

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Name: The Hon B M Perry MP
Position: Minister for Juvenile Justice
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New South Wales

The Hon. Barbara Perry MP

Minister for Juvenile Justice
Minister for Western Sydney
Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship

The Hon G Corrigan MP
Chairperson
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe Committee)
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Mr Corrigan

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission from the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs.

This submission will refer specifically to items d) and e) of the Terms of Reference as these items relate to the availability and effectiveness of young driver education programs and young offender diversionary options.

You would be aware that the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) has produced a document titled *Principles of Effective Community-Based Safe Driving Programs for Novice Drivers and Passengers*.¹ This document identifies that research has shown that the key issues regarding young people and fatal crashes include: inexperience; overconfidence; risk-taking behaviour; poor hazard perception; and alcohol use.

The document states that there are 'four modifiable behaviours that young people engage in at greater levels than other road users'. These behaviours have been identified as: speeding; not using seat belts and helmets; driving when fatigued; and drink driving.

Section three of the document, titled *Knowing What Works and What Doesn't Work*, identifies the types of programs which research has shown are effective (and not effective) in addressing the issues with young driver behaviour. For example, evidence has shown that driver education programs are most effective when they are delivered in a school or community setting and focus on addressing the underlying values and attitudes regarding driving in order to change young driver risk taking behaviour.

There are current examples of these programs being delivered to students in years ten and eleven, for example, Rotary Youth Driver Awareness (RYDA) Program and Reduce Risk Increase Student Knowledge (RRISK).

Currently, when young people commit a traffic offence and they are over sixteen at the time of the offence they are dealt with as adults, and the majority of matters are finalised (probably by a fine) without any involvement from DJJ. Young people involved with DJJ can access the NSW

¹ 2002, RTA Website, Principles of Effective Community-Based Safe Driving Programs for Novice Drivers and Passengers

Sober Driver Program, which is delivered by the NSW Probation and Parole Service and the Traffic Offenders Program (TOPS).

It is important to note that in a recent response to the NSW Sentencing Council's interim report titled *The Effectiveness of Fines as a Sentencing Option: Court Imposed Fines and Penalty Notices*, the department recommended that:

“For young people under the age of 18 years, alternative sentencing or diversionary options should always be used instead of fines or penalty notices.”

This was recommended because fines may lead to secondary offending for disadvantaged offenders who can't pay their fines. Young people often have limited or no capacity to pay outstanding fines.

Targeted traffic offender programs could assist young people to address their driving related offending behaviour, at the same time as providing an alternative and more effective outcome to the imposition of a fine.

The Australian Temperament Project (ATP) is a Victorian study which has followed the development of an original group of more than two thousand babies, over the last 20 years. The ATP Young Driver's Study² looked at the driving behaviour and experience of this group of now young people, any longitudinal predictors of different patterns of driving and any association between driving behaviour and other behaviours.

The study found that while most of the young people in the study did speed and drive while fatigued on occasions, only seven per cent consistently drove in a highly unsafe manner. The study found that there seems to be an interrelationship between risky driving behaviour, antisocial behaviour and substance use and that they have common risk factors, which are evident before adolescence. The common risk factors include higher levels of aggression and hyperactivity, difficulties with school adjustment and parental relationships and association with antisocial peers.

The study reported in *Examination of Different Predictors of Different Risky Driving Behaviours in Young NSW Drivers*³, focussed on the four modifiable behaviours mentioned above and identified that different factors predicted the different behaviours.

For example, driver anger was more important for speeding, while a sensation seeking tendency and an illusion of invulnerability was predictive of drink driving. Overall, this study confirmed the influence that values, attitudes, and perceptions of risks have on driver behaviour, while at the same time moving towards identifying specific causal factors which will allow for the development of targeted interventions.

As the study recommends, further research should be undertaken into strategies to specifically address the different risky driving behaviours. This will facilitate the development of a driving offender program specifically targeting young people, which can be delivered either in a group setting or individually as part of addressing the risks of re-offending in the case management of young people on supervised court orders.

² 2005, D. Smart, S Vassallo et.al. In *The Driver's Seat, Understanding Young Adults' Driving Behaviour*

³ 2006, Fernandes, R. F., Hatfield, J., & Job, R.F.S., *Examination of Different Predictors of Different Risky Driving Behaviours in Young NSW Drivers*, Final Report for the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW.

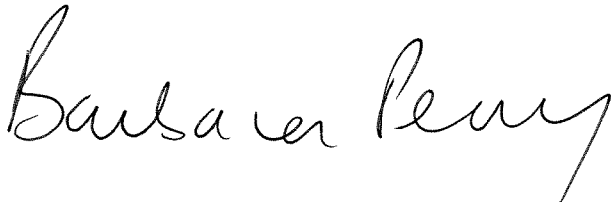
Further research into the apparent link between antisocial behaviour, substance abuse and high risk driving behaviour could provide important evidence to support early intervention and prevention strategies.

Young people would benefit from a two-pronged evidence based approach to addressing the issues regarding young drivers' risk taking behaviour. School and community based programs such as RYDA and RRISK could be made available to all young people in NSW prior to obtaining their licence and these programs should provide an evidenced based prevention program.

Secondly, a program is needed which addresses the specific issues regarding young traffic offenders and their risky driving behaviour that can be delivered in a group or on a one to one basis.

As part of this two-pronged approach, further research is required to identify strategies to address the specific issues, as well as ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barbara Perry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Perry MP
Minister for Juvenile Justice