

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: Coffs Harbour City Council
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COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL



Our ref: I/R 1761797

29 November 2007

Mr Bjarne Nordin
Staysafe Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Nordin

Young Driver Safety and Education Program

Enclosed is the submission for Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Program from the Road Safety Officer, Coffs Harbour City Council. Using the terms of reference as a guide, it provides information about young driver crashes and programs for young drivers in this area.

Please contact Anne Shearer if further information is required 6648 4414.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'George Stulle', is written over a light blue background.

George Stulle
Design Manager

AS:sbm

Encl

Coffs Harbour – some background information

Coffs Harbour is the largest urban centre in the Northern Rivers and North Coast region of NSW. The majority of the population is clustered along a narrow coastal strip stretching some 35 kilometres south from Red Rock to Repton.

The population of the area is rapidly increasing at a rate of about 1.8% p.a. and was 64 910 at the time of the 2006 census. 8049 of the population was between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2006.

(http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/Census_2006_First_Round_Results.pdf)

Coffs Harbour is the second poorest city in NSW. On the quintile index, if 1 = most seriously disadvantaged and 20 = least disadvantaged, Coffs Harbour averages 5 with some areas ranked 2. Unemployment was 7.9% in the March quarter of 2007; indigenous unemployment was 33.8% and youth was 22.38%. Individual incomes were also lower than State average (\$400.43 compared with \$515.65). There is a higher number than average of zero car households, 10 % have no private vehicle in their household, whilst 77% use private transport to get to work.

The increased population also means an increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. There has been an increase of about 37% in the average daily traffic through Coffs Harbour since 1998. In the single year from June 2002 to June 2003, there was a 32% increase in the number of new vehicles sold in Coffs Harbour.

Narrow rural roads winding through tracts of rainforest and banana plantations characterize the inland. Many of these roads are zoned 100 km/h, even though at such speeds motorists have little margin for error. The terrain is often steep, the corners tight and trees grow close to the roadway.

The road network is dominated by the Pacific Highway, which bisects the city and separates the coastal areas and beaches from the hills. The highway is the only link between the city and the villages that cluster along its length.

The lack of alternative routes is a source of considerable concern in the community as local drivers are forced to interact with long distance and heavy vehicle drivers. There are grounds for the concerns of the local community. The Pacific Highway is the site of 36% of all casualty crashes and 69% of all fatal crashes.

However, it is not the people passing through the area who are involved in most of these crashes. More than two thirds of the drivers who crash in Coffs Harbour are local residents, including the majority (58%) of those who crash on the Pacific Highway.

Young people aged 25 years or less are involved in almost a third (31%) of the crashes although they comprise only 13% of the driving age population excluding children. This age group are also the highest proportion of casualties (27%) which is more than 2.7 times their proportion (10%) of the whole population including children (2002 – 2004).

While almost a third of the drivers in crashes were aged 25 or less, the majority were not P-plate drivers. Only 12% of drivers in crashes hold provisional licenses, the majority (70%) holds standard licenses.

(http://www.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/Road_Safety_Strategy_2006.pdf)

Some crash data from 2006

During 2006 there were no fatalities on the road among people aged 17 – 25.

37% of crashes involving drivers aged 17 – 25 years old occurred on the Pacific Highway; 48 of the crashes occurred in Coffs Harbour and 23 on roads outside Coffs Harbour city and not on the Pacific Highway.

56% of the crashes in this age group were single vehicle crashes:

- 35 (31%) were off path on curve or turning;
- 28 (25%) were off path on straight.
- 19 (17%) were vehicles from the same direction (rear enders)
- 16 (14%) were crashes at intersections.

Crash Data for 17 – 25 years (2006)

Type of vehicle / injury / towaway	Male 17 - 25	Female 17 - 25	Total 17-25 /Total all ages	Percentage of total
Car - controllers	87	50	137/390	35
Light truck - controllers	11	1	12/53	23
Motorcycle - controllers	4	0	4/19	21
All motor vehicle types - controllers	103	51	154/491	31
Illegal BAC all controllers			15/28	54
Speed all controllers			41/80	51
Fatigue all controllers			14/33	42
Seat belt fitted not worn, all motor driver casualties			1/3	30
Seat belt fitted not worn, all passenger casualties			17/52	33
Injuries – motor vehicle driver	21	15	36/108	33
Injuries – motor vehicle passenger	7	10	17/51	33
Motorcyclists (incl passenger)	4	0	4/18	22
Motorcyclist casualty helmet not worn	3	1	4/18	22

Coffs Clarence Command will submit crash data as well as details of numbers of traffic offences for 2007 to be forwarded at a later date.

Traffic Education Programs

Some road safety education programs occur arbitrarily or are “one-off”. For example, the Attorney General’s Department determined that the ‘consequences of being caught drink driving’ would be the subject of the Law Week initiative. Senior students (years 10 – 12) were invited to take part in a “mock trial” of traffic offenders (Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt!). Several speakers from the emergency services were invited to speak. Students taking legal studies attended the day in the Family Court. The speakers used graphic videos that the lawyer related to me as “shocking”, and talked to the students about modified vehicles, speeding and drink driving offences. They were also given information about the costs of running a vehicle, the TOPS program and the consequences of crashes.

Another irregular program is the NRMA “Questacon” exhibition which tours Australia, and has visited Coffs Harbour twice in five years. It is a science exhibition with interactive exhibits simulating driving experiences which assist participants understand the physics of braking distances, and the skills required for driving.

PCYC - Traffic Education Program

The Traffic Education Program is designed to address the high incidence of traffic offences in Coffs Harbour. The program runs for six weeks each week covering the following sessions:

1. Legal issues/High Way Patrol
2. Ambulance/1st Aid
3. North Coast Head Injury Unit/Licensing Unit
4. Insurance/Crime Scene Unit
5. Drug & Alcohol Use
6. Defensive Driving/ Ted Noffs Foundation

PCYC

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Coffs Harbour NSW 2450
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Motorvate

Motorvate is a youth road safety resource developed by NRMA Motoring and Services. It contains a range of key road safety information as well as brief video clip interviews: vehicle crash test video clips and video clips that demonstrate the physics of stopping distances and seat belts.

It is intended to be presented by NRMA staff and also to promote their free insurance scheme: Free2Go. It is designed for 16 – 18 year olds to be presented to school groups, PCYCs, Rotary, CWA and Probus.

More information:

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Driver Mentor Program

The aim of the Driver Mentor Program is to provide voluntary supervision of learner drivers to enable them to complete 120 hours supervised practice and complete the Learner Driver Log Book.

The supervision is provided for Learner Drivers disadvantaged by not having family members or friends, or access to a vehicle in order to complete their 120 hours mandatory practice to enable them to apply for their Provisional Licence. The scheme will seek to reproduce as far as possible the conditions available to other learner drivers:

- No charge for the supervision
- Use of a car
- Supervision sessions – not lessons

The learner drivers may undertake a TAFE course that assists them in obtaining their learners licence. They are then matched with a mentor to enable them to undertake the 120 supervised driving practice. (see attached outline of program)
 The Mentors are volunteers who have completed a TAFE course as outlined below.

Dates	Session –
5/6/07	Introduction to Volunteering Graduated Licensing Scheme
12/6/07	How to teach learners
19/6/07	Cross cultural communication with LBOTE and Aboriginal learners Youth issues

At present Anglicare auspices a mentor program for refugees with approximately 15 volunteers. The Driver Mentor Steering Group seeks to expand the program to cater for Indigenous and disadvantaged young drivers.

The scheme has been operating since September 2006. Approximately 25 learner drivers have obtained their Provisional Licence.

There is a significant demand to expand this program, particularly since July 2007 when the mandatory supervision hours increased to 120. The police have

reported more unlicensed drivers, and this number is expected to increase if assistance is not available.

This is particularly important in regional and rural areas where public transport is expensive, sporadic and sometimes non-existent.

Alternatively, more funding to supplement existing bus services could alleviate some of the problems.

Helping Learner Drivers to Drive Safely Workshops

The Helping Learner Driver to Drive Safely Workshops provides practical advice about the role of supervising learner drivers and the value of on-road driving experience. The Roads and Traffic Authority, in conjunction with Coffs Harbour City Council provides a workshop every quarter in the Coffs Harbour LGA. The workshop is designed to support parents, relatives and friends in the supervision of a learner driver. Council's Road Safety Officer delivers it.

The workshop reinforces the role of the supervising driver and the importance of the 'stepped approach' to allow learner drivers to get their initial driving experience under conditions involving lower risk, and then gradually present them with more complex situations. It also highlights the importance of teaching 'low risk' driving techniques to learner drivers.

The two-hour workshop is for parents and other supervisors of learner drivers and seeks to provide practical advice about:

- Supervising learner drivers
- Completing the *Learner Driver Log Book*.
- Understand the benefits of supervised on-road driving practice.

Every workshop is evaluated, and the information forwarded to:

Natasha Ray
Roads and Traffic Authority
Grafton Regional Office
DX 7610 - PO BOX 576 GRAFTON
GRAFTON NSW 2460
P: 6640 1000

RRISK – Reduce Risk, Increase Student Knowledge

The RRISK program is being presented to year 11 students in the Coffs Harbour area for the first time this year. The program has been running for nine years in Lismore. It has expanded to Tweed and Ballina. The steering committee received funding from the Motor Accidents Authority to assist local agencies with the RRISK seminars in Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie.

The program offers students the opportunity to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge required to reduce risk-taking behaviour associated with driving, drug and alcohol use and celebrating. The RRISK program is a partnership between the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office, Coffs Harbour City Council, Bellingen and Nambucca Shire Council, Kempsey Shire Council, Hastings / Port Macquarie Council, the North Coast Area Health

Authority, NRMA and PCYC, with support and sponsorships from Southern Cross University, ABC North Coast, NSW Police, Ambulance Service and the State Emergency Services.

Year 11 students from high schools in the area are invited. These students are at an age when they are most likely to be learner and provisional licence holders. Approximately 800 students from 13 schools in the region are expected to attend the Coffs Harbour seminars over 2 days.

The students and teachers evaluate the program. A three-year external evaluation was also conducted for the Motor Accidents Authority in Lismore.

During the year participating schools are encouraged to:

- Increase teaching of risk related topics in formal lessons
- Raise community awareness and discuss strategies for reducing risks, through communications with parents such as school newsletters and school meetings.
- Attend the seminars
- Support the training of peer facilitators for the RRISK seminars and encourage these students to promote the aims of the RRISK program throughout the coming year.
- Invite teachers to take advantage of the professional development session provided during the RRISK seminars.

Objectives and Strategies:

- Create an educational environment that encourages discussion of adolescent risk taking and the development of strategies to increase protective behaviours.
- Provide the latest information and research about drug and alcohol use and risk taking amongst young people.
- Provide timely information for learner and provisional drivers on the issues of speed, drink driving, fatigue and safe vehicles
- Improve young driver awareness and realistic perception of risks associated with being a driver/passenger of a motor vehicle.
- Provide high school teachers with information about the latest research into drug and alcohol use and risk taking to increase their confidence in addressing these issues with students.
- Encourage young people to plan ahead and look after their friends when socialising to minimise 'risky' choices.
- Reduce injury resulting from risk taking behaviour among adolescents.
- Evaluate the effects of the RRISK Program on student knowledge, attitudes and self-reported behaviour related to risk taking associated with alcohol and drug use, driving and celebrating.

I also spoke to a Taree Rotary member – Ken Patterson – about the **RYDA program** that was offered to students in neighbouring Shires. These schools are also attending the RRISK program. The RYDA program is similar in many ways to other road safety programs in that it involves a crash scenario and information about the effects of alcohol and other drugs, as well as testimonials from crash victims and emergency services.

Ken Patterson said that they had received Federal and State Government funding to roll out the program nationally, and that they would be offering the program to schools across the North Coast.

My view is that schools should be offered one program using all the best available resources, and based on sound research. "One-offs" should be discouraged, and presenters should be trained to talk to young people.

The program should be integrated with school road safety programs, which should be compulsory for students both in school and in other educational institutions such as TAFE. A program such as RRISK which has been well evaluated, and is supported by education and health personnel would seem to be the kind of program which could be developed and supported.

I think that voluntary bodies, as well as private companies such as NRMA have rushed in to fill a void left by Government bodies that have not given clear direction for road safety programs for young people.

Some services would like to see mandatory courses included as part of the Graduated Licensing scheme involving testimonials from crash victims and talks from emergency services. Graduates of the TOPS course often say that, had they known the information provided in this course beforehand, they would not have committed the offence that placed them on that course.

There are many complex factors influencing young people's attitude to driving. Not least, images on the media, and the availability of vehicles built for speed.

Speedometers give the impression that 100 kph is a medium speed as it is placed at the top of the display.

The Graduated Licensing Scheme is based on research, which claims to lower the risk of crashing. However, the system is expensive and prohibitive for vulnerable groups, who are more likely to drive unlicensed. Funding schemes should have been made available alongside the increased licensing restrictions, to provide more public transport for young people. Schemes such as the "bat bus" in Byron Bay, need to be funded across regional NSW.

Extensive funding should also be made available to set up driver mentoring programs which could supplement driving schools, and ensure disadvantaged youth have the same opportunities to learn to drive safely as other young people

