

**Submission
No. 6**

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Name: Mr Anthony Gerace

Date Received: 24/10/2007

.....

Mr Anthony Gerace
RTA Testing Officer

BRINGELLY NSW 2556

October 18, 2007

The Committee Manager
Staysafe Committee, Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



SUBJECT: SPOT LIGHT ON YOUNG DRIVERS

Dear Sir or Madam:

Background

As you are probably aware, from the 1st July this year, applicants must show **120** hours of logged driving. If only half these hours are authentic, we should see a gradual improvement in the presentation of young drivers in a driving test over the next few years. As well as the 120 hours of logged driving being introduced, from the 3rd December this year, a more comprehensive and demanding driving test will be implemented. Testing time will increase from 15mins to 45mins.

In addition to the above changes, there has also been a zero tolerance for P1 drivers and speeding introduced where if a P1 driver is caught speeding they are suspended for three months.

Issue

In the last 24 years of testing drivers, I have seen a lot of changes. One example is the requirement for learners to document their driving hours in a log book. Sadly few people take this seriously enough, and it is known that some supervising drivers help learners to 'doctor' the log entries to help them in obtaining their Provisional licence sooner than they should.

As I have conducted over 66 thousand driving tests in my career, I can tell within the first 5 minutes of taking an applicant out that they have not done the required hours to go for their Provisional licence. If I believe that the entries in an applicants log book are false, I can only bluff their admission. RTA Testing Officers have extensive experience and training and can ascertain whether the entries written in the logs are true hours or not.

Continued next page

.....

Given that a number of applicants **do** falsify their log books, this results in them being under experienced on the road. This can be demonstrated in the number of young drivers that have died on our roads over the years.

No amount of education is going to curve the attitude of being untouchable when these drivers are young, as they will only learn from their mistakes. But what we can do is ensure that when they do make these mistakes they do not pay the highest price, with their life.

Recommendation

As an RTA testing officer I can give you some important input as to the reason why no matter how much education we give to young drivers, we will not lower the death toll unless we take the necessary steps and procedures to improving the current system.

My first recommendation may sound unfeasible, but it has merit. As there are some applicants that falsify their log books, I would recommend the introduction of a merit based passing scheme where drivers are rewarded for higher driving skills and doing the required hours. The drivers that have a pass mark of 98% and above should be issued with a P1 licence and if in 12 months time they have accrued zero demerit points, that person could be given a P2 licence for only 1 year, giving them an incentive to drive according to the law.

And on that note I will bring to your attention that at the moment there are two types of applicants yet only one type of licence issued. There are the very skilled with a high degree of ability and there are the not so skilled who only just obtain a pass mark.

Two standards yet both applicants get the same licence. Why not introduce a restricted licence for poor ability and a less restricted licence for the higher skilled applicants. This would encourage the applicants to get more training in order to pass their driving test and be issued with a less restrictive licence.

My second recommendation is that P2 drivers be made just as accountable as P1 drivers with zero tolerance on speeding offences and if they are caught they are issued with an automatic 3 months suspension. Only then will we see safer young drivers.

No young driver wants to be pulled of the road. Ask any highway patrol officer and they can verify that P2 drivers take just as many high risks as P1 drivers.

Continued next page

And thirdly, I believe that further training needs to be provided to these young drivers. If an education program could be implemented into the school system where year 10 students were compulsorily required to;

1. complete a certain amount of 'defensive driving' at an external course,
2. complete a certain amount of theory in the class room about the NSW road rules, and
3. inform them about the facts of driving. For example, how many people die on the roads each year, how much of a responsibility it is to drive safely and what their negligent driving can do to other people and their families.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission, and I trust that you will endeavour to do the best by our young drivers and the community.

Yours sincerely,



Anthony Gerace
RTA Driver Testing Officer