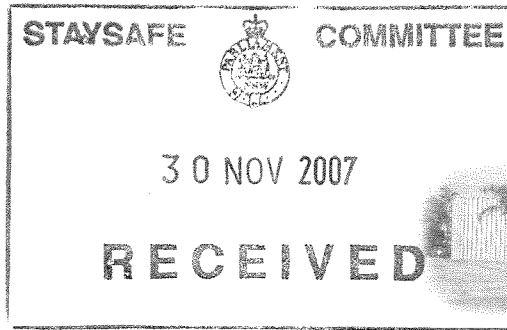


INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Baulkham Hills Shire Council
Name: Mr Andrew King
Position: Manager, Traffic and Transport
Date Received: 30/11/2007



28 November, 2007

Mr Geoff Corrigan MP
 Chair
 The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe)
 Parliament House
 Macquarie Street
 Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Corrigan

Thank you for inviting Baulkham Hills Shire Council to prepare a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road safety (Staysafe) to assist their inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs.

Please find attached our submission which has been authorised by Council at their meeting of 27 November 2007.

If you require any further information related to this submission please contact Council's Road Safety Officer, Angela Vernicos on 9843 0145.

Thank you

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 Andrew King
 Manager, Traffic and Transport



THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY (STAYSAFE) INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Submission prepared by Baulkham Hills Shire Council . November 2007

BACKGROUND

The Shire of Baulkham Hills is located north west of the Sydney CBD covering an area of about 380km². The central and northern regions of the Shire are mostly rural land while the southern region is a highly populated suburban area.

In 2006 the Baulkham Hills Local Government area (LGA) had a total population of 165,391 people and of this total, 23,359 people were aged 15 – 24 years. This age group represents 14.7% of the total population. This is higher than the Sydney region which has 13.8% of its population as young people aged 15 – 24 years.

In 2005 Baulkham Hills Shire was ranked second in terms of the largest population increase of all LGAs in New South Wales, recording an extra 3,517 people. Population growth in Baulkham Hills to 2031 is projected to continue to increase at an average annual rate of 1.5% which is higher than the rates of both Sydney (0.8%) and New South Wales (0.7%).

Motor vehicle ownership is higher than average due to a lack of public transport. In 2006, 70% of households in Baulkham Hills LGA had two or more vehicles. This is higher than Sydney region (51%) and New South Wales (52%) according to 2006 ABS statistics. Between 2001 and 2006, Baulkham Hills LGA vehicle ownership has grown by 7,145 vehicles which is a 14% increase. As at 30 June 2006 the Baulkham Hills LGA had 9,170 provisional license holders out of a total of 115,276 in the Shire which represents 8% of all license holders.

As would be expected with high vehicle ownership rates, the majority of our population travel to work by car as either a driver or passenger. Only 9% use alternative transport to travel to work. Due to this lack of public transport, and great distances to travel for some young drivers in the Baulkham Hills LGA, the use of a car is often essential.

1. Current incidence of road crashes involving young drivers in Baulkham Hills LGA

Young drivers aged 17 – 25 years represent a significant number of casualties on roads in Baulkham Hills LGA as they do across the state.

In the five year period from 2002 – 2006, young people aged 17 – 25 years were the casualties in an average of 30% of road crashes in the Baulkham Hills LGA. 51% of the casualties in this age group were male.

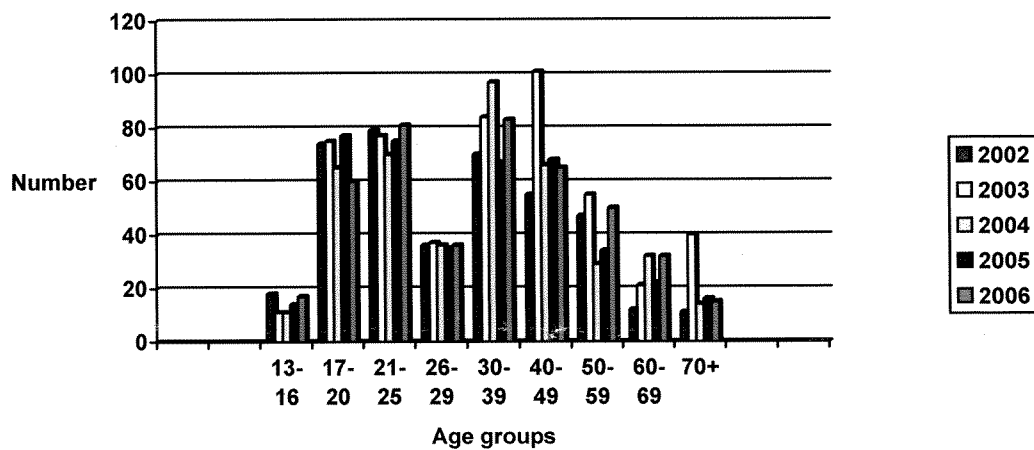
When considering crashes involving fatalities only in this five year period, the outcome for young drivers is much worse. From a total of 17 people killed in road crashes in Baulkham Hills LGA, seven of those were males aged 17 – 25 years. This accounts for 41% of those killed on our roads in that five year period.

However, the trend involving young drivers aged 17 – 25 years in road crashes in Baulkham Hills has been downward, and over the last five years there has been a reduction in young drivers involvement as casualties in road crashes. Graph 1 illustrates this reduction.

Age group of road crash casualties in Baulkham Hills LGA 2002 – 2006

Graph 1 highlights the five year trend from 2002 - 2006 of road crash casualties across all age groups in Baulkham Hills Shire. Whilst those aged 17 – 20 years have reduced their representation as casualties in 2006, young drivers aged 21- 25 years appear to be increasing their representation . This graph also highlights that this is not just an issue for those aged 17 – 25 years but also for those aged 30 – 39 years who are the most highly represented as casualties in motor vehicle crashes in 2006 in the Baulkham Hills LGA.

Graph 1: Age group of casualties in Baulkham Hills Shire 2002 - 2006



2. Underlying risks and major factors contributing to crashes

Young drivers are more highly represented than other age groups in crashes which involve speed, alcohol and driver fatigue in the Baulkham Hills LGA.

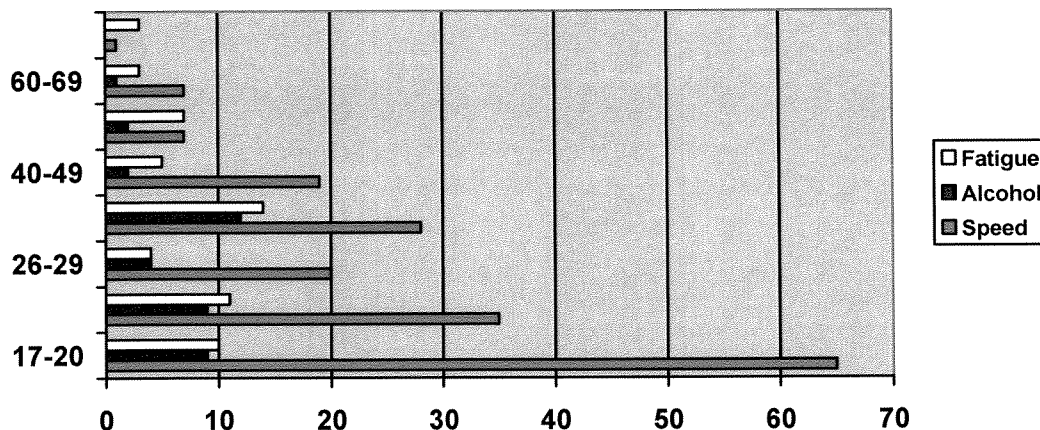
The following graph highlights the over representation of drivers aged 17 – 25 years in all crashes where speed, alcohol or fatigue are contributing factors in the Baulkham Hills LGA in 2006.

In 2006 young drivers aged 17 – 25 years were involved in:

- 52% of crashes involving speed
- 43% of crashes involving alcohol
- 33% of crashes involving driver fatigue.

Although rural roads are often considered to be less safe, in 2006, 91% of crashes involving young drivers aged 17-25 years occurred on urban roads in the Baulkham Hills LGA.

Graph 2: Major contributors to crashes in Baulkham Hills LGA in 2006 by age group



A lack of late night transport, particularly from licensed premises in the Baulkham Hills LGA, has also resulted in young people aged 17 – 25 years driving their cars when they have been drinking.

In 2005, 406 people were charged with drink driving in the Baulkham Hills LGA. 33% of those charged were aged 17 – 25 years. Considering that the zero alcohol limit is applicable to drivers until they are at least 21 years old, this is an alarming trend.

3. Current initiatives to improve young driver safety in Baulkham Hills LGA

RYDA 'U Turn the Wheel' Program

Baulkham Hills Shire Council has been involved in the Rotary Youth Driver Awareness (RYDA) 'U Turn the Wheel' one day young driver program. The Council has contributed financially to this program on an annual basis since 2001 and the majority of Year 11 students attending high schools in this LGA participate in this program each year. This program was instigated by Rotary Clubs of District 9680 in 2001 in response to the deaths of four young drivers in one car crash in Dural. It was a community response to a local issue and involved the collaboration of Rotary Clubs, Baulkham Hills Shire Council, local Police and Health representatives. Students attend a one day road safety awareness day at Honda Australia's Roadcraft Training Centre (HART) at Mona Vale. They participate in presentations by the Police, Health and young people who have sustained a brain injury in a road crash

The program has continued to grow across New South Wales and Australia with support from Local Government, State Government, Rotary and private enterprise. It supports and enhances the Year 11 PDHPE road safety curriculum objectives for road safety. Road safety programs like this one are invaluable as they provide additional support and resources to local schools in the provision of important road safety messages as young people enter the licensing phase. Utilising the professional skills of workshop presenters and the manpower and organisational skills of a large group like Rotary allows vital road safety information to be given to a wide audience of young people. Further support and refining of programs like this one can ensure that

young people receive the road safety information they need to help them make safe driving choices in the future.

RTA Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers Workshops

Baulkham Hills Shire Council has been involved in running at least three RTA 'Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers' workshops per year since their implementation by the RTA in 2000. These workshops provide information and support to the supervisors of learner drivers in assisting them to understand the use of the Learner Driver logbook and the importance of providing their learner driver with a variety of driving experiences. These workshops have been well frequented by parents in this area and usually at least 35 people attend each two hour workshop. Parents report that they feel more confident about the task of teaching their learner to drive and with the mandatory 120 hours of driving practice now required, this is essential.

NRMA funded Drives for Learners in Hornsby, Hawkesbury and the Hills

In partnership with Hornsby and Hawkesbury Councils, a series of designated learner driver routes in both rural and urban environments were established to improve young driver skills. This program was funded by the NRMA and implemented by the Road Safety Officers in all three Councils.

Baulkham Hills Shire Council also provides educational support to Police operations which target young drivers by distributing relevant road safety messages and materials in the local media and community.

CONCLUSION

Young drivers aged 17 to 25 years are over represented as casualties on roads in Baulkham Hills Shire and will remain so unless a concerted effort is made to ensure that a combination of education and enforcement measures are enhanced. Continued support for community groups like Rotary to provide road safety programs for young drivers as well as the provision of affordable and accessible late night transport could help to reduce these statistics. More support for Police operations to target young drivers and to enforce the new licensing restrictions should also be a priority.