Submission No. 47

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Suncorp/GIO General Insurance

Name: Mr Matthew Kayrooz

Position: Executive General Manager, GIO Customer Development, NSW CTP

Date Received: 6/12/2007

The Committee Manager,

Staysafe Committee,

Parliament House,

Macquarie Street,

SYDNEY NSW 2000. 5 December 2007

Dear Sir,

Re: Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs

I refer to your call for submissions to the above inquiry. Attached is our submission.

GIO believes that there are fundamental weaknesses in the way road safety information is compiled and communicated to young people. Road safety messages often appear to be generalised, conclusions based on limited (but often repeated) statistical facts. Consequently young people do not personalise road risks to their own situations and this reduces their sense of ownership of the problem or the recommended solutions.

We believe that many road safety education programs have been too narrow in their focus with a strong emphasis on “Scare them, threaten them and punish them” messages. Most education programs are of the style of “we know the problem and the answer, so all you have to do is listen to us”.

We believe that education needs to embrace lifestyle skills that not only ensure that young people can identify the problems in their own lives, but also have the ability to implement the required actions in the face of difficult situations, such as peer pressure.

We would be readily available to present our ideas and suggestions to any public or other meetings that you might require.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Kayrooz

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Submission to Staysafe

Young Driver Safety and Education Programs

Wednesday, December 5, 2007

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1 Introduction

Young people are over represented in fatal road crashes. The effectiveness of approaches to redress this situation however, often labour under stereotypes of what types of people are involved and the type of accidents they have, so many well intended comments, reports, actions and campaigns aimed at reducing the toll do not resonate with young people and prove to be ineffective.

When the dominant approach appears to be about sensible ”adults” protecting reckless “young people” from themselves it is not surprising that programs aimed at young drivers tend towards the stern, uncompromising, legalistic approach. Scare them, threaten them and penalise them are the key features of many media reports and road safety programs.

This report does not shrink from the need for the community to stand its ground on road safety issues with a firm role for police and the justice system but these measures need to be components in a broader range of actions and activities. This report emphasises the broader issues because we believe that the disciplinary approach will be more than adequately covered by other submissions.

The considerations of this report are covered in two broad areas:

1. Research, analysis and availability of data. The need for good research is obvious. But even if data has been collected it is hard to come by. The information that does make it into the public arena is so limited as to be misleading. The way crashes are reported and the way authorities and interest groups emphasise limited statistical facts and/or opinions, creates a distorted sense of the real risks on the road. Information should be researched carefully and distributed widely so as to empower young people with a good understanding of the range of causes and efforts that can be part of crash situations.
2. Effective communication and education must be participatory, not just top-down “lessons”. Education has gone way beyond the idea of “simply telling people what you think is important and what they should do”. Empathy, involvement, compassion, facilitation and ownership of the solutions must be the methods and measures of a complete strategy.

Young driver training might well embrace a vision of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) [1]

> Empowering people through the free flow of ideas by word and image, and by access to information and knowledge.

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2 Conclusions

2.1 The need for empathy not antipathy

Scare them, threaten them and penalise them are the key features of too many media reports and road safety programs aimed at young people.

There is a need for a frequent, visible police presence. There is a need for penalties but penalties only need to be significant to have an affect; they do not have to be draconian.

One of the benefits of visible police activities and a consistent judicial system is that young people can use this fact to help them avoid difficult situations when they have strong peer pressure to be involved in dangerous activities.

Demonising “at-fault” drivers, however, is a narrow approach to reducing road crashes for young road users and adults as well. Furthermore there can be some severe counterproductive consequences if this is the only approach.

By highlighting spectacular crashes that do not represent the range of situations, by focusing on the assignment of blame to a single party and by failing to convey the message that preventive practices like wearing seatbelts and the consequences of poor road conditions, unintentionally, remove crashes from a public health context and position them as just individual cases. If road safety is just seen as some irresponsible individuals doing wrong, then practical solutions will not be apparent for all young drivers who, in many cases, do not personally relate to these stories.

It is not just a case of not achieving positive results. Well meaning proposals can have unintended consequences. Any road safety measure must be prepared to measure the consequences of its application in a wide context and our community needs to be prepared to stop and remove the measure if it proves to be counterproductive, even if it has large popular support.

2.2 The lack of statistical depth in the road safety debate

1. The information in the public arena about the road safety situation is so limited as to be misleading and road crashes that are likely to make a good news story are only a sub set of the overall situation. This distorts the perception of risks.
2. Producing simple messages is an understandable goal but oversimplifying and limiting the issues reduces the sense of ownership in the target audience because they do not relate the message to their own real life situations.
3. The lack of comprehensive statistical input in the public debate about road safety is indicated by the many misconceptions that still abound about the nature of the road crash situation.
4. There is a tendency for Governments and other organisations to hoard data.
5. There is a tendency for governments and other organisations to release only the good news stories or information that supports a preconception with written material that has been filtered through a PR department.

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6. One of the problems is that governments seem to want departments that collect data to be profit centres. Comprehensive data is available, but for a fee.

7. Statistical analysis and presentations focus on fatalities. Serious injuries are the forgotten side of the road toll yet they represent a large, comprehensive data base of information.

8. Information is usually distributed with conclusions to justify programs that have already been decided on. Rarely is information made available without conclusions so as to empower young people to understand the range of issues and allow them to suggest solutions.

9. A considerable amount of the value from data that has been collected is lost because there are no resources to ensure that the results are comprehensively analysed and communicated and more detailed information requests can be dealt with.

2.3 Weaknesses in previous programs

Our observations are that:

1. Many traditional driver training exercises have failed to produce positive results and in fact some have led to negative consequences.

2. Many courses are “one-off” exercises. Good education is an on-going process.

3. “Shock-horror” programs that emphasis the death and injury that can occur from road crashes are generally accepted by the community but not personalised by individuals. They often do not lead to behavioural change.

4. Many programs to bring about improvements are suggested without any understanding or accountability for cost effectiveness or measuring the impact including unintended consequences.

5. It is inappropriate and unfair to suggest that the whole role of driver training can be pushed onto the teaching profession within the school system.

6. Road safety can be part of the school curriculum but it should not be only carried out in isolated lessons. Road safety can be incorporated in many aspects of the learning experience, especially for very young children.

7. The key elements of programs that have failed appear to be: short term programs, programs that just focus on the mechanical skills of driving, a lack of concern about measuring the results and messages that demonise those who have made a mistake.

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2.4 Strengths in Previous Programs

GIO observations are that:

1. Increased concern about Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) has generated a number of programs to reduce road crashes associated with work activities. The underlying strengths in the implementation of these programs are that they are on-going and the results are continually being measured.
2. Interactive or participatory teaching and learning methods are an effective way to ensure knowledge transfer and ownership and the ultimate use of skills beyond the teaching environment.
3. Communication can be about making simple messages but we have to be careful about having only a limited range of generalised slogans. The use of a wide range of simply expressed information facts based on credible data has highlighted many practical areas that people can embrace and apply to reduce their road safety risks.
4. The key elements of successful road safety programs appear to be:
    - a clear understanding of the many aspects of the problem,
    - ownership of the solutions,
    - accountability to one's peers,
    - identifying specific things that can be done that relate to personal activities and an involvement over a reasonable period of time.

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3 Recommendations

1. Staysafe's final report should do more than cover drivers; it should actively place young driver safety and education programs within the context of a broader range of road safety strategies.

2. Much more effective use must be made of road safety data not just to support conclusions that have already been made but to remove misconceptions in popular opinion and to encourage solutions that are generated or at least have ownership with the target audience.

3. Doing data collection and writing a report is only half of a project. Sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure the results of quality road safety research are clearly expressed and a program of promoting the results in the appropriate areas is carried out.

4. There needs to be more freedom around the provision of data and encouragement for independent resources (including universities) to review data sets. Not just to check the veracity of the work, but also to continue to look for additional valuable conclusions and to compile non-political information.

5. Education has gone way beyond the idea of simply telling people "what you think is important and what they should do." Empathy, involvement, compassion, facilitation and ownership of the solutions must be the strongest goals of a complete strategy.

6. Education programs should encourage skills that help people cope with the processes that may lead to a crash. Examples include helping young people to develop skills to cope with peer pressure and helping parents and other mentors to work through road safety information with young adults.

7. Education programs must start when people are showing the first signs of risk taking behaviours which (in the case of males) appears to be from the earliest time they are starting to use push bikes.

8. A key responsibility of government authorities that are involved in road, must be to provide information from public health researchers to the media and other organisations that report on crashes to achieve the most effective road safety results from the way the stories are framed and the information that is presented. Actitivites such as these can be outsourced to ensure that they get done.

9. Evolving areas of road safety programs (that are not necessarily connected with young drivers) should be reviewed for possible constructive ideas. For example the current development of road safety packages within organisations is getting considerable attention as an OH&S issue. Good information should be distributed widely without conclusions so as to empower young people with a good understanding of the range of causes and effects that can be part of crash situations, to allow openness for creative solutions to be identified and to instill a sense of ownership.

10. Our community should not be restricted by a perception of "education" programs as being lessons taught in a classroom. Programs must be developed that empower people to act more safely within the social context that they are living in. Programs should include helping young people learn how to resist peer pressure to drive unsafely or to be a passenger in a car that is being driven unsafely and programs that help parents facilitate their children into safe road behaviour patterns.

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4 The terms of reference

It is understood that young drivers have an above average fatality rate in car crashes. But GIO would be concerned if communications and discussions arising from the Staysafe review focused solely on the details of training programs on the act of driving a car as an isolated issue rather than as part of the overall road safety situation.

This report shows research that:

- identifies the rate of injury from operating road "vehicles" (including push bikes) starts at an early age,
- there are very clear, age related risks other than driving (e.g. young women passengers between the age of 15-19)
- a public health perspective approach to road safety, with all the associated research and experiences, is undermined if we take a focus just on stories about "at-fault" drivers. Of course "at-fault" risks should be addressed, but the message taken from such a singular focus can be one of fatalism: the kind of person responsible for crashes is the sort of people we are not, so there is little that can be done to protect ourselves from these "others".
- A driver making a mistake is the end result of many factors including the current situation, how their passengers act, their understanding of risk and their long term experiences. Many people's actions are often involved even if they are not behind the wheel.

We believe that Staysafe's final report should do more than cover driver education programs; it should actively place driver education within the context of a broad road safety program.

5 The stern, inflexible approach

A popular view on road safety is that it is only the reckless, malicious or crazy who have crashes. This is extremely convenient because it automatically excludes you and me. Furthermore this leads to the belief that "all" the community has to do is make "them" change.

In many ways this is the dominant approach to young drivers. Stereotypical concepts are reinforced by police and media reports that give emphasis to the most extreme examples of behaviour. This leads to the belief that all crashes are caused by willful and intentionally anti-social behaviour, by young drivers who are treated in a "guilty until proven innocent" manner.

Not everyone intentionally demonises the young but the narrowness of this approach is compounded by the repetition of a few basic statistics (e.g. young people are over represented in crashes). This data recognises the problem but stops short of helping young people address practical solutions.

When confronted with a top-down approach based on a small amount of data, it is not surprising that young people can feel alienated, misunderstood and limited in what practical things they can do to reduce their involvement in road crashes. They rarely get to feel a sense of ownership of the answers. Road safety becomes obeying what may be seen as capricious laws that adults have created.

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This report does not back away from the need for some level of police enforcement, driver restrictions and a justice system to deal with offenders. There is a need for a frequent, visible police presence. There is a need for penalties. Penalties need to be significant to have an affect but they do not have to be draconian. Many young people (and adults) find that being pulled over by the police leaves a lasting impression that encourages them to be more vigilant.

One of the benefits of visible police activities and a consistent judicial system is that young people can use this fact to confront difficult situations when they have strong peer pressure to be involved in dangerous activities. Being able to say with a high degree of credibility that they do not want to get caught and run the risk of losing their license should be one of the approaches they have at hand to be able to implement good life style actions to reduce their risk.

The same can be said for consistent rules from parents. There have been many examples of a child asking for permission to do something, hoping that the parents will say no. Even if the child would like to do the activity but they feel scared, then being able to put the responsibility for the decision on the parents makes it easier to resist peer pressure. This raises the issue of helping parents get the skills to define and facilitate their children in road safety matters.

This submission will not go into any more detail regarding disciplinary or restrictions on young people, as it is felt that these issues will be more than adequately covered by other submissions. We do not deny the need to carefully consider such measures but we believe that they must be considered in a broader context of measures and they must be considered and, if necessary, implemented in a context that involves young people.

An interesting thought that might help to encourage the community to a considered opinion on road safety for young people is that if the solution is to aggressively restrict the right to drive for young people and thus decrease their accessibility to important activities like education and work opportunities this may come back to bite the community. The statistics also show that while the average death and injury rate starts to decline after the age of 19, it also starts to increase again after 65 years of age. It is sobering to think that by the time one gets to 65 years of age, one of the current young drivers (on whom a draconian solution was forced) might well be the Minister of Transport.

6 Sending the wrong messages

Our perceptions of road safety risks are a product of what information we get about crashes. A prominent source of information is reports of crashes in the media. The media usually rely on information and conclusions provided by authorities and they have a need to report stories that are perceived to be interesting to their audience. So what messages are being conveyed by what ultimately makes it into the press?

While considerable research has been done on the public health issues of television images and violent crime, little has been done on how real life road crashes are reported and how this frames our perception of the problems and solutions of road safety.

One study does address this issue. S M Connor and K Wesolowski [2] conducted research "To examine the public health messages conveyed by newspaper coverage of fatal motor vehicle crashes and determine the extent to which press coverage accurately reflects real risks and crash trends". Crash details were extracted from two years of newspaper coverage of fatal crashes in four Midwestern cities in the United States. Details and causal factors

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identified by reporters were compared to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS).

The impact can be profound:

> "Press coverage of fatal motor vehicle crashes has the potential to shape readers' perceptions of personal risk and their beliefs about the nature and causes of crashes through the frames they employ, including the choice of which stories to cover and how much space to allot them, the narrative forms used in telling stories, the choice of detail, rhetorical strategies used, and the context in which information is placed."

It is important to understand the different approaches of the media and public health professionals.

> "Media and public health goals are often at odds, since the former focuses on emphasising the distinctiveness of the event covered and the latter aims to detect trends and similarities and identify risk factors."

The conclusions were emphatic:

> "Newspaper coverage did not accurately reflect real risk. Papers presented fatal crashes as dramas with a victim/villain storyline; in keeping with this narrative strategy, papers were most likely to cover stories where a driver survived to take the blame. By highlighting crashes that diverge from the norm, focusing on the assignment of blame to a single party, and failing to convey the message that preventive practices like seatbelt use increase odds for survival, newspapers removed crashes from a public health context and positioned them as individual issues."

There is no point in simply blaming the media. The media reports the things that make interesting news and media success is measured on how much people watch, listen and read. The real issue is how road safety authorities and experts interact with the media. Connor and Wesolowski, who have done work in our areas of public health and media coverage, remain positive about improving the situation.

> "Public health practitioners can work with media outlets in their areas to draw attention to misrepresentations and change the way these stories are framed."

GIO believes that there is a tendency to only provide the media with information that reinforces simple images and oversimplified representation of risks. This limitation stultifies the efforts at engaging young people in particular, to have ownership and skills to reduce their risks when on the road.

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7 Making the most of all the data

7.1 Examples where the real statistics are often overlooked

The current popular "process" for identifying solutions to road safety is often as follows:

- Perceive what the problem is;,
- Decide what the solution is;
- Find information that supports your point of view;
- Campaign for "your" solution to be implemented.

A more scientific approach should be:

- Identify what the problem appears to be;
- Compile data or conduct new research to clarify what the real situation is;
- Define what changes need to be achieved (and therefore define the key measures of success);
- Identify ways to achieve the objective involving young drivers in defining the solutions;
- Implement a program;
- Measure to see if it works;
- Continue with the program if it works, improve through feedback or remove it if it doesn't.

This may seem elementary but the lack of comprehensive statistical input in the public debate about road safety is indicated by the way road safety programs often slavishly hold onto to misconceptions about the real risks. Media reports and subsequent public response through talk back radio, blogs and letters to the editor are rarely enhanced by the provision of good data. In GIO's experience, media commentators are often totally surprised when told of facts such as the following:

- Road crashes don't take holidays. The average number of people who die on the roads each day during the Christmas/New Year holiday period is the same as at other times of the year. [3]
- Nearly one third of fatal crashes occur on roads with speed limits of 60 km/hr or less. [4]
- Young adults are over represented in fatal crashes but they are not the only problem. We are all at some level of risk. Nearly three out of four road deaths are not people aged between 17 and 25. [4]
- It's not just the drivers whose lives are at risk. Forty per cent (40%) of road deaths in Australia are passengers or pedestrians [4]

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- Specific major highways are not the only problem. In a 10 year period up to 2003, the Pacific Highway experienced 10,000 crashes resulting in 500 deaths. This represented approximately 9% of the deaths in NSW and 3% in Australia. [5]
- Many traditional driver training programs that focus on driver skills have consistently been found to be ineffective in reducing crash rates and in some cases have been found to be counter-productive. [6]

7.2 Examples where the real statistics are very helpful

Recent RTA campaigns that highlight the significant percentage of deaths that are pedestrians, is a good example of the effective use of data. [7]

Another good example was at a recent Australian Institute of Traffic Planning and Management conference in Canberra. Figures were presented that said 53% of fatalities at signalised railway level crossings were pedestrians and the majority of those were people being hit by the "second" train i.e. they observed and avoided the first train but then were hit by a second train traveling on an adjacent line. Just knowing this fact provides a very specific action to consider when crossing a railway rather than having a vague slogan of "be careful". [8]

It has been GIO's experience that these facts are not known by the public but when presented they give people an example of a risk that they can readily relate to. Real statistics must be promoted even if they do not support our current perceptions.

7.3 Fatalities are not the only statistics

The predominant measures of road safety are the number of people killed and the number of fatal accidents.

Emphasis on fatalities is understandable. They are easy to define and compile quickly compared to measuring serious injuries. Serious injuries, however, represent a much larger database which can be helpful particularly when looking at more detailed issues. They also represent another compelling data set that highlights the tragic impacts from road crashes that directly affect many people.

Greater use should be made of data on serious injuries. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) describes the serious injuries as "the often forgotten side of the road toll". In 2004 they put the road "toll" into perspective:

> "Figures from the Australian Transport Safety Bureaus report on serious injury due to road crashes, provide a sobering reminder that for every person killed on the roads each year about 11 are seriously injured (meaning they had to spend at least one night in a hospital)". [9]

According to their research there were 214,484 land transport-related patient days in hospital, 0.9% of total patient days in Australia and 11.6% of all injury-related patient days. The mean length of stay for the 46,862 persons hospitalised due to a land transport accident was 4.6 days. [10]

Based on these figures, on an average day in Australia, 587 people are in hospital because of road injuries.

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Not only does serious injury information give a wider data set, it can add to the nature of the programs we develop.

A survey of young drivers in eastern England [10] found that:

- 79% said killing someone else would be worse than killing himself or herself
- 69% said that, for them, paralysis would be a worse outcome than death

With an understanding that young people were afraid of killing a friend, a NSW television campaign was produced where an at-fault driver has to face his parents knowing that he has killed his sister in a car accident. The impact of having to face a person who is physically disabled because of your actions may be an extension of this approach.

7.4 Age trends in road injuries are not one dimensional

Below is a table with figures taken from the ATSB "Serious injury due to land transport accidents, Australia, 2003–04". [11] It should be noted that these figures are not just drivers but all road users (including being a passenger in the car).

Table 1: Land Transport—age-specific Rates Of Serious Injury Per 100,000 Population By State And Territory Of Residence, Australia, 2003–04

	State And Territory								
Age Group (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	National
0–4	68	56	85	103	48	56	69	109	71
5–9	178	143	228	162	172	175	157	264	179
10–14	325	303	412	334	310	271	177	451	336
15–19	467	455	529	436	573	461	311	673	484
20–24	388	439	459	346	500	431	315	563	431
25–29	302	345	336	297	320	334	278	430	330
30–34	253	282	272	234	290	235	170	310	267
35–39	223	243	224	170	228	226	206	458	228
40–44	185	209	195	160	189	187	164	273	193
45–49	175	205	189	127	177	127	135	255	180
50–54	156	180	158	114	140	111	101	201	157
55–59	144	161	131	110	133	105	94	174	142
60–64	129	151	124	89	106	75	153	132	129
65–69	144	151	133	105	124	76	141	350	140
70–74	154	159	133	112	115	275	195	45	149

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	State And Territory								
Age Group (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	National
75–79	175	170	155	159	173	127	49	271	167
80–84	196	219	173	179	227	162	238	251	200
85+	169	169	162	163	182	197	70	162	169
All Ages (Crude)	225	239	250	203	235	208	182	341	235
All Age STD	226	239	249	202	240	215	177	326	235

While not being a definitive analysis of the data, a number of important insights can be seen. Such insights can help widen the understanding of the situation for the media and the population and they also widen the range of options considered for further research:

- The 15-19 year age group is the highest risk of injury but the age groups on either side (10-14 and 20-24) are not far behind.
- All age groups between 10 and 35 have a higher than average serious injury rate.
- The Northern Territory has traditionally had very high road death and injury rates and this table reinforces that situation. South Australia and Queensland also show rates for 15-19 and 20-24 well above average.

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The following graphs are from the same ATSB report.

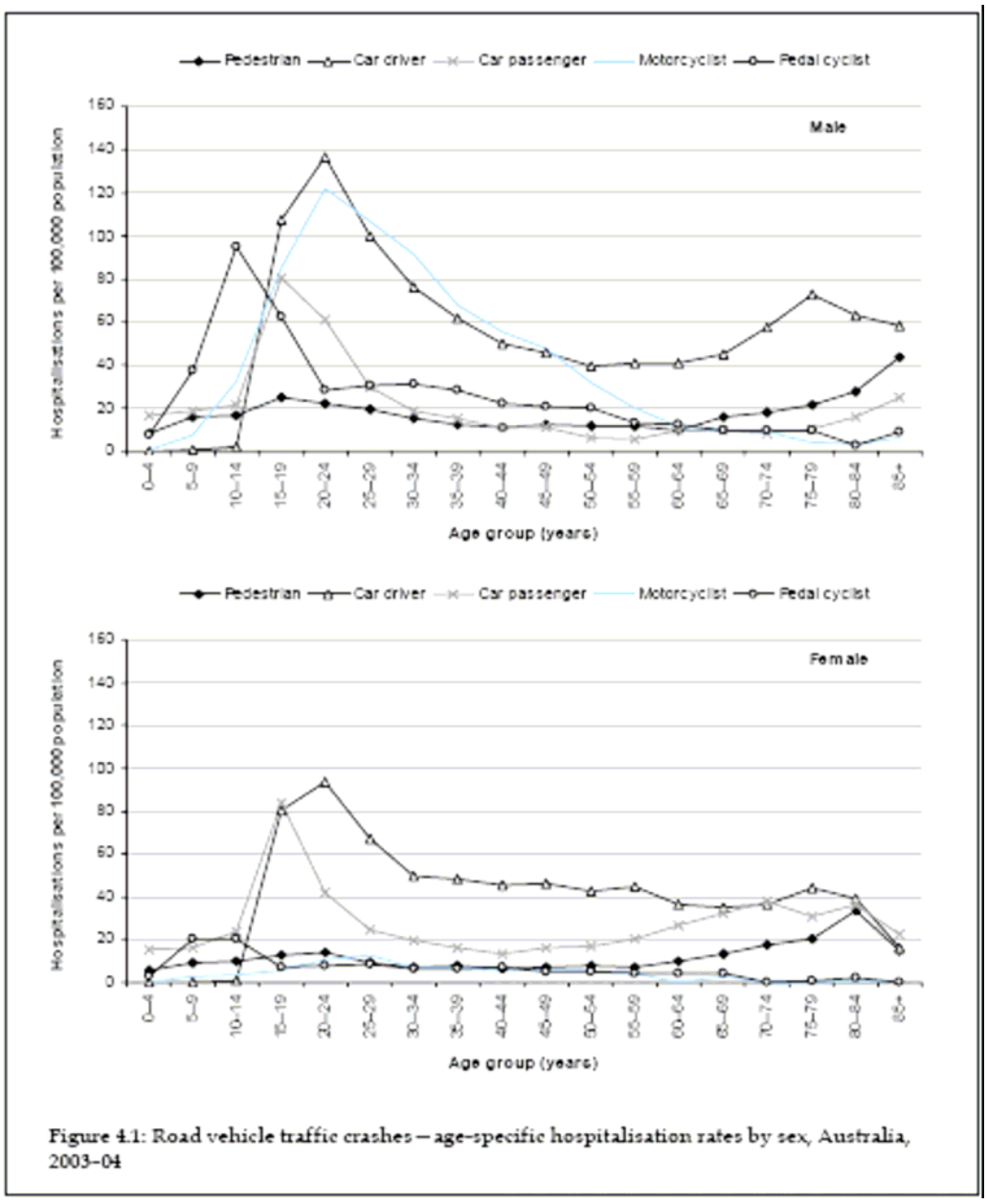

Figure 4.1: Road vehicle traffic crashes – age-specific hospitalisation rates by sex, Australia, 2003–04

These graphs indicate, among other things:

- As many young females (aged between 15 and 19) are injured as a passenger, as being a driver.
- Younger males (aged between 10 and 14) are nearly five times more likely to be injured on a pedal bike as females of the same age.
- The number of men injured on motor bikes is similar for each age group as those injured when driving a car up to the age of 60.

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More extensive review and use of information based on solid statistical detail creates a broader awareness, more discussion points and practical areas for identifying solutions.

7.5 Taking the data to the next step

Further analyse of information from the above graphs can give many more new perspectives.

It is often assumed that young males "go crazy" when they get their license. By extracting the data from the ATSB graphs above, a broader trend is apparent. The table below considers the rate of injury per 100,000 population from crashes where the person is controlling a road vehicle (be it a pedal bike, car or motorbike – excluding car passengers and pedestrians). Unfortunately the original data figures provided here were unavailable as the research project that produced the report did not have any budget for answering information requests. Data had to be read off the graphs.

Table 2: Land Transport—age-specific Rates Of Serious Injury Per 100,000 Population By type of vehicle in control, Australia, 2003–04

	Males				**Females**			
	Bikes	Cars	Motor Bike	Total Male	Bikes	Cars	Motor Bike	Total Female
Age Group (years)								
0–4	8	0	0	8	4	0	0	4
5–9	39	0	8	47	20	0	2	22
10–14	98	0	32	130	20	0	4	24
15–19	62	108	82	252	8	80	8	96
20–24	30	138	120	288	8	95	12	115
25–29	31	100	106	237	9	64	12	85
30–34	32	77	92	201	8	46	8	62
35–39	30	61	68	159	8	45	8	61
40–44	22	49	56	127	8	43	8	59
45–49	21	46	50	117	7	44	7	58
50–54	20	40	32	92	7	42	8	57
55–59	12	41	20	73	6	43	7	56
60–64	12	41	12	65	5	38	0	43
65–69	10	44	10	64	5	37	4	46
70–74	10	58	10	78	0	38	0	38

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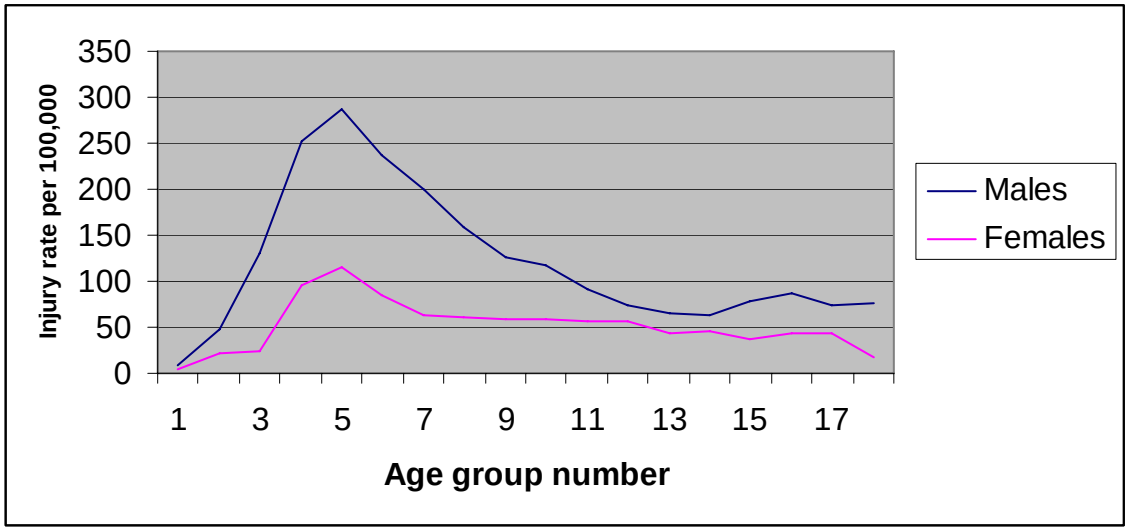
	Males				Females			
	Bikes	Cars	Motor Bike	Total Male	Bikes	Cars	Motor Bike	Total Female
Age Group (years)								
75–79	10	72	5	87	1	42	0	43
80–84	5	63	5	73	2	40	2	44
85+	10	59	7	76	0	18	0	18



One powerful conclusion that can be seen from this graph is that the trend of males being injured in road crashes starts at a very early age: when they start riding bicycles. By the time they get their driving license they have, as a group, already experienced a high level of injury.

This would strongly suggest that prevention programs should start when the problem begins to manifest itself which would appear to be in infants' school.

7.6 Dynamic use of data and on-going research

Doing research and writing a report is only half of the project. Sufficient resources should be given for independent review of the data not just to check the veracity of the work but also to continue to look for more valuable conclusions.

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i. Research data not shared

Dr John Robinson, Senior Partner (Canada) McCormick Rankin Corporation and a specialist in road safety, has warned against hording data [12]. One of his five guiding principles is the need for sharing knowledge. Knowledge and data hording works against what we are trying to achieve. He believes that a lot of data collected by companies could be released without compromising commercial sensitivities and the problem with Governments is that hording data can be done as a source of power over others within departments or against other departments or organisations. There are locations where the full value of a data set can be explored: universities are ideal areas for conducting further research on existing data bases.

ii. Promoting the good news stories

There is a tendency for governments to release only good news stories or information that supports a preconception and all are filtered through a PR department. Better data is always necessary even if it does not immediately support existing strategies.

iii. Data as a profit centre

Another problem is that governments are now seeing departments that collect data as profit centres. Comprehensive data is available if you pay for it. GIO is unaware of any review that has evaluated how this policy is reducing the benefits that arise from the costs of collecting information.

iv. Ongoing data analysis taskforce required

It is not possible to identify all the issues in one review. Resources should be available for evaluating suggestions as they arise.

There should also be resources for collecting data to review many of the common place perceptions or any new idea's that arise about road safety. It has often been said that young drivers should "Expect the unexpected". It seems to be good advice but it is a rather general statement. What does it mean and what sort of "unexpected" situations are causing the problems?

v. Truths or Myths

GIO is aware of a comment made at a traffic conference (which was presented without reference to the particular research) that young drivers are over represented in crashes that are not their fault. The example given was that where a driver turns right in front of a young driver, the young driver might typically expect the other driver to be as cautious as they would be. When the other driver does not show a high degree of caution, the young driver is not as prepared to avoid a collision. If this is true, then this is a practical piece of information that young drivers can relate to. Is it true? Are there other situations that typify situations where this advice can be applied? Only research and in-depth analysis will tell.

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8 Lessons from Previous Training Programs

8.1 Unintended consequences

Popular opinion is that education programs must be a good thing and anyway “it can’t hurt” and if it saves one life it is worthwhile. Quality road safety research has shown that some very well intended road safety programs have produced negative results and every program has to be evaluated on the best use of resources. Reducing injury is a good thing but if more lives could be saved and more injuries avoided by spending limited resources in other areas then that should be the plan of action.

Some unintended consequences from road safety programs include:

- Many traditional training exercises have failed to produce positive results and in fact many have led to negative consequences. When this issue was raised on a talk-back session on the ABC some time ago a taxi owner rang in and said that he had sent his five drivers to a driver training exercise [13]. The result was that they had the same number of accidents but they were more severe in nature and the drivers wore out their brake pads at twice the rate. Teaching people car control such as sliding, correcting and the incredible braking capabilities of modern cars, has left many people with a confidence level that exceeds their abilities. The situation is compounded when a driver tries to get into situations on the open road to “practice” the skills they have learnt on the race track. A positive move has been towards “defensive driving” courses rather than “advanced” driving but this still depends on what is meant by “defensive”. The ultimate measure is not even just the attitude people take from a course. It is whether they effectively apply the lessons they have learnt in real life.

- Many courses are “one-off” exercises. What has been learnt is soon forgotten. Good training is best achieved over a period of time.

- ”Shock-horror” programs that emphasis the death and injury that can occur from road accidents are generally accepted by the community but they are not necessarily successful. When implementing a recent campaign, the Scottish Government [14] expressed this well:

  > Fear-arousing messages are successful in gaining audience attention, but there is a risk that advertising which portrays extreme threats is either avoided after initial viewing because it is too distressing, or is discounted by viewers as unrealistic, not personally relevant, and lacking in credibility (Hastings et al 2004). It was hoped that a more empathetic and credible style of road safety advertising (Slater, 1999) would prove equally, if not more, effective in engaging audiences.

- Some social commentators have suggested that the increase in a heavy handed legalism in road safety has led to more road rage. The prevailing attitude is that “I think I am in the right so I am justified in getting angry at anyone who does anything to get in my way”. Examples are intolerance in merging traffic situations and aggressive action and actions against people who are traveling a little below the speed limit or even if traveling at the speed limit plus a perceived tolerance level. Robert DiGiulio [15] puts this in the context of a general culture of violence.

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> This culture of violence is a shared account of current happenings and holds the premise that the world is a dangerous place and that to survive, one must be watchful (or armed) and prepared to react to the ever-present dangers. Such an attitude promotes a sense of constant defensiveness, suspicion, the need for standing one's ground, and inclination to offer reprisal for the slightest offense. An example of antisocial behaviors prompted by quick trigger responses prevalent in such a touchy climate would be the display of road rage we observe and note in news reports.

The key elements of programs that have failed appear to be: short term programs, programs that focus on the mechanical skills of driving and messages that demonise those who have made a mistake.

8.2 There is some good news

The news is not all bad

- The increased concern about Occupational Health and Safety has generated a number of programs to reduce road accidents associated with work activities [18]. The valuable aspects of these programs are that the programs are on-going and the results are continually being measured. There is also a very clear financial incentive to get it right not to just make the community feel good about doing something. The work environment involves many of the characteristics of the situations that young people find themselves and in which road safety programs might be addressed. There are differences of opinion, anger at being misunderstood or ignored, motherhood notions of solutions, people who are focusing on many things not just road safety and incentives that compromise road safety.
- One of the seminal road safety programs ever conducted was with Swedish Telecom [16]. The Western Australian Government quotes programs based on the principals of this research as good examples of corporate road safety initiatives. They describe one program as follows [17]:

  > It involves conducting a short series of small group discussions on problems associated with road safety within the organisation. Swedish Telecom experience shows that employees participating in this program have significantly fewer crashes than similar work areas not exposed to the discussions.
  >
  > Telstra uses the group discussion technique to achieve the following goals:
  >
  > - Convince Telstra drivers that their fellow drivers are as concerned about safety as they are.
  > - Provide evidence that Telstra is concerned about safety, by ensuring the company responds to problems uncovered by the drivers.
  > - Promote the exchange of information about what constitutes safe driving, by having drivers discuss what can be done to solve safety problems.
  > - Create commitment, by asking for a personal decision to behave more safely.

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The program comprises the following elements:

- A working party comprising representatives of business units and Health and Safety was established in June 1996 to provide ongoing overall direction for the program.
- Information from road safety organisations, such as the Federal Office of Road Safety, state automobile clubs and road traffic authorities has been used in developing the program and preparing specific driving information for supervisors.

The key elements to success appear to be:

- a clear understanding of the many aspects of the problem,
- ownership of the solutions,
- accountability to one's peers,
- identifying specific things that can be done that relate to personal activities and an involvement over a reasonable period of time.

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9 Issues of communication and teaching

Driving a car, or being a passenger or walking or riding a bike are all activities conducted within a social context. The inattentive driver may not be a young male with the radio playing heavy metal music. It might be the parent trying to achieve a congested schedule with children making a ruckus in the back of the car. It is necessary then to ensure that learning programs are in the context of the needs of the "students".

Good learning processes are participatory. The student has to see that the information is relevant; it reflects where the student is coming from; and can be practically applied. UNESCO [19] gives a strong emphasis to participatory learning:

> Interactive or participatory teaching and learning methods replicate the natural processes by which children learn behaviour. These include observation, modelling, and social interaction. Listening to a teacher describe skills or read or lecture about them does not necessarily enable young people to master them. Skills are learned best when students have the opportunity to observe the skills being practiced and then use the skills themselves. Researchers argue that if young people can practice [sic] the skills in the safety of a classroom environment, it is much more likely that they will be prepared to use them in and outside of school.

It is inappropriate and unfair to assume that the whole role of driver training can be pushed onto the teaching profession within the school system. Schools do have a role but it is not focused on putting on separate "road safety" lessons. It is more effective to bring it into the general curriculum than as a separate subject.

Because transport is conducted in a social context, then road safety issues can be raised within a wide range of subjects. One example is in infants' classes where children are encouraged to talk about their weekend activities. If they visited a relation then the teacher has the opportunity to ask about how they got there, did they have to cross a road, how did they do that safely etc.

In later years students who are approaching driving age can discuss and role play health issues including the impact of peer pressure and the risk on the roads.

Connor and Wesolowski [2] recognised that the lack of contextualising is what is missing in many media reports. The fact that a driver was not wearing a seat belt or that the road was in poor condition, or the lighting was not good, or there were large trees very close to the roadway, were elements in the situation. This does not absolve the at-fault driver but it highlights the context in which the risk of a crash and the magnitude of the injury from a crash are increased.

But it is not just the schools responsibilities. Life's lessons are learnt in many situations including watching the way your parents behave.

The community should not be restricted by our perception of "education" programs as being lessons taught in a classroom. Skilling our young people to reduce their risks on the road must be done over an extended period of time and through a variety of means each of which must address the need to involve them in the process, not just tell them what to do.

Skills should be seen in the context of how young people can cope with various social situations and how adults can impart effective understanding and practical actions to children and young adults.

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