

## **INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

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Mr Geoff Corrigan MP  
Chair  
Staysafe (Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)  
Parliament House  
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Dear Mr Corrigan

**INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

The following is a submission from Newcastle City Council for the Staysafe Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs.

An electronic copy of the submission has also been provided by e-mail.

Any enquires or requests for further information can be directed to Mr Adam Drabsch, Community Road Safety Officer on 4974 2667.

Yours sincerely

**JANICE WALSH**  
**GROUP MANAGER CITY SERVICES**



**PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY  
(STAYSAFE)**

**INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**SUBMISSION PREPARED BY:**

**Mr Adam Drabsch  
Community Road Safety Officer  
Newcastle City Council**

**Introduction**

The City of Newcastle is located on the East coast of New South Wales, about 170 kilometres north of Sydney. Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA) is bounded by Port Stephens Shire in the north, Lake Macquarie City Council area in the south and Maitland City Council and Cessnock City Council areas in the west.

Newcastle City encompasses a land area of 213km<sup>2</sup> with a varied road network of 814km (740km local roads, 29km regional roads, 45km State Roads).

**a) The current incidence of road crashes involving young drivers**

Between 2002 and 2006, 7 young people (aged 17-25) were killed and 1,036 were injured in Newcastle.<sup>1</sup>

This age group accounts for 27% of drivers killed and 33% of drivers injured.

Young drivers account for 24% of drivers in fatal crashes and one-third of injury and non-casualty crashes in Newcastle. This percentage is similar to the Hunter Region and NSW for fatal crashes, but higher than the Hunter Region and NSW for injury and non-casualty crashes.

While the involvement of young males in crashes receives a lot of attention, it should be noted that in Newcastle between 2002 and 2006, 42% of female motor vehicle controllers involved in fatal crashes were aged 17-25. Further, in this age group, more females than males are killed as motor vehicle passengers and injured as motor vehicle drivers and passengers.

**Recommendation:**

**The development of road safety strategies for young drivers considers young female drivers.**

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Centre for Road Safety. Road Traffic Crash Data. December Quarter 2006 Data Release.

## **b) Underlying risks and major factors contributing to such crashes**

Inexperience is a risk factor for young drivers. The introduction of 120 hours supervised driving experience during the learner driver phase is supported, however, programs that assist learner drivers to access a vehicle and supervising driver, would promote adherence to the learner driver licence requirements and genuine experience in completion of 120 log book hours.

### **Recommendation:**

**Investigate the development of programs that assist learner drivers to access a vehicle and supervising driver to meet the learner driver licence requirements of completion of 120 log book hours.**

Supervising drivers play an important role in teaching and influencing learner drivers. Newcastle City Council does provide Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers workshops for parents and supervising drivers. These workshops are supported and funded by the RTA.

Workshops have been held since 2003 with an average of 17 participants at each workshop (four workshops held each year). This is a small number compared to the number of learner licence holders and potential supervising drivers in Newcastle.

The current funding provided to Newcastle City Council is \$600 per workshop, which is the same amount as when the workshops commenced in 2003.

### **Recommendations:**

**Increased promotion by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) of helping learner drivers become safer drivers workshops to encourage attendance by supervising drivers.**

**The RTA work with the Department of Education to encourage and assist schools to coordinate workshops for parents.**

**Increased funding to Councils to provide helping learner drivers become safer drivers workshops.**

## **c) Differences in driving behaviour, crash outcomes and relevant trends in urban and rural areas of NSW**

Newcastle City Centre is a popular late night entertainment venue with young people, drawing patrons from neighbouring areas (Maitland, Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie) as well as from the Central Coast and Hunter Valley.

The lack of an efficient late night transport system in Newcastle to effectively move people around the city and to get them home, increases the risk that

young (and older) drivers will drive with an illegal blood alcohol content (BAC) or be a passenger in a car with a driver who has been drinking. Between 2002 and 2006, in crashes where alcohol was a factor, 46% of drivers were aged 17-25.

**Recommendation:**

**Improved coordination of late night transport considering provision, destinations and timetable of services to and from the Newcastle entertainment precinct.**

**d) The availability and appropriateness of current diversionary and educational programs for young offenders involved in serious traffic violations**

**e) The efficacy of young driver education programs and the potential for development and expansion of these programs**

In the Newcastle LGA there are more than 4,300 learner licence holders and almost 8,000 Provisional (P1 and P2) licence holders in the LGA.<sup>2</sup> Further, the University of Newcastle attracts students in this age group, which adds to the number of young drivers in the LGA. As these young drivers come from across NSW (as well as Interstate and International) any proposed options to improve safety for young drivers would benefit from a Statewide approach.

An absence of any type of approved or recommended driver education program leads to locally developed courses which cover topics and/or provide inappropriate activities such as driver training on a go-kart track.

**Recommendation:**

**The RTA develop a framework for young driver education programs that are effective for influencing young driver behaviour and young driver safety to provide a consistent approach across NSW.**

**f) Other initiatives to improve young driver safety.**

**g) Any other relevant matters**

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<sup>2</sup> New South Wales Driver and Vehicle Statistics 2007 (preliminary). Roads and Traffic Authority 2007. RTA /Pub.07.264.