

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Wollondilly Shire Council
Name: Mrs Naomi Green
Position: Road Safety Officer
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**Inquiry into Young Driver Safety
and Education Programs**

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

**Submission by Wollondilly Shire
Council**

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SUBMISSION SUMMARY

Wollondilly Shire Council is concerned about the high severity and incidence of crashes amongst young drivers in the local government area. To address the issues associated with young drivers, a full-time Road Safety Officer is employed to develop, implement and evaluate road safety projects and messages. Below is a list of the initiatives which are outlined further in this submission.

- Wollondilly Road Safety Working Party (5.1)
- Drives for Learners in Macarthur (5.2)
- Driver Education Awareness Program (5.3)
- Helping Learner Drivers Become Safety Drivers Workshops (5.4)
- World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims (5.5)
- U-Turn the Wheel (5.6)
- Drive to Survive Courses (5.7)
- Macarthur Young Drivers Assistance Program (formerly Drives for Learners in Macarthur – Mentoring Project) (6.1)
- Tomorrows Drivers (6.2)
- School holiday workshops (6.3)

The efficacy of each initiative is detailed in the corresponding section of the report.

Continued funding and support from all areas of government will assist in further engaging young drivers and reducing the crash rate and severity of the target group.

This submission has been prepared by the Road Safety Officer of Wollondilly Shire Council, Naomi Green, on behalf of Wollondilly Shire Council.

This document has been endorsed by the General Manager of Wollondilly Shire Council, Mr Les McMahon and contributions have been made by executive members of staff.

BACKGROUND

In 1995, Wollondilly Shire Council joined the Local Government Road Safety Program and introduced the part-time position of Road Safety Officer.

Due to the high rate of crashes on the road of Wollondilly, the position was then increased to a full-time position to assist in targeting the local community with road safety messages designed to reduce the incidence and severity of crashes.

Council currently has external funding for the redevelopment of the Road Safety Strategic Plan, previously developed in 2000. This document aims to integrate the activities of all areas of Council pertaining to road safety and related outcomes and provide a strategic direction for road safety action in the future. In addition, community action and direction will be noted as considerable passion and determination for involvement in road safety initiatives exists within the Shire which complements the work of Council.

A thorough analysis of available data is currently being developed which will provide a framework for the implementation of key initiatives and support the direction, strategies and outcome of the document. It is envisaged that this will be completed by January 2008.

Notwithstanding, the original document and recent statistics provide an excellent basis for Council's submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee and Road Safety (Staysafe) inquiry into "Young Driver Safety and Education Programs".

Wollondilly Shire Council has placed priority on novice drivers as this is the age group most significantly represented in crashes in Wollondilly. Figures for the wider Macarthur region indicate that this trend is common to the area and thus collaborative work on projects with Camden and Campbelltown City Councils has enabled consistent messages and services across the three local government areas.

POINTS ADDRESSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The current incidence of road crashes involving young drivers in NSW

Data analysis conducted by the Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW have concise and thorough information on road crashes involving young drivers in NSW based on reported information from police officers attending road incidents.

2. Underlying risks and major factors contributing to such crashes

2.1 Pertaining to crashes of young drivers in Wollondilly, the following statistics provide a summary of the underlying risks and contributing factors:

- Over the last three years, 42% of fatalities were aged 17-25 years.
- 84% of all fatalities were locals, either residing in Wollondilly or neighbouring local government areas.
- Speeding is a contributing factor in 46% of crashes
- Motorcycles are involved in 21% of crashes
- Alcohol affected pedestrians (2007 emerging issue identified by Southern Region RTA via Wollondilly Road Safety Working Party).
- The Wollondilly Local Government Area (LGA) features high car dependence with a large number of high speed classified roads with relatively unforgiving road environments. 46% of fatal crashes occurred on main roads.
- The most severe crash times relate to times when young people are most likely to be driving: 58% of crashes occurred at night/dawn/dusk and 50% on weekends.

2.2 The Report of Wollondilly Shire Council Needs Analysis for Young Peoples Services 2006 was developed in view of recent vandalism and the anti-social behaviour of some young people in the Wollondilly Shire. It is possible that boredom and a lack of connection between these young people and the communities they live in will be a contributing factor. Young people were defined as being between the ages of 12 and 24 for the purpose of this report. The findings and outcomes of the draft document which are relevant to young driver safety and education programs are included below:

2.2.1 Unsuitable or unsafe transport options. Friends and/or older siblings who may not be responsible drivers are the most utilised mode of transport and may contribute to the high road mortality and injury for young people in the Shire;

2.2.2 The small number of health promotion services, harm minimisation strategies and workers for all young people is a concern and may impact

the community in terms of unsafe behaviours such as drink driving and dangerous driving;

2.2.3 With 70.8% of residents travelling outside the Shire for employment, parents are less likely to be available to provide transport and support;

2.2.4 High numbers of school students attend schools outside the Shire (there are only two high schools in Wollondilly). Due to the socialisation needs of young people and the trend to congregate with school friends, these young people tend to travel further distances to fulfil socialisation needs; and

2.2.5 Long established social issues associated with department of housing including inappropriate role models for young people, illegal behaviour in young adults (drug use and supply), a culture promoting disrespect and a lack of trust of authorities.

2.3 The Wollondilly Youth Needs Analysis (WYNA) report, conducted in September 2000 was the culmination of a research project into the needs of young people within the Shire. Young people (11-17 years of age), adult residents and service providers contributed to the findings of the report.

2.3.1 Issues relevant to the subject area of this inquiry raised by young people include:

- Boredom/nothing to do;
- Frustration and dissatisfaction with public transport (notably from those aged 16-17 years);
- Intolerance and discrimination faced from adults;
- Taking risks and experimentation with alcohol and other drugs; and
- Emotional problems including stress/ pressure, family problems, no one to talk to, depression and suicide.

2.3.2 Issues relevant to the subject area of this inquiry raised by adults include:

- Safety and policing;
- Transport; and
- Drugs.

2.3.3 Issues relevant to the subject area of this inquiry raised by service providers include:

- Transport; and
- Safety and violence

2.4 Inadequate experience received by the young driver during the learning phase contributes to the high crash risk of young drivers. While significant steps towards a more comprehensive time of learning through the increased time and experience (120 hours of on-road driving experience including 20 hours of night driving), many young people still lack the maturity to operate vehicles safely. Research has shown that the more experienced the driver, the lower the crash rates and that driving experience is a major factor in the development of the initial vehicle control skills and then the more cognitive skills required for hazard perception and crash avoidance.

2.5 The propensity for risk taking behaviour of young drivers and the desire of young people to indulge in the freedom and independence accessed through the possession of a drivers licence and a vehicle increases the crash risk of young drivers. Research supports this view as initial crash rates are higher for drivers who commence driving at a younger age.

3. Differences in driving behaviour, crash outcomes and relevant trends in urban and rural areas of NSW

The incidence and severity of crashes in the Wollondilly Shire, as a rural area, is higher in comparison to urban areas with similar population demographics. RTA determined factors include:

- The inclination for drivers to speed increases when the area they are driving in is less built up;
- Lack of transport options leads to drink driving being more prevalent in rural areas; and
- Due to the distance travelled between venues, fatigue is a significant factor.

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

The Driver Education Awareness Program (DEAP) was established in 2003 and is currently operating as a young offenders program in the neighbouring Wingecarribee Shire. Young people who are facing court decisions based on driving behaviour are often referred by that court to this program. This program is now operated by the organising committee with association with Police Blue Light.

5. The efficacy of young driver education programs and the potential for development and expansion of these programs, subject to proper evaluation

Wollondilly Shire Council has a designated position with the sole focus of addressing road safety issues and concerns within the Shire and ultimately reducing the incidence and severity of crashes occurring on our roads. The position is 'Road Safety Officer' and was introduced in 1995 as a part-time position. It is now a full-time position within Council. Included in the responsibilities associated with the position are the development, implementation and evaluation of programs relevant to road users within the community. Wollondilly Shire Council has placed priority on novice drivers as this is the age group most significantly represented in crashes in Wollondilly. Figures for the wider Macarthur region indicate that this trend is common to the area and thus collaborative work on projects with Camden and Campbelltown City Councils has enabled consistent messages and services across the three local government areas. Outlined below are the current road safety programs and interventions relevant to the inquiry subject.

5.1 Wollondilly Road Safety Working Party

Scheduled and driven by the Southern Region Roads and Traffic Authority, representatives from Wollondilly Shire Council, Camden Council and the NSW Police Force attend to investigate every fatal crash from 2002 to the present day. Engineering professionals work alongside behavioural scientists to

determine possible methods of prevention both in road treatments and marketing aspects to reduce similar incidents.

Project efficacy and potential for development/expansion:

- i. The Working Party facilitates regular collaboration on pertinent issues, currently young drivers. Focused attention on particular crashes enables intervention specific to the locality and develops beneficial working relationships between agencies who are called to deal with this issue, resulting in complementary intervention measures.*
- ii. This model of frequent meetings and collaboration on road safety in general would benefit any area.*

5.2 Drives for Learners in Macarthur

In conjunction with Camden and Campbelltown City Councils, the Drives for Learners in Macarthur project was developed in 2004 to support the Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS) operating in NSW, which novice drivers undertake before obtaining their unrestricted licence.

As part of the project, regular Log Book Run events are conducted during which learner and supervising drivers are guided on a drive encompassing a range of driving experiences. In addition, a booklet featuring suggested drives which highlight a variety of driving experiences available within the Macarthur region has been compiled and distributed to learner drivers through Log Book Run events and made available from the participating Councils in hard copy and electronically on their respective websites.

Day and Dusk events are conducted to emphasise the importance of night driving experience and to date over 400 learner drivers have participated in the program.

Project efficacy and potential for development/expansion:

- i. Learner drivers have access to structured routes and a variety of driving experiences, contributing to their experience in different environments;*
- ii. Supervising drivers are addressed regarding their responsibilities in supervising learner drivers and in structuring learning opportunities for learner drivers so that they gain access to a variety of driving experiences;*
- iii. Structured routes and guides provide learners and supervisors with suggestions for learning experiences with a variety of driving environments.*

- iv. *This concept has been taken up and offered to learner drivers and their supervisors in other local government areas within NSW.*

5.3 Driver Education Awareness Program (DEAP)

Though currently operating as a young offenders program, the original concept of DEAP sought to bring an education on road safety and the consequences of dangerous and unsafe driving behaviours to the general community. Though a significant number of the participants were court referred, the course was also promoted to the general community, encouraging all drivers to regard their licence as a responsibility. Wollondilly Shire Council was involved with the original project, assisting the organising committee in delivering it to the local community.

Project efficacy and potential for development/expansion:

- i. *Through a follow-up evaluation conducted on the licenses of the participating drivers, 85-90% of participants had not re-offended up to 12 months following participation in the course.*
- ii. *Positive community feedback on the program from participants highlighted their appreciation and regard for the information they received.*
- iii. *The further development and expansion of this model of driver education would benefit the general community as the information provided will contribute to a change in general driver attitude in the community.*

5.4 Helping Learner Drivers Become Safety Drivers Workshops

RTA developed workshops are provided to supervisors of learner drivers. Workshops are free and provide support and practical advice for supervisors about the risks to young drivers aged 16-25, including the impact of their driving behaviour on the attitudes of their children. Council is involved in delivering these workshops to the local community.

Project efficacy and potential for development/expansion:

- i. *The structured workshop promotes the need for supervisors to take seriously the responsibility of supervising and guiding the learner driver so that they are a more experienced driver once they are driving unsupervised.*
- ii. *Supervising drivers are informed about the Graduated Licensing Scheme process and what they can expect at each stage.*
- iii. *A greater number of workshops should be offered to supervising drivers across NSW however funding and the restrictions of suitable persons to*

conduct workshops (where a Road Safety Officer is employed at a Council, they are the only person permitted to offer the RTA approved workshop) prevent additional scheduling.

5.5 World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims

In conjunction with members from the community who have felt the effect of the loss of a love one on the road network in Wollondilly, the inaugural memorial service for the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims was held on 18 November 2007. Chair of the Staysafe Committee, Mr Geoff Corrigan addressed the crowd. A large proportion of fatalities occurring in Wollondilly are young drivers. The event was well represented by young people who had lost friends on the road, evidence that the event was a significant reminder of the reality of road trauma. The inclusion of additional young people in the planning of future events to mark this occasion will be a priority and will help to cement the reality of what can occur to drivers and passengers on the roads when driving is not treated seriously.

Project efficacy and potential for development/expansion:

- i. The event enabled all present to consider the reality of road trauma while contemplating the need to prevent future loss on our roads.*
- ii. The occasion will be marked annually, with the organising committee comprising of community members keen to contribute to road safety. Each year the event will be developed to attract larger crowds and focus on the reality of road crashes.*
- iii. This concept would work well in any locality with a community who is feeling the burden of loss of life through car crashes and has the passion to assist in the organisation and running of any event. The community involvement is crucial as it enables local elements to influence the event and provides a practical way for bereaved and persons to deal with their emotions and contribute practically to the wider community.*

5.6 U-Turn the Wheel

The road safety focussed event for year 11 students continues to be a popular part of the Shires calendar. Administered by Rotary, Picton High School, local NRMA representatives, Council and community members, the program brings together a range of speakers to engage the students in various aspects of road safety. Speakers include the local Police, crash victims who have suffered physical and brain injuries, crash victims who have caused serious injury to

others, NRMA, community members who have lost family members through road crashes, vehicle mechanics and truck drivers.

The event allows young people to consider a range of issues around road safety and hear from the experiences of others who have made judgement errors in their driving and are paying for the consequences.

Project efficacy and potential for development/expansion:

- i. Highly positive feedback and praise is always an outcome of each U-Turn the Wheel event with the young people purporting to have considered the impact and consequences of not driving safely.*
- ii. Any negative or constructive feedback is routinely considered through the regular meetings to improve on the service and content of the day.*
- iii. 1252 students from Picton and Camden High Schools have attended the program.*
- iv. The project has been in operation since 2001.*
- v. In 2007, Camden High School left the Wollondilly program as it was catered for by a similar project based heavily on the Picton model operating in neighbouring Camden Council area. This new program is able to offer the event to all schools within the Camden local government area.*
- vi. In 2008, the other high school in the Shire, Wollondilly Anglican College will be invited to come on board as they expand to incorporate a senior school on their premises.*
- vii. Similar programs are being run through Rotary Clubs and other community organisations, as well as Councils across Australia.*

5.7 Defensive Driving Courses

A Council funded Rotary initiative includes the provision of discount vouchers for the Stage 1 Drive to Survive Course run by local business, Ian Luff Motivation. Significant community support for the program was a considerable factor in the participation in this program. An evaluation mechanism has been set in place to gauge the short and long term impact of the program on the driving behaviour of those completing the course.

Planned Road Safety Outcomes:

- i. An insight into the reasons behind young drivers electing to participate in such courses and the benefits they are hoping to gain from participation;*
- ii. An insight into the short term and long term benefits the course has on the learner driver; and*

- iii. *An understanding of the take-up rate of the offer.*

6 Other initiatives to improve young driver safety

6.1 Macarthur Young Drivers Assistance Program (formerly Drives for Learners in Macarthur – Mentoring Project)

Recognising the difficulties that may arise from the need to complete 120 hours of supervised driving under the new conditions for the learner driver, an assistance scheme has been developed to provide access to vital resources for disadvantaged young people in the Macarthur area.

Through external funding, driving lessons with professional driving instructors will be provided along with access to volunteer supervisor drivers and project vehicles, administered by Council.

This initiative reinforces the benefits gained through the 120 hours of driving experience and catalyses relationships between young drivers and community members, local businesses, police and Council representatives. It is expected that a greater connection between young drivers and the community will also result in a better understanding of the consequences of their actions and empathy for others, resulting in a more considerate driver. “Connection”, “feeling involved” and “facing discrimination from adults” were issues identified by the Report of Wollondilly Shire Council Needs Analysis for Young People’s Services (2006) and the Wollondilly Youth Needs Analysis (2000).

Planned Road Safety Outcomes:

- i. More experienced learner drivers sitting for their provisional licence;*
- ii. Participating young drivers who appreciate the benefit and importance of quality instruction;*
- iii. Non-participating young drivers who appreciate the benefit and importance of quality instruction;*
- iv. Young people who feel more connected and involved in the community which will contribute to a change in behaviour and the possible reduction of dangerous driving behaviours;*
- v. Supervising drivers who appreciate the benefit and importance of quality instruction;*
- vi. Volunteer supervising drivers who have a greater respect for young people and provisional licence holders as fellow drivers;*

- vii. *Participating young drivers who have a greater respect for other road users; and*
- viii. *Local businesses who appreciate the importance of quality instruction and support the young drivers and volunteers who participate.*

6.2 Tomorrows Drivers

Focusing on educating parents to model good driving behaviours to their children from an early age, workshop material is being developed to take into the communities and local businesses in the Shire. In every area of life, children learn about the world from their parents and caregivers and while they will not sit behind the wheel of a car for over a decade, their attitude towards driving is being shaped by the behaviour modelled.

These workshops will engage parents of children as young as newborns and encourage them to model the type of driving and attitude they want to see in their child come their 16th birthday.

Planned Road Safety Outcomes:

- i. A greater appreciation of the impact of modelled parent behaviour on the child;*
- ii. Parents making the effort to model safe driving behaviours and practices to their children; and*
- iii. Child care facilities supporting parents as they model appropriate behaviour to their children.*

6.3 School holiday workshops

In association with local youth services and networks, day workshops on creative expression of road safety issues will be conducted.

These workshops will facilitate a relationship between the youth and Council's Road Safety Officer whereby driver attitude and responsibility can be considered and expressed through creative statements and artwork. This expression will allow young drivers to own the driving concepts they explore and create further opportunities to discuss driving and road safety. Conversely, the artworks will be designed to engage the onlooker, challenging their perception of the learning to drive phase and driver attitude in general. Artworks and expressive material developed will be coordinated and exhibited during Youth Week in April 2008.

Planned Road Safety Outcomes:

- i. *Young drivers (aged 12 – 25) who attend the workshops be challenged regarding their perception of the learning to drive phase*
- ii. *Participants will understand the concepts and desire to communicate them through artwork*
- iii. *Onlookers of the artwork will contemplate their perception of driver attitude and the learning to drive phase.*

7 Any other relevant matters

Documents used to compile this submission include:

Christie, R (2001) *The effectiveness of driver training as a road safety measure: an international review of the literature*, Report 01/01. Melbourne: RACV.

Hall, N & Mason, J (September 2000) *So close, so far away: research report of the Wollondilly youth needs analysis*, Childhood and Youth Police and Research Unit: University of Western Sydney.

Harrison, W A (1999) *The role of experience in learning to drive: a theoretical discussion and investigation of the experiences of learner drivers over a two-year period*. Report 156. Clayton: Monash University Accident Research Centre.

O'Sullivan, K (1988) *The complete learn-to-drive handbook for australia and new Zealand*. Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers.

Wollondilly Shire Council (2006) *Wollondilly Youth Charter*, Document 1005#5. Wollondilly Shire Council.