulsory Third Party Insurance Scheme for New South Wales. The Authority's road safety activity focuses on decreasing serious injuries and gives priority to those areas that incur the greatest costs to the Compulsory Third Party scheme.

The Authority has been concerned about young driver safety for many years and is pleased to present this submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety's Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) has been self-referred to inquire into and report on the factors involved in young driver road traffic accidents and fatalities, with particular reference to:

- a. the current incidence of road crashes involving young drivers in New South Wales;
- b. underlying risks and major factors contributing to such crashes;
- c. differences in driving behaviour, crash outcomes and relevant trends in urban and rural areas of New South Wales;
- d. the availability and appropriateness of current diversionary and educational programs for young offenders involved in serious traffic violations;
- e. the efficacy of young driver education programs and the potential for development and expansion of these programs, subject to proper evaluation;
- f. other initiatives to improve young driver safety;
- g. any other relevant matters.

The Motor Accidents Authority's submission addresses the terms of reference, drawing on the Authority's Compulsory Third Party Claims data in relation to young people and young drivers; and outlines relevant funded projects.

2 Incidence of Young Driver Crashes in New South Wales

The Authority recognises that young drivers (aged 25 or under) continue to be a significant road safety problem. During 2002-2006 young drivers represented 24% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes, but represented only 16% of licensed drivers (Roads and Traffic Authority, 2007). Over the last five years (2002 - 2006) there have been 397 young drivers, including motorcyclists, killed on New South Wales roads.

During 2002-2006 young drivers represented 26% of all drivers involved in injury crashes, but represented only 16% of licensed drivers (Roads and Traffic Authority, 2007). Over the last five years (2002 - 2006) there have been 23,678 young drivers, including motorcyclists, injured on New South Wales roads.

Although examining young driver involvement in road crash fatalities is important, it is vital that young driver injuries are also examined concurrently. The Authority considers that the burden of road crash injuries, especially for young road users must be examined and action taken to reduce these injuries.

2.1 Compulsory Third Party Claims Data

The Authority administers the New South Wales Compulsory Third Party Insurance Scheme and collects data on the profile of injuries that generate Compulsory Third Party claims. Compulsory Third Party data demonstrates that young people are disproportionately involved in crashes and disproportionately involved as drivers of vehicles which are the primary cause of crashes leading to Compulsory Third Party claims.

As depicted in Figures 1 and 2, young people (17-25 years) represent 20% of Compulsory Third Party claimants and 27% of at fault drivers. Young people are predominantly injured as drivers or passengers. As the Compulsory Third Party scheme is still largely fault based¹ this data does not include people who injure themselves in motor vehicle crashes.

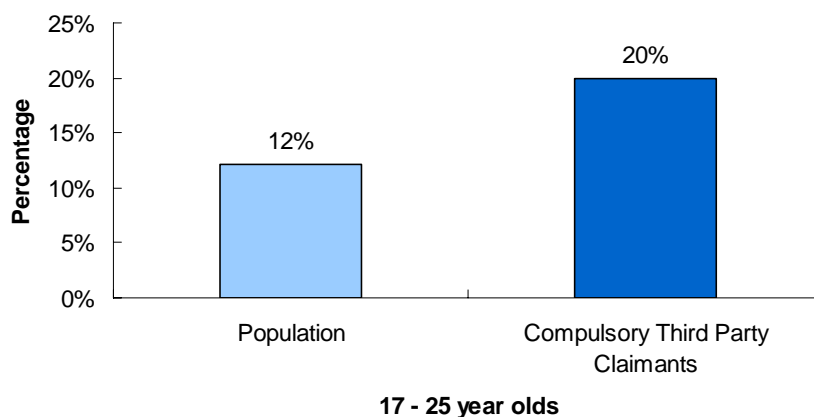


Figure 1. Comparison of 17 – 25 year old population and Compulsory Third Party claimant statistics.

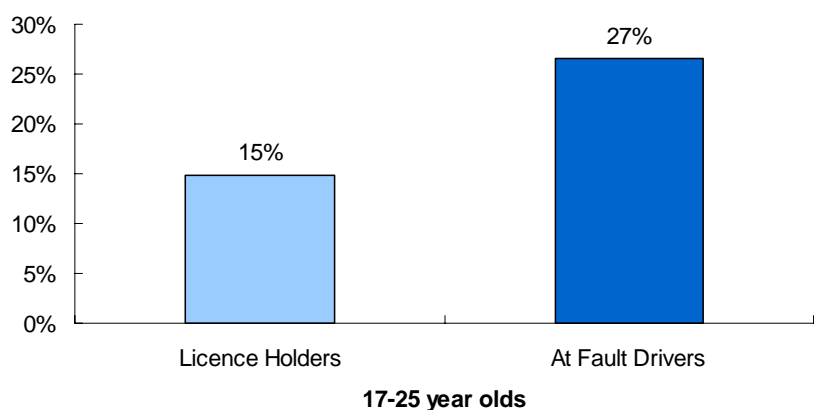


Figure 2. Young drivers and motorcycle riders at fault in Compulsory Third Party claims compared to the percentage of licence holders of 17-25 year olds.

¹ As of 1 October 2007, catastrophically injured drivers would be offered treatment under the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme.

2.1.1 Gender

Analysis of claims data demonstrates that male drivers (68%) of all ages typically outweigh female drivers (30%) in the number of drivers at fault in road crashes. Amongst young drivers aged 17-25 years old there is a similar trend with 67% of male at fault drivers compared to 32% of female drivers, as shown in Figure 3.

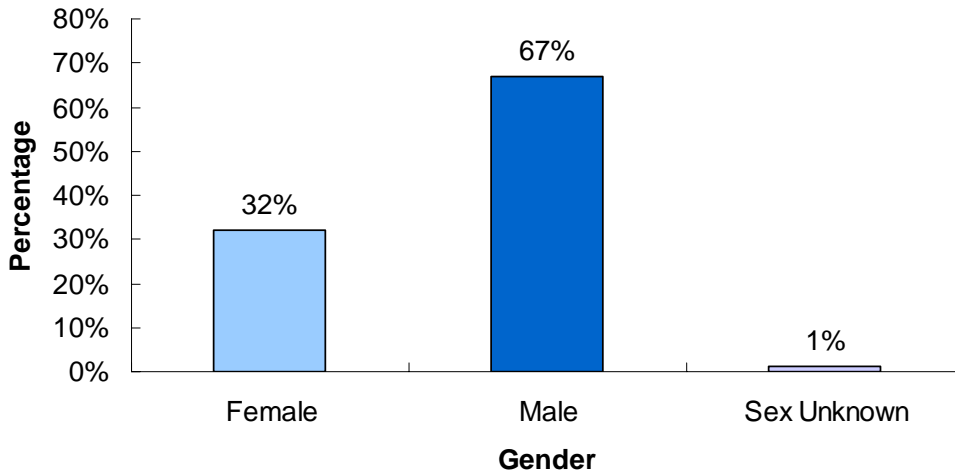


Figure 3. Distribution of 17 -25 year old drivers at-fault drivers by gender.

2.1.2 Location

The typical distribution of claims for 17-25 year old road users in metropolitan and regional New South Wales is shown in Figure 4. The graph highlights that the majority of claims occur in metropolitan New South Wales.

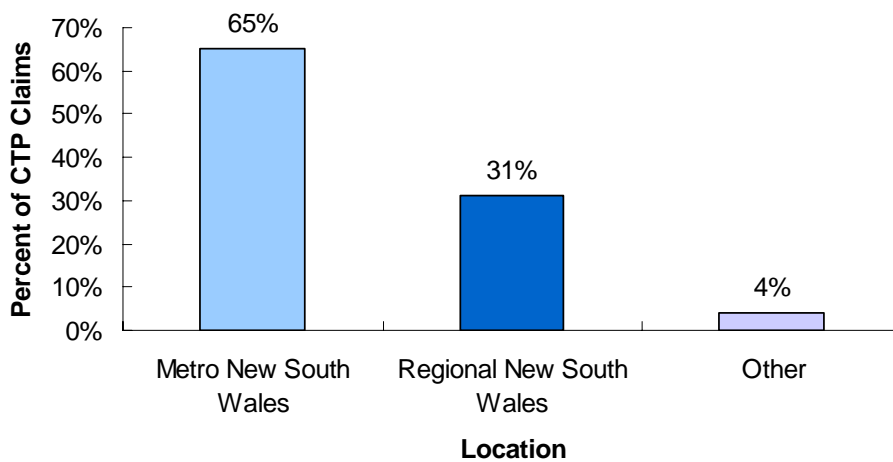


Figure 4. Distribution of Compulsory Third Party claims for 17-25 years old road users by location.

2.1.3 Cost of Claims

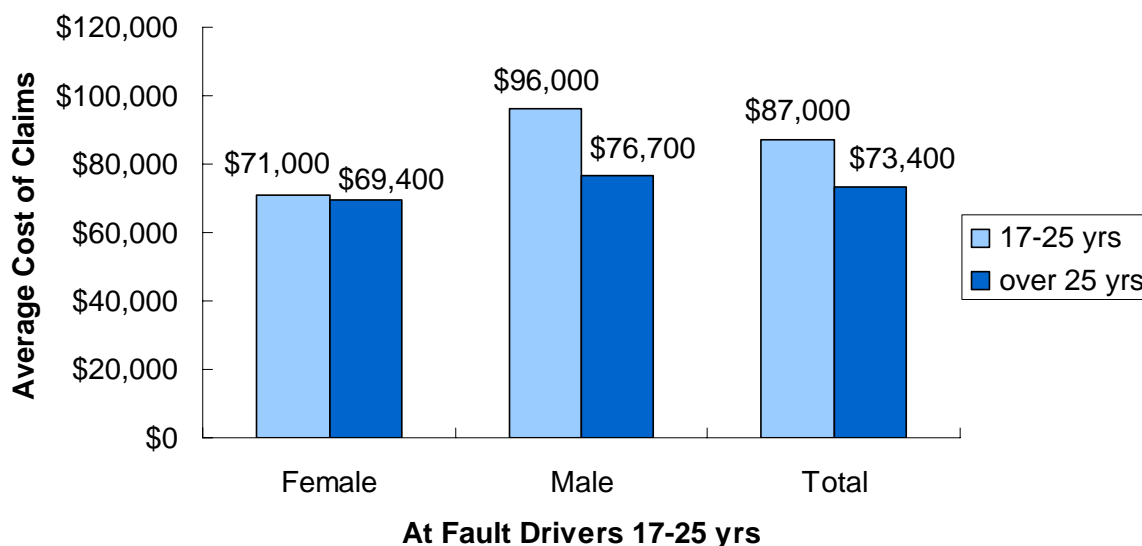


Figure 5. Cost of claims of at fault drivers aged 17-25 years.

Source: Motor Accidents Authority Claims Register data, as at 30 September 2007 (claims against privately owned standard motor cars).

Compulsory Third Party data indicates that the youngest drivers are more likely to have injured passengers in their own vehicle compared to other age groups, and whilst the claim cost of passengers in the vehicle at-fault is always higher than that of passengers in other vehicles, the difference is much more pronounced where the driver was under 26 years. The proportion of claims involving catastrophic injury (spinal cord injury and brain injury) is also significantly higher for under 25 years.

2.1.4 Impact on Compulsory Third Party Premiums

As the scheme is compulsory, there is an obligation to ensure the affordability of premiums for all vehicle owners. For this reason the scheme has caps on the maximum amount payable by any one policy holder. For example the maximum amount payable at present for a class1 vehicle (sedans etc) in the metropolitan zone is just under \$600. It is acknowledged that the maximum premium is inadequate for the high risk market segment, represented by owners and drivers aged 25 or under. Accordingly, the Scheme has maintained a community rating which creates cross subsidies through low risk groups paying additional premiums to provide a lower cost for this high risk group.

2.2 Lifetime Care and Support Scheme

The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme provides treatment, rehabilitation and attendant care services to people severely injured in motor vehicle crashes in New South Wales, regardless of who was at fault in the crash. People who are eligible for the Scheme may have a spinal cord injury; moderate to severe brain injury; multiple amputations; severe burns; or blindness as a result of a crash. The Scheme began for children under the age of 16 injured in motor vehicle crashes from 1 October 2006 and on 1 October 2007 for adults.

Given that the Scheme has only recently been operational for adults, there is no claim data currently available however research conducted prior to the establishment of the Scheme demonstrated that the proportion of claims involving catastrophic injury (spinal cord and brain injury) was significantly higher for people aged under 25. The research also indicated that typically the catastrophically injured person is a young male; more than half are less than 20 years old at the time of the injury and more than 70 percent are under 30 (Motor Accidents Authority, 2005). The Authority will be working closely with Lifetime Care and Support Scheme and keep a watching brief on this issue.

3 Risks and Major Factors of Young Drivers Crashes

Young people are overrepresented in road crashes for a range of factors including a combination of inexperience and risk taking behaviour. This behaviour would appear to be a product of higher levels of risk tolerance in young people shown across a range of activities of which driving is just one, and poorer ability to assess risk.

For this reason Government initiatives have focussed upon increasing level of experience of new drivers through the Graduated Licensing Scheme and addressing risk taking through additional limitations upon young drivers.

On 1 July 2007 the New South Wales Government introduced a range of new initiatives to reduce the death and injury among young people. Among these measures are: minimum 120 hours of supervised experience (including 20 hours of night driving), extended minimum Learner period from six to 12 months, mobile phone use restriction for Learner, P1 drivers and Provisional riders and peer passenger restrictions for P1 drivers. The Authority will be closely examining the Compulsory Third Party claims data to see whether the new Graduated Licensing Scheme changes have any impact on Compulsory Third Party claims.

It is important to consider that although the main road safety issues for young drivers can be addressed through legislative changes, other contributing factors such as fatigue and peer pressure are not easily enforceable. To address issues such as fatigue and peer pressure, it is important that the community is educated about these significant issues to help create a climate for change where this behaviour becomes perceived as unacceptable. Young drivers driving under the influence of illicit drugs may also warrant closer investigation and evidence based countermeasures introduced specifically for this target group.

4 Young Offender Programs

The Committee's terms of reference make reference to the availability of current diversionary and educational programs for young offenders involved in serious traffic violations. The Authority draws the Committee's attention to two driver offender initiatives namely the New South Wales Sober Driver Program and the Traffic Offenders Program. While it is noted that these programs are not solely targeting young drivers eligible young drivers attend.

4.1 New South Wales Sober Driver Program

The New South Wales Sober Driver Program is a whole of government initiative that targets adult drink drive offenders, over 18 years old who are convicted of more than one drink driving offence within a five-year period. Participants are required to complete the program as part of their sentence. The program is delivered consistently using a standard format and addresses the consequences of drink driving, effects of alcohol on driving, managing drinking situations, alternatives to drinking driving, relapse prevention and stress management.

The Sober Driver Program is managed and delivered state-wide by the Department of Corrective Services, Community Offenders Service and until June 2007 was jointly funded by the Authority and the Roads and Traffic Authority. The program is now solely funded by the Roads and Traffic Authority.

The Sober Driver Program has been independently evaluated for the effectiveness and impact of the program on the participants' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour relating to drink driving. The evaluation demonstrated that program graduates are half as likely to re-offend as other recidivist drink drivers who do not attend the program (Bryant et al., 2007).

4.2 Traffic Offenders Programs

Traffic Offenders Programs are pre-sentencing education programs. Traffic offenders can self refer or be referred by their solicitor or by a magistrate. The programs have been developed as community-based initiatives by interested groups and organisations and program content and delivery vary.

5 Young Driver Education Programs

In New South Wales many campaigns have been undertaken to educate young drivers about the dangers whilst driving that are specific to this overrepresented target group. However, young drivers aged 17 to 25 years are a challenging group to promote road safety messages to. The challenge faced by the road safety professionals is how to communicate road safety messages in effective ways that will resonate with this often cynical and marketing-savvy demographic.

The Authority considers that public education campaigns targeted to young drivers continue to play a vital role in helping to reduce crash rates. However, it is vital that such campaigns are combined with enforcement, based on best practice and are evaluated for effectiveness. It is also important that young driver education campaigns are connecting with youth via mediums that are current and commonly utilised by young people.

5.1 Motor Accidents Authority Initiatives

The Authority has a statutory responsibility to fund activities to prevent or minimise injuries from road crashes and to provide safety education. The Authority's road safety strategy recognises that the Roads and Traffic Authority is the lead agency for road safety in New South Wales and the Authority is a key partner, collaborating with the Roads and Traffic Authority and other agencies in cross sectoral initiatives.

Young drivers are one of the Authority's priority groups and the Authority conducts or contributes to number of initiatives that target young people.

5.1.1 Arrive alive Initiatives

The Authority's Arrive alive program targets 17-25 year olds through areas that interest them such as sport, music and the arts. The program commenced in 2000 and involves promoting road safety messages relevant to young drivers and seeking their involvement in developing future activities.

5.1.1.1 Sponsorships and Arrive alive Website

Under the Arrive alive branding the Authority funds a range of sponsorships including the following.

In sport, sponsorship partnerships have been developed in rugby league with five first grade National Rugby League teams - West Sydney Tigers, Newcastle Knights, Penrith Panthers, Manly Sea Eagles and St George Illawarra Dragons and the Arrive alive Cup schoolboy rugby league competition, as well as men's and women's soccer and wheelchair basketball athletes. Players from these disciplines deliver road safety presentations, generally in schools, to students in Years 10 to 12.

Since 2001 the Authority has contributed sponsorship to the New South Wales Youth Week. Sponsorship involves the allocation of funding for Arrive alive shuttle buses to transport young people safely to and from local Youth Week events, a Youthrock band competition, a New South Wales Youth Week poster and website design competition and inclusion of road safety promotions at council run Youth Week activities and community based projects. For the past two years 100% council participation has been recorded allowing the Arrive alive brand and its associated messages state-wide coverage.

The Authority also sponsors the East Coast Challenge University Games to reach University students with road safety advice including choosing a designated driver, non use of mobile phones when driving and how to avoid driver fatigue. Sponsorship involves the allocation of funding for the Arrive alive shuttle bus to safely transport Games participants.

All sponsorship promotions incorporate key road safety messages with most including a youth feedback mechanism to further inform future decisions.

All young driver related sponsorship activities are promoted on the Authority's youth website arrivealive.com.au. On average the website receives over 20,000 visits each month and is designed to have relevance for and appeal to this market.

5.1.1.2 Arrive Alive Youth Road Safety Grants

In 2002 the Authority established a grant scheme called 'Arrive alive Grants.' The scheme aims to raise awareness of youth related road safety issues among young people aged 16 to 25 throughout New South Wales. It works by encouraging groups of young people and organisations to apply for grants of up to \$10,000 for activities that address identified local youth road safety issues. It promotes active involvement by young people in road safety initiatives in their local communities. An advisory committee of young people and road safety stakeholders assist in the selection process. To date more than 70 local road safety projects involving young people have been funded under the Arrive alive grants scheme.

5.1.2 Cross Sectional Initiatives

5.1.2.1 Reducing Risk Increase Student Knowledge Program

The Reducing Risk Increase Student Knowledge Program has been running in the Northern Rivers area since 1999. It was developed and is managed by an intersectoral committee with representatives from North Coast Area Health Service, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Office, Lismore City, Tweed and Ballina Shire Councils.

The Programs objectives are to reduce injury and harm resulting from risk taking behaviours associated with alcohol and drug use, driving and celebrating among adolescents in northern New South Wales. The Program extends the school based drug education and road safety curriculum by providing opportunities for senior high school students to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills to reduce risk taking associated with alcohol and drug use, driving and celebrating and to increase protective behaviours. The program includes a well-designed, multi-strategic seminar day, preceded and followed by a range of in-school activities. It incorporates peer led workshops and factual presentations on risk taking, alcohol, drugs, safe driving and vehicle safety and is enlivened by drama, real life stories and role models.

As part of the 2002/03 youth road safety research grants the Authority provided funding to evaluate the Program over 3 years from 2002-05. The results indicate that the Program has had some significant positive effects on student knowledge, attitude and behaviours in relation to risk taking and the evaluation provided recommendations for program refinement (North Coast Area Health Service, 2005).

The North Coast Area Health Service will sustain the current program in the Northern Rivers and the Authority has provided funding towards the expansion of the Program to potentially 20 additional schools in the Mid North Coast by 2008.

5.1.2.2 On the Road – Lismore Aboriginal Driver Education Program

The Authority has funded the Lismore Aboriginal Driver Education Program since 2002 on a joint partnership basis between the New South Wales Attorney General's Department (Crime Prevention Division), the Roads and Traffic Authority and The Authority. The program was developed and administered by Lismore Adult Community Education and is monitored by the New South Wales Attorney General's Department (Crime Prevention Division).

The goal of the program is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people living in the far North Coast of New South Wales in the criminal justice system. The issue was identified by the Lismore Local Court Aboriginal Client Services Specialist and supported by research conducted by the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council including driver licensing information.

The program focuses on removing the barriers to gaining a licence through:

- Assistance with fine negotiations with the State Debt Recovery Office.
- Assistance with obtaining a birth certificate.
- Improving Aboriginal access to the Roads and Traffic Authority Driver Knowledge Test, through the installation of a modified computer program in more than 30 community organisations.
- Assistance with literacy and computer skills for Aboriginal people attempting to gain or regain their driving lessons.
- A Driver Mentor Program.
- Facilitating employment through driving skills and community networking.
- Increasing the number of Aboriginal Justice of the Peace.

In 2005 all agencies contributed to an evaluation of the program. The process evaluation shows the program has been successful in accessing North Coast Aboriginal communities across a broad geographical area and has assisted a number of participants to obtain their Learner, Probationary and Light Rigid Vehicle Licences (Clapham, Khavarpour, Ivers & Stevenson, 2005).

6 Initiatives to Improve Young Driver Safety

Given the current priority for road safety in the State Plan and the establishment of the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety, the Authority is currently reassessing the evidence on road crashes to develop its road safety strategy for the next three years. The Authority is evaluating priority needs, looking at ways to enhance current activities, investigating opportunities for new initiatives and undertaking further consultation with relevant stakeholders. The Authority will be working together with road safety stakeholders, in particular the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Road Safety Taskforce to develop and implement best practice initiatives targeting young drivers.

The Authority anticipates that emerging issues related to young drivers that need further investigation and evidence based countermeasures may include vehicle safety, drug driving, driving while tired and peer pressure.

7 References

Bryant, P., Rouse, R., Hawkins, A., Hodge, W., Johansson, K., Bowery, M., Harvey, P., Browne, G., Flaherty, B., & Saffron, D. (2007). *A whole of government approach to reducing drink drive re-offending. The success of the NSW Sober Driver Program*. Presented at the Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

Clapham, K., Khavarpour, F., Ivers, R., & Stevenson, M. (2005). *An evaluation of the Lismore driver education program*. The George Institute for International Health and Yorrang Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies, The University of Sydney. New South Wales, Australia.

Motor Accidents Authority. (2005). *Lifetime care and support for people with a catastrophic injury from a motor vehicle accident*. New South Wales Government: Sydney, Australia.

North Coast Area Health Service. (2005). *Reduce risk increase student knowledge evaluation report 2002-2005*. New South Wales, Australia.

Roads and Traffic Authority. (2007). New South Wales, Australia.