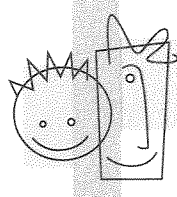


INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: NSW Commission for Children & Young People
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nsw commission for
children & young people

Mr Geoff Corrigan MP
Chair
Staysafe Committee
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Mr Corrigan

I am pleased to enclose the NSW Commission for Children and Young People's submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs.

I congratulate the Government on seeking the community's views on Young Driver Safety and Education Programs. I note that the terms of reference for the Committee are broad. In order to add value to the work of the Committee the attached submission provides information on the 2006 findings of the Child Death Review Team regarding young driver fatalities as well as the views of young people on issues for young drivers.

I will be placing a copy of the submission on the Commission's website. Making work such as this publicly available is one mechanism I use to be accountable to children, young people and the Parliament of New South Wales.

If your staff require any further information, please contact the Commission's Manager, Policy, Ms Sharyn Jameson, on 9286 7205 or Sharyn.Jameson@kids.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Calvert
Commissioner
31 January 2008

**SUBMISSION TO THE
NSW PARLIAMENTARY JOINT
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ROAD SAFETY
JANUARY 2008**

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**SUBMISSION TO THE NSW PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

JANUARY 2008

1. THE NSW COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1.1 The NSW Commission for Children and Young People ('the Commission') promotes the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people in NSW.
- 1.2 The Commission was established by the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* (NSW) ('the Act'). Section 10 of the Commission's Act lays down three statutory principles which govern the work of the Commission:
 - a) the safety, welfare and well-being of children are the paramount considerations;
 - b) the views of children are to be given serious consideration and taken into account; and
 - c) a co-operative relationship between children and their families and community is important to the safety, welfare and well-being of children.
- 1.3 Section 12 of the Commission's Act requires the Commission to give priority to the interests and needs of vulnerable children. Children are defined in the Act as all people under the age of 18 years.
- 1.4 Section 11(d) of the Act provides that one of the principal functions of the Commission is to make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services affecting children.

2. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 2.1 The Commission is pleased to make a submission to the Stay Safe Committee on young driver safety and education programs.
- 2.2 This submission provides an overview of issues regarding young driver safety and also addresses the Terms of Reference at b) and g) providing information on:

- Relevant matters arising from consultation with young people in NSW on driving and road safety; including their feedback on driver education, supervision, and education programs.
- Risks and factors contributing to fatal road crashes involving young drivers in NSW as reported in the 2006 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team.
- The importance of further investigation and research.

3. THE NSW COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY

- 3.1 The Commission for Children and Young People has undertaken a number of activities to address the issue of safety for young drivers in NSW. The Commissioner chaired the Country Road Safety Summit and was a member of the NSW Government Young Drivers Advisory Panel. The Commission has worked with both government and non-government agencies on initiatives to improve young driver safety.
- 3.2 Driving is important to young people. It is one way of demonstrating independence and mobility and also a milestone in the transition to adulthood and the attendant rights and responsibilities. The capacity to drive allows young people to access employment, participate in social activities and to fulfil familial responsibilities.
- 3.3 For young people in rural areas, where access to public transport may be restricted or limited, driving can be an important mechanism for social inclusion by providing them with the mobility necessary for their social and economic participation.
- 3.4 Research has identified that there is a culture of risk and blame that underpins the way we think about young drivers and the interventions we develop to address young driver safety. This is, in part, informed by negative images of young people as irresponsible risk takers. Tilleczek (2004) cautions against risk and blame being overly attributed to individuals at the expense of understanding how institutions contribute to and monitor the problem.
- 3.5 During December 2004 and February 2005 the Commission consulted with approximately 130 young people aged 14 -19 years through small focus groups and on proposals to improve safety for young drivers. A discussion paper was produced and the consultations informed the Commission's submission to the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) on improving safety for young drivers.
- 3.6 Our consultations revealed that driving is an important part of young people's lives and the capacity to drive is something to which many young

people aspire. They are also concerned about the overrepresentation of young drivers in motor vehicle accidents and agree that action should be taken to reduce the number of accidents and assist young people to become safer drivers.

- 3.7 In July 2007 the NSW Government introduced changes to the graduated licensing scheme with new licence conditions for L and P drivers and riders. These changes targeted speeding, mobile phone use, peer passenger restrictions, display of L and P plates on vehicles and increased licence terms and supervised driving hours for learner drivers. Many of these changes reflected recommendations made in the Commission's submission to the RTA.
- 3.8 It is important to consider initiatives to improve young driver safety within the broader context of other factors that may also influence road crashes. How young people drive is one of a number of factors that influences young driver safety. There are additional factors for which government and communities hold responsibility for that also have the potential to reduce road crashes. A comprehensive approach to improving young driver safety needs to consider factors such as: the availability of alternatives to driving, such as late night safe public transport options; incentives for vehicle manufacturers to include safety features and modify vehicles to increase driver safety; resources to allow for built environment changes for cyclists and pedestrians eg. cyclepaths, reduced speed limits, improved street lighting and pedestrian barriers.

Recommendation: The changes to the licensing scheme, introduced in July 2007, should be independently monitored and evaluated for the impact on road safety and on young people's lives. Such an evaluation should consider the positive and negative impacts on economic and social participation and opportunity and barriers for licensing

4. RELEVANT MATTERS ARISING FROM CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW ON DRIVING AND ROAD SAFETY

- 4.1 During the Commission's consultations, young people talked about what they thought would improve safety for young drivers, they identified driver education, driving experience, driver restrictions and licensing as important issues. This section of the submission reports on what young people identified as important for improving safety. Quotes from young people are in italics.

Experience and training

- 4.2 A number of studies have confirmed that experience related factors play a significant part in motor vehicle accidents amongst young drivers.

(Williamson, 2003). Research shows a strong link between increased driving experience and reduced crash risk. (Harrison, 2003)

4.3 The learner period is the safest time to gain driving experience as it is the period where there is the least risk of crash. However, there is very little research on what is the ideal number of hours to gain the experience needed. If enough experience is not gained during this period, learning is transferred to the first few months of unsupervised driving, which is one of the least safe driving periods. (Senserrick and Whelan, 2003)

4.4 Young people value supervised driving experience. In 2005 young people voiced concerns as to their capacity to access the 120 hours of experience that have been required, since 1 July 2007, to obtain the P1 licence.

50 hours can be hard enough to get if you don't have the money for lessons and no one's car to drive.

It costs a lot to be a safe and experienced driver.

4.5 Many young people said they couldn't afford the cost of professional driving lessons. In rural areas, young people said it can be difficult to book driving lessons because of the limited number of driving schools.

We all need the experience and out of school driving training is pretty expensive.

4.6 Young people suggested that professional driving lessons could be subsidised so that more young drivers have the opportunity to get at least a few hours of supervised driving and benefit from having a professional instructor.

If the Government wants you to be safe on the roads, they should look at lowering the lesson fees.

If you did so many hours you were entitled to do free hours with a driving instructor.

When you get your Ls you should get some free lessons for the first couple of months or something.

4.7 Young people identified that increased hours alone was not enough to prepare them for driving. They wanted experience in driving in different environments and conditions, such as heavy traffic, highways, at night or in rain. It is noted that the new requirements include 20 hours of supervised night driving.

As long as this includes some night driving and wet weather driving where possible.

Because young people usually want to go out at night and so they would need good night time experience.

Recommendation: That strategies are developed to improve access to supervised driving for all young drivers, including targeted initiatives for economically disadvantaged young people, young people living in rural areas, and indigenous young people.

The role of parents in young driver education

- 4.8 Research has demonstrated that children of parents who have crashed their cars are likely to have also crashed (Mulvihill et al. 2005). There is evidence that there is a correspondence between a parent's driving record and the record their children will have within three years of gaining a licence: young people whose parents had at-fault collisions, speeding and other offences are more likely to show such behaviour themselves (Wilson, 2006).
- 4.9 The influence of parents on young people's driving behaviours begins prior to them learning to drive. Parents should be made aware of this and of their responsibility in modelling safe driving behaviour to their children.
- 4.10 It is clear that young people require and want quality supervised driving experience when they are learning to drive. During the consultations young people often spoke about their parents' reluctance to teach them to drive or their parents' bad driving habits as a negative influence on their own driving.

Young drivers are learning from somewhere and that needs to be looked into. Parents need to know how to teach their kids to drive. My mum has no idea, she won't take me to do three point turns let alone on a highway.

The day I got my Ps I went driving at night and it was torrential rain and I was scared, my Mum didn't let me drive when it was raining.

- 4.11 It is also important to recognise that not all young people have parents who are able or willing to supervise them (for example parents without licences or without vehicles). During the Commission's consultations it became apparent that even for those young people with parents who could provide supervision there were still barriers. These included no suitable car for learning and lack of confidence from parents in supervising them in difficult conditions.

- 4.12 The role of parents in young driver education is not limited to supervising their children during the learning period. Parents are in an ideal position to support and monitor the graduated licensing scheme, by continuing to provide support, advice and monitor their children's developing competencies.
- 4.13 The Commission has previously recommended that strategies are developed to involve parents more in their child's driving practice. For example, the RTA could provide more direct information to parents about driver supervision, provide information on an ongoing basis during the learner period via regular mail outs and encourage parents to support their children during their transition from inexperienced to experienced drivers during the "P" plate period.

Recommendation: That parents are targeted with information and education advising them of their influence on young people's driving experiences and their continued responsibility to assist them develop the required experience and skills to drive safely.

Community and school based driver education programs

- 4.14 When the Commission spoke with young people they identified other possible sources of driving supervision, with some suggesting that local youth services might have a role to play in assisting with gaining quality driving experience.

Have programs in the community, through youth centres, etc. where young people can get supervised lessons on driving.

- 4.15 Young people have told the Commission that they wanted to have driver education programs presented by people with knowledge and experience, such as Police officers or people who have injuries from accidents, not just teachers. They also suggested that having young people of a similar age presenting to them would be more interesting and relevant.

Other youth from our community, older ones, who lost their licence, or got points taken.

The most effective one was when a woman came in and talked about her husband who died in a car accident.

- 4.16 It has been suggested by some that school settings may be appropriate for driver education programs. The Commission has previously expressed reservations about driver education in school settings. Research suggests that such programs have, as yet, limited demonstrated efficacy.

- 4.17 There is consistent evidence that driver training and education in schools either has no effect or a negative effect on safety for young drivers. (Harrison, 2003) This evidence is largely based on evaluations of school programs that lead to earlier licensing and therefore increased exposure to the risk of crash (Senserrick and Whelan, 2003; Roberts et al, 2001).
- 4.18 Young people agreed with the need for more education at school but were concerned about where it would fit within the curriculum and how it would be presented. The Commission suggests that young people be involved in the development of any school driver education program.

This is a good idea in theory, but the senior years at high school are cluttered and hectic as it is without adding another class or program.

- 4.19 One concern with school driver education is that such programs often change attitudes and increase knowledge in the short term, but this dissipates with time (Engstrom et al, 2003). Young people suggested that in the early years of high school they should have general education on driving and then a refresher in later years that is more focussed on the experience of driving. They suggested having a small component of education each year would help them to remember what they had learnt, rather than being overloaded with information in Year 11 or 12.

Recommendation: The Commission recommends that further research is needed into the efficacy of school driver education programs and the introduction of programs into schools be dependent on these results.

Community education campaigns

- 4.20 During the Commission's consultations many young people pointed out that most of the factors that caused accidents and fatalities amongst young drivers were already illegal or the subject of road safety campaigns, such as drink driving and fatigue. They suggested that road safety education campaigns need to be made more relevant to young people.
- 4.21 Education campaigns targeted at young people need to be developed in consultation with young people. Young people have told us that they want to have more input into the design of campaigns. They suggested that either young people be funded to create campaigns, or to give advice to adults. Some young people spoke about the Motor Accident Authority *Arrive Alive* Grants, which they thought worked well to get the message about road safety across to young people.

... if it's coming from youth, the youth are going to listen, they are not going to listen to someone in a suit and tie who sits in an office all day. If they hear it from us, they'll understand it better.

- 4.22 Campaigns that target specific factors, such as gender differences and driving behaviour should continue to be developed and evaluated for their impact on the behaviour of young drivers. For example the recent *little pinky* campaign targeting young male drivers was highly successful with 63% of young men believing the campaign would have some effect in encouraging young drivers to obey the speed limit (Roosenthaal, 2007).
- 4.23 Young people's participation in the design of road safety campaigns that target them should be encouraged. The recent RTA *Pimpourads* competition received 7600 entries for people 16-30 years of age. Such initiatives can provide valuable information on young people's experiences and the information collected may be useful in informing social research on attitudes and behaviour.

Recommendation: Community education programs, including social marketing campaigns should continued to be developed in partnership with young people and evaluated for impact on behaviour, attitudes and values as well as changes in crash incidence.

5. TRANSPORT FATALITIES REPORTED IN THE 2006 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM

- 5.1 The Child Death Review Team reports annually on the circumstances of all deaths of children and young people in NSW up to 17 years. While the report does not investigate the deaths of young people above this age, the data presented provide interesting insights into the circumstances of deaths of children and young people as passengers in vehicles driven by young people, as well as those of young drivers themselves.
- 5.2 The Team's Annual Report 2006 found that 65 children and young people died in 56 transport incidents during the reporting period. Transport incidents are the most common external form of death for children and young people. Whilst the rate of transport fatalities overall has declined since 1996 there was a substantial increase in 2006. The increase from 2.7 per 100,000 in 2005 to 4.1 per 100,000 in 2006 is attributed solely to an increase in male death rate.

Passenger fatalities

- 5.3 Passenger fatalities were the most common type of transport incident, and have been consistently since the Team commenced reporting. Within the 56 incidents, there were seven involving multiple fatalities of children. Four of these involved males in the 10-17 year age group, and accounted for 10 fatalities. In each of these incidents the young people were either drivers or passengers in cars with peers under 25 years of age.

- 5.4 The report found that, in nine incidents that involved the deaths of 13 young people in the 15-17 year age group, the young person was in a car with peers aged 25 years or younger. Speed, alcohol and/or inappropriate restraint use were evident in seven incidents that resulted in 11 fatalities.

Young Driver fatalities

- 5.5 The report also examined driver fatalities and found that 12 young people (11 males and 1 female) died as drivers during the reporting period. Eleven of these were in the 15-17 year age group and one was in the 10-14 year age group. Eight of these drivers were on provisional licenses and four were unlicensed.
- 5.6 The young people died in separate incidents involving standard cars (10) and motorcycles (2). Six incidents were non-collision incidents and four were collisions with a fixed or stationary object (the driver lost control of the vehicle).
- 5.7 Eight of these incidents occurred on residential or trafficable roads (six sealed and two unsealed); three on state highways or main traffic routes and for one incident the road type was unknown.
- 5.8 Eight of the fatalities occurred on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Nine occurred in the afternoon or early evening between 1pm and 8.30pm. Two occurred at approximately 6.30am and one at 12.30am. All of the incidents occurred during non holiday periods.

6. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DRIVER YOUNG FATALITIES REPORTED IN THE 2006 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM

- 6.1 The 2006 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team examined the circumstances of death of these 11 young men and one young woman and found a number of factors associated with the fatalities. The findings of the Child Death Review Team are consistent with other research on young drivers.
- 6.2 That 11 of the young driver fatalities were young men is an issue of significant concern. This fact is consistent with international trends. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) road crashes are the single biggest killer of 15-24 year olds in industrial countries with rates for drivers under 25 roughly double those of older drivers and death rates of young men up to three times those of young women (OECD 2006).

- 6.3 Excessive speed was a factor in five of the fatalities and a possible factor in a further three fatalities. The report identified that in three incidents, speed was combined with other hazardous driving, including hazardous overtaking, speeding through intersections, and failing to respond to road signs.
- 6.4 Peer driving was a factor in five incidents where the driver was known to be driving with peer passengers aged 25 years or less. In at least two of these incidents there was evidence of speed and inappropriate restraint use. In these two incidents the drivers were unregistered and driving in unroadworthy vehicles along roads on the edge of rural properties.
- 6.5 In at least three fatalities seatbelts were not worn by the driver.
- 6.6 Fatigue was a factor in two of the fatalities. These two incidents involved a young driver driving late at night when tired and a young driver returning home in the morning following a party the previous night.
- 6.7 Supervision was a factor in two deaths. In both incidents the young drivers lost control of a vehicle whilst under adult supervision.
- 6.8 Environmental factors or poor road conditions contributed to four of the incidents, with two occurring in wet conditions and two on unsealed roads at speed.

7. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

- 7.1 A number of factors contribute to the over representation of young people in motor vehicle accidents, including inexperience, road conditions, distractions, alcohol and other drugs, speeding and passengers. Further research is needed into the social and environmental conditions that influence these factors.
- 7.2 The Commission supports continued in-depth research which analyses the factors surrounding all road accidents involving young drivers that result in serious injuries, not just fatalities. Rather than only situation related factors, such as the condition of the road, a consideration of the psychological and social factors can provide a better starting point for understanding what contributes to accidents. (Engstrom et al, 2003).
- 7.3 Developing a better understanding of the factors that contribute to young driver accidents means more appropriately targeted strategies to address young people's over representation in motor vehicle accidents.
- 7.4 The Child Death Review Team is undertaking a study examining trends in child deaths in NSW from 1996 to 2005. This study will look in particular at

driver and passenger fatalities and provide valuable information to guide the research agenda in NSW.

Recommendation: Research should be undertaken into the variety of factors that influence young drivers, including social and psychological factors. Research projects should be developed in partnership with young people and findings communicated back to young people.

8. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The changes to the licensing scheme, introduced in July 2007, should be independently monitored and evaluated for the impact on road safety and on young people's lives. Such an evaluation should consider the positive and negative impacts on economic and social participation and opportunity and barriers for licensing.
- 8.2 That strategies are developed to improve access to supervised driving for all young drivers, including targeted initiatives for economically disadvantaged young people, young people living in rural areas, and indigenous young people.
- 8.3 That parents are targeted with information and education advising them of their influence on young people's driving experiences and their responsibility to assist them develop the required experience and skills to drive safely.
- 8.4 The Commission recommends that further research is needed into the efficacy of school driver education programs, prior to the introduction of programs into schools.
- 8.5 The Commission supports the active involvement of young people in the development and evaluation of social marketing campaigns aimed at improving young driver safety.

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