

INQUIRY INTO YOUNG DRIVER SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Organisation: NRMA Motoring & Services
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Mr Geoff Corrigan MP
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Dear Mr Corrigan

On behalf of NRMA Motoring & Services please find attached our submission to the Staysafe Committee's inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on undertaking such an important inquiry and on seeking input from relevant stakeholders.

Our submission builds on the work that NRMA has conducted in this area and presents our research and suggestions for the Committee's consideration.

NRMA would welcome the opportunity to expand on our submission at the Committee's hearings in the new year.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if we can provide any further information.

Regards

Graham Blight
Chairman
Policy and Advocacy Committee
NRMA Motoring & Services



**NRMA's Response to the
Parliament of NSW Staysafe
Committee
Inquiry into Young Driver Safety
and Education Programs**

December 2007

Response to the Parliament of NSW Staysafe Committee Inquiry into Young Driver Safety and Education Programs

NRMA Motoring & Services (NRMA) welcomes the opportunity to discuss the issue of young driver safety and education programs with the Staysafe Committee. This Inquiry will provide a welcome opportunity for stakeholders and the community to state their views on young driver safety issues and to suggest measures and strategies to address this issue.

NRMA appreciates that the issue of balancing the road safety of all road users and the mobility of individuals is complex. No one wants to see young people injured or killed on our roads.

The overrepresentation of young drivers has been known for many years and there have been numerous measures introduced by the NSW Government and other organisations in an attempt to reduce their injury and fatality rates.

The complexity of the issue is evident from this quote from a Swedish road safety report.

"The initial years as a car driver are important for building up driving experience, but paradoxically this means that young people need to drive a car during a relatively risky period in order for the accident risk to decrease."

(Swedish National Road Transport Research Institute, VTI Report 457)

NRMA encourages the Staysafe Committee to ensure that any measures considered are research based, equitable, practical, enforceable and the best use of resources.

NRMA suggests that the only way to improve the safety of young people on the roads is through a comprehensive regime of measures. NRMA requests the Staysafe Committee and the NSW Government consider the following measures, which we derived from extensive research and comments from our Members and the community:

Improve the range of education & information resources and increase their accessibility (eg brochures, websites, CD, DVD, programs, activities)

- for pre drivers at school
- young drivers (pre testing/assessment)
- for parents and supervising drivers
- for Driver Trainers

Transport equity

- review the impact of the peer passenger restrictions introduced in 2007 (on young people and their families)
- identify the issues for young people using existing public transport
- review of community transport schemes or other options for urban and regional areas

Police enforcement and penalties

- NRMA calls for greater visible Police presence on NSW roads. Increasing Police presence immediately improves the safety of all road users.
- Review the Traffic Offenders program

Review vehicle design

- review the findings of the US National Highway Transportation Safety Authority investigation of in-vehicle technologies in terms of the safety impact and age-related differences
- monitor the American Automobile Association's (AAA) negotiations with vehicle manufacturers regarding safety features to ensure Australian vehicles meet relevant international
- monitor European safety programs such as 'eSafety' regarding opportunities for NSW. NRMA would welcome the opportunity to provide further comment to the Staysafe committee on our position as it relates to younger drivers contained herein.

Key issues from the crash data

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) are the source of accurate road crash data for New South Wales. Analysis of NSW road crash data has for many years shown considerable gender differences in crashes (the rate and crash type) with young men being consistently more involved in serious injury and fatal crashes. The over representation of young males in crashes is consistent with the experience of other countries.

If Staysafe is to consider measures from other countries which have over similar over representation of young drivers and passengers then analysis of their data is worth consideration.

A report from the Joint OECD/ECMT Transport Research Centre found that for the age group 15 -17 years young males are **twice** as likely females to end up as a traffic fatality and for the 18 -24 age group males are **three and half times** more likely than females to end up as a traffic fatality. The research notes that these differences are principally due to differences in behaviour.

The OECD/ECMT research also looked at three of the best performing road safety countries in the world - Sweden, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Analysis, including adjustments made for exposure, showed that **very significant gender differences remain**. These gender differences need to be considered in context of NSW crash rates and in relation to all measures considered by Staysafe and the Government.

NRMA suggests that Staysafe request the RTA to supply them with a gender analysis of NSW crash data for the last 10 years. The NRMA wants the Panel to have access to this information to see if there are similar patterns to the OECD/ECMT report, that is, young males being three times more likely to die in a crash and if their rate is increasing.

One question NRMA would like to raise is the question; if the overall number of young driver fatalities is being diminish is it as a result of a reduction of young female drivers or are young male fatalities staying steady or increasing?

This would be interesting as in the United Kingdom " *In 1994 a young male driver's risk of being in a fatal crash was a little over 4.5 times that of a driver aged 30-59; in 2002 this had risen to be 7 times greater.*" (Young Drivers: The Road to Safety, OECD Transport Research Centre, Report 2006) Gender differences are obviously a serious road safety issue in NSW,

as in all Australia, therefore the NRMA believes that this requires a gender specific approach to the problem. (see Education section)

Background to young driver licensing

The Graduated Licensing Scheme for New Drivers (GLS) was introduced in NSW July 2000. It was a radically revised graduated licensing scheme to ensure that novice drivers demonstrate improved skills and maturity in driving and have more experience behind the wheel before graduating through the stages of driver training and licensing. This progression through the licensing stages means that new drivers will be at least 20 years of age before obtaining an unrestricted license instead of the previous 18 years of age.

In recent years since the introduction of the GLS there have been a number of Government community consultations and discussion papers on the issue of young driver safety (including education programs) and NRMA has actively participated in them all.

In 2005 the NSW Government published a community consultation options paper, *Improving Safety for Young Drivers*. This paper described a number of possible measures for young drivers – these covered passenger restrictions, night time curfews, toughening the licence process, increasing the age of licence and education. The Government called for submissions in response from the community but did not engage in a transparent process of review or response. NRMA does not know the responses of the public to each of the suggested measures contained in the options paper.

In 2005 NRMA held focus groups with young people in Sydney and in regional centres to hear what they thought of the options and to give them an opportunity to express their concerns. NRMA also ran an on-line survey on the issue and had more than 6,000 people responded. The findings of the focus groups and the survey were made public and included in NRMA's response to the government.

As a result of this option paper the NSW Government introduced restrictions on high powered vehicles. The involvement of high powered vehicles as a contributing factor to young driver crashes is a myth. There is no evidence to show that a high number of crashes occur in high powered cars. The Government listed hundreds of cars on the restricted list. The restricted vehicles list included many common family cars like Commodores and Falcons.

NRMA opposed the restriction of banning P plate drivers from 6 cylinder cars because many of the cars on the restriction list had 4 and 5 star ANCAP (Australian New Car Assessment program) ratings. The evidence is absolutely clear that if a person (driver or passenger) is involved in a crash, their risk of serious injury or death is greatly reduced if the vehicle that has a 4 or 5 star ANCAP rating. (See the section : Vehicle Safety for detailed information) The Government later amended the restriction list to remove some of the family cars.

In 2006 there was extensive media coverage of crashes involving P plate drivers. One of the crashes which received significant media attention was a multiple fatality on the north coast. This crash and the ensuing media coverage resulted in the NSW Government releasing another discussion paper for community consultation.

During the extensive media coverage of young driver crashes in 2006 there was almost no reporting that 2006 was an abnormally dreadful year for young driver crashes and **not** representative of an increasing trend in young deaths. In the past decade there has actually been a downward trend in the number of fatalities of drivers aged 17-25 years. In 1997 there were 79 deaths, in 2004 down to 48 and in 2005 it was down to 25. The 2006 figure was not part of a trend.

At the time it released the consultation paper, the Government established a *Young Drivers Advisory Panel* to consider a range of measures aimed at stopping the loss of young lives on the roads. NRMA had a representative on this panel. The panel reviewed the research, discussed the options and the impact they may have on reducing injuries and fatalities and their social impact. The decision on which options the government would then introduce were not based entirely on the opinions of the panel. There was no voting process and the decisions were largely a matter for the Minister for Roads and the RTA.

In 2006 the NSW Government released yet another discussion paper for community consultation on Young Driver Safety.

The NRMA did not oppose most of the suggested measures in the paper but again it made public its opposition to measures that were inequitable to young people. The results of our recent research into the impact of these measures are contained in the 'Social Equity and Transport needs of young people' in the following section.

A summary of the measures introduced by the Government are:

- **Licence suspension for any speeding offence for P1 drivers and provisional riders.** As a P1 driver or provisional rider you will receive a minimum of four demerit points and have your licence suspended for at least three months if you speed on or after 1 July 2007. A fine is also payable.
- **A ban on all mobile phone use for learner, P1 drivers and provisional riders.** You must not use any function of a mobile phone while driving or riding. This includes phones in the hands-free mode or with the loudspeaker operating, or sending SMS (text) messages. The penalty for mobile phone use is three demerit points and a fine (or four demerit points if the offence occurs in an operating school zone).
- **Peer passenger restrictions for P1 drivers.** If you are under the age of 25 you must not drive between the hours of 11pm and 5am with more than one passenger under the age of 21. The penalty is three demerit points and a fine.

The RTA can grant an exemption from peer passenger restrictions if exceptional circumstances are demonstrated. Further information on how to apply for a passenger restriction exemption is available on the Application for Exemption: Peer-Passenger, One-Passenger or Prohibited Vehicle Condition (available to download from the RTA website). An application fee will apply.

- **Changes to the display of L and P plates on vehicles.** L or P plates may no longer be displayed from inside your vehicle. All learner and provisional drivers must clearly display their L and P plates on the front and back of the outside of the vehicle. The letters L and P on the plate must not be hidden. The penalty for incorrectly displayed plates is two demerit points and a fine.

- **Increased licence term and supervised driving hours for learner drivers.** Learner drivers getting their licence on or after 1 July 2007 will need to hold their learner licence for a minimum of 12 months and complete at least 120 hours of supervised driving (including 20 hours of night driving) before they can apply for their P1 licence.

(Source RTA website)

Penalties

NRMA wants the message to P plate drivers to be clear - a license is a privilege and a responsibility, not a right. If a P Plate driver breaks the law they should be punished. Current penalties could be toughened. NRMA wants only those breaking the law punished. Loss of license will be a punishment but it would be better if education was provided to help change or improve their behaviour.

The existing Traffic Offenders Program needs to be reviewed to consider its strengths given these concerns.

NRMA calls for greater visible Police presence on NSW roads. Increasing Police presence and targeted campaigns are proven ways of reducing crashes - it requires no changes to legislation and immediately improves the safety of **all** road users.

NRMA expressed its concerns to the Government in 2005 and 2006 that young drivers drive late at night and in the early hours of the morning to get to & from study or work. Many drive as part of their work. The huge number of exemptions that are at present required and that are going to be needed in the future make this an expensive measure. Police resources should be spent on enforcement **not** clerical duties organizing exemptions.

Relevant education and information

Recent research, June 2006, from the American Automobile Association (AAA) in the US indicates that although the Graduated Licensing Schemes (GLS) have assisted in road safety gains there is clearly a need for more initiatives. The AAA report suggests that far more needs to be done to engage with young people so they understand what impact lifestyle and risk taking has on crash risk. The research also notes that there is a place for ... *"Innovative school and community based initiatives, as well as awareness and communication campaigns that target young drivers in ways meaningful to them... to support the safety goals of GLS."* (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety 2006)

The NRMA has recognised the need for innovative initiatives and has supported community based programs for a number of years. In 2005 NRMA partnered with Westmead Hospital to develop an innovative *Youth and Road Trauma Forum* for students in years 10, 11 and 12. The forum was held in 2006 with 4,000 students participating over 2 days and then in 2007 with 10,000 students over 3 days. The Forum was designed to engage with young people and give them the opportunity to learn about aspects of road safety including - risk taking and outcomes (for themselves, friends and families); some understanding of vehicle safety; stopping distances and it challenged them to think about their own behaviour and the risks they take as passengers and as drivers. The Forum, reinforces the information students receive in their school road safety lessons it does not replace it

The style of the Forum is adult learning, that is, self select attendance to a wide range of interactive stands. The stands covered issues from seeing how Police radar speed guns operate; seeing all the equipment that is carried in an Ambulance and having paramedics explain what and when it used; having doctors demonstrate how to intubate and give CPR (on dummies) then giving the students a try and there was also truck rollover simulator which students could sit in and see for themselves why wearing a seatbelt is critical. The motoring stands from NRMA covered understanding vehicle safety features, tyre and brake safety and preparation and maintenance of vehicles.

The *Youth and Road Trauma Forum* is valuable to teachers and young people and as a result is being run in 2008 and already more than 9,500 students from 75 schools across the state signed up to attend and could provide a model for the Committee to investigate further.

Education

There is already good solid, research based road safety education provided to children and young people at school from Kindergarten to Year 11. This road safety material is developed by the RTA and the Department of Education and is included in the curriculum of Government, Independent and Catholic schools.

Unfortunately for some, road safety is frequently seen as boring or dull.

Whilst the road safety material in use is sound there is a struggle to ensure it meets the required learning objectives and at the same is interesting and engages the students. There is room for time it could be improved by introducing more interactive and engaging methods in how it is presented such as the Forum described above.

Young people need to understand - reaction times, stopping distances, vehicle safety, behaviour that increases risk of crashing. This needs to be delivered in an engaging and interesting manner.

The evidence is clear that young men take greater risks and are involved in more serious crashes than young women. NRMA wants to see programs developed that are targeted to young men; more innovative methods of delivering road safety; increased support for special programs.

Parents

Parents begin teaching their child to drive from the time the kids are in a child restraint in the back seat. They are the first role model on road safety and their behaviour affects what attitudes young people have to driving safely.

Parents need relevant information and access to training to help their young driver become a capable, safe driver. They need **practical information** like when to take them on a busy road and when to take them out driving at night.

NRMA is aware of the value of the GLS workshops for parents and believes that the RTA could do far more to actively promote the workshops for parents; and NRMA would encourage the RTA to develop practical information for parents and to increase its accessibility and availability. (eg radio, P & C newsletters, websites etc)

Social equity and the transport needs of young people

NRMA has been and still is concerned with finding a balance between improving young driver and passenger safety and accessible, affordable, safe motoring. In 2005, 2006 and 2007 there have been measures suggested and implemented that are socially inequitable for young people living. The results of a survey conducted in 2005 by NRMA in response to the Government's *Improving Safety for Young Drivers* paper.

The survey highlighted the lower access of younger people outside metropolitan areas to public transport for work, study and social activities. Over half (57%) of people aged 15-25 did not have access to public transport for one of work, study or social activities. However, this figure reached 70% for the non metropolitan respondents compared with 50% in Sydney and 56% in Newcastle/Wollongong.

Where there was no access to public transport, many drove themselves, and many were driven by their parents, particularly the younger 15-20 year olds. A quarter overall were driven 'by a friend', which has implications for restrictions on young drivers.

In November 2007 NRMA surveyed young drivers (NRMA Members) regarding the changes made to the Licensing system that were introduced from July 1. An online survey was conducted amongst Members aged 17-21 years to gain an understanding of the affect that the new P plate restrictions with 1,425 surveys were completed in total by this target group.

Our research found that overall, 53% of our younger Members indicated that they had been personally affected by the new P-plate restrictions which had been recently introduced, 46% believed they had not been personally affected.

However despite the affect on them personally our younger drivers did not believe that all the restrictions were having an impact overall, namely

- Banning P1 drivers from using hands free mobiles (45% somewhat/significant difference)
- Limiting to one passenger 11pm till 5am (37% somewhat/significant difference)
- Display of P-plates (18% somewhat/significant difference)

This is not to say that all initiatives are thought to be having no impact. In fact those initiatives clearly focused around tougher enforcement of laws, specifically

- Suspension of license of p-plate drivers caught speeding (66% somewhat/significant difference) AND
- Enhancing police enforcement (59% somewhat/significant difference)

NRMA's concerns regarding passenger restrictions are:

(i) It undermines the designated driver program. Restricting passengers would mean that the lives saved by having young responsible sober drivers may be lost.

(ii) If you limit the number of young people who can travel together in one car you increase the number of P plate drivers on the road.

(iii) In regional NSW young people ride together because of the distances they have to drive to get anywhere and the cost of fuel in regional and rural areas is higher than in urban areas. In the country there are no transport options.

Our concerns are justified when viewed against NRMA's latest research in this area. Our results found that 91% of our younger drivers claim to have used a designated driver either always, often or sometimes when out with friends.

However 62% felt that the restrictions of limiting to one passenger between the hours of 11pm and 5am hampers their ability to be a responsible designated driver, with 42% believing that the restrictions would have a negative impact.

Comments from young people provided in the survey.....

" As I live in a country area where there is no public transport of a night my friends and I feel extremely disadvantaged. Even to go out with friends to the pictures becomes a problem. Going to Newcastle and out for dinner every second person has to take a car. Which is costly for petrol. NOT FAIR to country kids."

" Having a passenger limit for P1 Drivers is ridiculous. The Designated Driver Scheme worked so well and pretty much everyone was happy with having turns to not drink and be responsible for driving everyone home. These new rules have ruined it. And frankly, the people who will respect these rules are the ones who don't do anything wrong. The ones that drive dangerously with other passengers won't even obey the new rules. Worst restriction EVER!"

"As a designated driver - i have a full car free to possibly take 4 friends safely home from the city at night (40min drive), now - i can only choose 1 mate and the rest are stuck in Kings Cross to try and find a taxi (\$80 to get home) and risk getting harrassed or even hurt. Not good."

" .. . getting home from nights out is extremely difficult if you're in a group because 5 cars are needed for 10 people! Taxi's are also regularly used by our group now at night to get home which is extremely expensive and sometimes scary knowing the recent assaults on young girls by taxi drivers."

" Living in a rural area there is no public transport, with the exemption of taxi's which in these areas are expensive, having then your friend/s who are on red P's having to make in excess of 5 trips back and forth to a location to commute people from a social gathering or any other location is extremely inconvenient and expensive."

" I think it is a great idea for some drivers, who need to have certain rules in place to curb speeding and accidents, but everyone is being targeted, even thoses who have a perfect driving record. It is unfair to punish people who do the right thing like myself, and put restrictions in place which are demeaning, and unfair. People who have marks on their driving reciornd should be the ones targeted, not the demographic as a whole."

Vehicle safety

Motor vehicle safety, particularly crash protection, has come a long way in the past 15 years, largely due to consumer demand and the efforts of independent testing organisations such as the New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP), a worldwide crash testing regime to which NRMA Motoring & Services, the other Motoring Clubs and other stakeholders contributes.

While crash protection features such as airbags can mean the difference between life and death, of equal significance is the greater understanding that car manufacturers now have of how lethal crash forces, generated on impact, can be absorbed and dissipated by the car itself.

Modern day cars have a body which has front and rear crumple zones, specifically engineered to absorb and direct crash forces along defined structural paths, away from the occupants who sit inside a rigid, impact resistant safety "cell". You can't see any obvious evidence of this, but it is the basis of the improvements in crash protection in recent years.

Another significant factor that makes a safe car is how easy it is to control. Here, handling, steering, braking and tyre grip are important, as is the layout of the drive-train itself - front, rear or all-wheel drive - and the performance characteristics of the engine and transmission.

The dynamic behaviour of today's cars has been considerably enhanced by anti lock brakes, traction control and stability control. Stability control can help to correct a potential skid, without any intervention from the driver.

Young drivers and their cars

The role of the car in young driver crashes is usually considered to be a contributing factor in the cause of the crash. Certainly in 2005 and to a lesser extent in 2006 media coverage concentrated on high speed crashes.

In actual fact those type of crashes are rare – most fatal crashes occur at surprisingly low speeds. The media are eager to use dramatic pictures of cars torn in half during high speed fatal crashes but the real crash statistics tell a different story... "*more than half of all fatal crashes occur at impact speeds under 60km/h and a typical side impact fatality occurs at less than 40km/h.*" (Paine 2005)

During the 1990's cheap small cars became very popular among new car buyers. These vehicles can now be bought very cheaply second hand and they often appear as the first car of a young driver. Young people tend to drive older cars which have fewer safety features.

Vehicles passive and active safety systems have made significant improvements in the reduction of crashes and particularly the outcome of crashes. In the future, new technologies will eventually save many young lives.

The benefits of ISA (Intelligent Speed Adaptation) will reduce higher speed crashes but it will not be able to prevent all crashes – nothing can. It is a combination of aiming for safer drivers in safer vehicles on safer roads.

New vehicle technology

Speeding is a factor in approximately 40% of crashes for all age groups. Speeding and lack of driving experience is a deadly combination for young drivers. New technology may assist in reducing the number of fatalities and serious injuries.

Controlling speeds

In Europe and Australia very promising trials of Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISA) are underway. With these systems the vehicle automatically “knows” the posted speed limit and takes action if the vehicle is exceeding that speed limit. The action can be as simple as making the accelerator pedal stiffer or making it vibrate.

It will be many years before we see these clever systems in widespread use, and even longer before the typical vehicles bought by young drivers have such features. However, there are several spin-offs from this technology that could be applied to young drivers:

- Top speed limiting – preventing *prolonged* travel in excess of a set speed. Most modern cars have an electronic engine management system with a built-in top speed. They are all set way too high but it should be easy for manufacturer’s to reprogram the chip to a sensible value. A bonus for car owners is that top speed limiting is a great deterrent to car thieves and joy-riders. Aftermarket kits are available for top-speed limiting older vehicles and have been used in the mining industry for decades.
- A more sophisticated top-speed limiter could have a coded over-ride that allowed the driver to temporarily exceed the set speed. Even fancier is a smart card system that sets the speed according to the driver, who is identified by an electronic ignition key (that also automatically adjusts the drivers seat and mirrors). But that is getting away from our concern about young drivers who cannot afford to buy a brand new BMW.
- Monitoring speeds. Black-box recorders can be fitted to vehicles to record speed and other parameters. Later the data is downloaded to a computer and analysed. Speeding violations can then be detected. Drivers who are repeatedly convicted of speeding could be required to only drive vehicles with such a black box recorder (their vehicles should also be speed-limited).
- You don’t even need a device built into the vehicle to monitor the teenager who is borrowing the family car. Most GPS receivers that are used for bushwalking are capable of recording in a car. The resulting “track” can be later analysed by computer and the speed driven along various sections of road can be displayed. Systems that use a mobile phone in a similar way are also available. (Source Michael Paine 2005)

Seat belts

Smart seat belt reminder systems are becoming common on new vehicles. These detect when the driver or front seat passenger is not wearing a seat belt while the vehicle is moving. They sound a distinctive alarm if this happens. A retrofit kit would be a good idea for older vehicles, particularly those driven by young drivers, since non-wearing of seat belts is often a factor in their serious crashes.

Education and information on vehicle safety

NRMA provides financial support to a number of key vehicle safety research programs – these include:

ANCAP (Australasian New Car Assessment Program) - gives consumers consistent information on the level of occupant protection provided by vehicles in serious front and side crashes.

Used Car Safety Ratings - are a measure of the safety of vehicles, based on actual crash statistics. The ratings are published by a group of government and motoring organisations. A 'serious injury rate' is calculated for each vehicle based on the percentage of all crashes where the driver is seriously injured. The statistics are adjusted to eliminate the effects of driver's age, location of crash etc.

ANCIS (Australia's National Crash In-depth Study) This program was first established in 1999 to provide a means of collecting detailed information on representative crashes in Australia to examine crash and injury trends to vehicle occupants and to monitor emerging problems. It has been running for 6 years and at 30 June 2006 had delivered more than 650 in-depth crash investigation cases. Since then these objectives have been extended to include details on crash involvement factors in addition to crashworthiness information.

Of the vehicle safety programs ANCAP probably has the highest profile with the community.

NRMA promotes car safety features to everyone but it particularly encourages parents to always give the car with the most safety features to their young person.

The *Used Car Safety Ratings* and *ANCAP* brochures and video crash testing footage, which provides information on vehicle safety features and safety ratings, are available in hard copy and via the NRMA website.

Information for parents

Families that who have two cars often give the older car to the youngest driver. The reason is usually that they are considering the possible insurance costs damages should the young person scratch or dent the car. Unfortunately this results in inexperienced (and therefore a high crash risk) P-platers driving around in old, cheap and often dangerous cars.

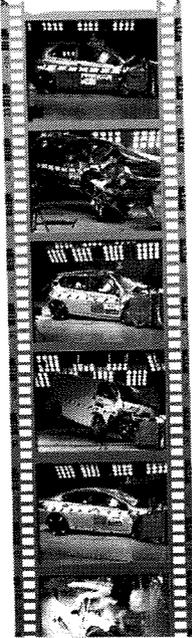
The critical information that needs to reach parents is that today you don't have to spend a fortune to buy a car that's much safer than those which they probably drove as a P-plater.

Because we don't live in a perfect world, where we can all afford to put our P-plate teenagers into brand new, five star ANCAP rated cars, with every piece of safety technology available. However, most families, and young drivers looking to purchase their first car, don't have that luxury. The more information they have on car safety the greater the likelihood of

NRMA also supports additional supervised driving for learners, help for parents working with their kids in the graduated licensing system and programs targeted specifically at young men.

No matter how well prepared our young drivers are, though, you'll be doing yours what may be the favour of a lifetime by putting him or her behind the wheel of a well engineered, safe car.

NRMA also have a comprehensive selection of features on car safety, including ANCAP results, used car safety ratings and technology such as stability control.



Behind safety ratings

How do you know how your car will perform in a crash?
Easy - check its test results

We all know that car safety ratings are becoming increasingly important and it's true that more people are aware of the importance of a good rating. But few of us know what actually goes on inside the crash laboratories.

And, when we do see a safety rating, do we really know what it means?

Well, the answers are pretty simple, and the good news is that safety testing is as rigorous as you could hope, destroying dozens of cars in the process. The ratings are compiled by the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), which is an independent organisation supported by all the major state motoring clubs and state governments in Australia and New Zealand and the FIA Foundation.

The aim of the ratings is to give buyers consistent information on the level of safety for the occupants of the car. Before arriving at a safety rating, new cars are put through a series of damaging tests and simulated crashes that aim to emulate potential real-life crash situations.

They are tested for both side impacts and head-on collisions, and in some cases are also tested for crashes involving pedestrians to work out how dangerous a car is to other people on the road who do not have the protection of a vehicle around them.

And then, so buyers can compare apples with apples, a simple five-star rating system is applied to the car. The safer the car, the more stars are awarded to it.

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NEW CAR TESTS

- A front-on test where the vehicle hits a barrier at 64 km/h - which, although the speed limit is usually a little bit slower than this, is a common speed for drivers to be travelling.
- A side impact test at 50 km/h.
- A test to assess likely injuries caused to pedestrians by a vehicle travelling at a speed of 40 km/h.

An optional "pole test" can also be done. During this, a car is smashed sideways into a pole at 29km/h, with the pole lined up to hit directly where the driver's head would normally be positioned.

Now none of the above situations are where any of us would want to be. Unfortunately, however, the scenarios are based on common real-life crashes so should have important meaning to those choosing a new car. Thankfully, car companies are also realising the importance of obtaining the best ratings possible in these tests so are constantly striving to improve their model's performance.

And while cars are probably faster than they have ever been, they also generally handle better than ever before and have much better and more comprehensive safety equipment than cars of even ten years ago.

But remember, sensible careful driving is the best safety tool anybody can have. Even if your car is the absolute safest on the road according to the ratings, driven the wrong way it can be lethal.

Page on vehicle safety from the 'Young Driver Safety' booklet produced by NRMA Motoring & services and the RTA in conjunction with The Daily Telegraph

Coming to grips with car safety

SAMANTHA STEVENS reports ASK your kids what they want for their birthday, and they will likely ask for the latest MP3 player. Ask what kind of car they want, and a priority will be an MP3-compatible stereo.

Then they need a car that is safe goes without saying. But does even your techno-savvy teenager know what ABS is? What about TC? Or ESC?

Knowing what those abbreviations and acronyms stand for – and making sure your kids' car has them – will keep that useful ricken they call music blaring from the stereo for many days to come.

TRIPS – getting a grip

There are four things between you and the road. The better they are, the better the grip. The better the braking, the better the handling, the better the turning... yet they are the first thing to be neglected on a car.

You could have all the safety features in the world, but they will not be effective if your tyres do not have the grip in the first place.

NCAP Crash Testing

Every popular new car is crashed, and given a rating out of five for its safety in the event of an impact.

The majority of new cars on the market will be professionally tested by an NCAP, or New Car Assessment Program.

The Australian NCAP (ANCAP) is based on European standards, and involves an offset frontal impact test and a side impact test. The model is fired into a barrier at 64km/h, and the car's structural integrity and active safety features such as seat belts and airbags are assessed.

The side impact test is just as dramatic, with a one-tonne steel missile blasted into the side of the car at 50km/h to imitate contact with another vehicle.

ABS – Anti-lock Brakes

If you were heading towards a brick wall at 80km/h on a wet road, could you take your foot off the brake pedal? Chances are you wouldn't. But without ABS, slamming on the brakes could cause an uncontrollable skid instead of a stop. ABS has two major advantages: it returns grip, and allows you to steer. If the brakes are hit hard, the car's computer responds and stops the wheels from locking up, leaving enough grip to stop, steer, and to steer around the obstacle.

TC – Traction Control

If we could completely control traction, we would probably never crash. Losing traction, or grip, is the main reason we slip.

Traction control systems are designed to limit wheelspin by sensing any loss of grip and automatically adjusting the amount of power sent to the driven wheels.

The car's engine management computer and in-wheel sensors (employed by ABS) monitor the wheel rotations. If one or more drive wheels start spinning at a higher rate than the others,

the computer cuts power to the spinning wheels by reducing power from the engine, applying the brakes, or both depending on the vehicle. By stopping wheelspin, grip is returned.

ESC – Electronic Stability Control

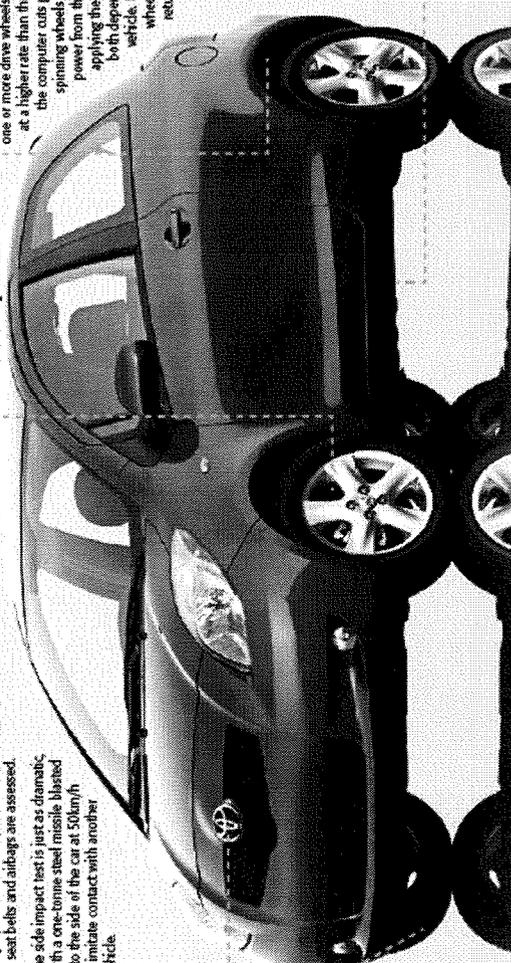
This is the biggest lead of acronyms – the stability program. Each manufacturer has a different name for the same system (i.e. ESP, PSM, VDIM, DSC), but for arguments sake, we will call it ESC. It is more advanced than traction control (though a car with ESC and ABS usually has TC), as it not only reduces power to the driven wheels but detects and selects which wheel needs more power, and which wheel needs braking, to correct an impending slide or spin. Sensing the angle of the car on its suspension, the grip levels from all four wheels, it can actually stop a slide or drift in its tracks before you realise it is even happening. Like a form of human ESP, it can see a future accident, and stop it in its tracks.



HOW MUCH THE FEATURES REDUCE YOUR RISK OF INJURY

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Driver's Airbag: | 5-10% |
| Passenger Airbag: | 5-10% |
| Seatbelt: | 50% |
| Curtain Airbags: | 45% |
| Seatbelt pre-tensioners: | 5-10% |
| Headrest: | 5-10% |

Source: www.bonnettyourcar.com.au



Page from the 'Young Driver Safety' booklet produced by NRMA Motoring & Services and the RTA in conjunction with The Daily Telegraph

Driver education

Why do people keep talking about in car driver education?

One of the reasons why people see in car driver education on its own as a panacea for the youth road toll is that there is no real understanding, by most of the public, many politicians or the media, of the complexity and factors affecting young driver safety. Driver education seems like a simple, logical solution to the problem.

Driver education is seen by most people as the key way to reduce the young driver road toll. It has widespread public and political support even though decades of research indicate that **in car driver training without a focus on driver attitude does not reduce crash involvement** among novice drivers. Comprehensive reviews from around the world reveal that ... *"There is no difference in the crash records of driver education graduates compared with beginners who learned to drive without formal education. There is little evidence that **pre-license** training per se reduces crash rates among novice drivers in the short or longer term."* (Williams & Ferguson, Injury Prevention 2004)

One of the problems with generalist comments regarding driver education is that there are differences in the type, content, quality, training and qualifications of the instructors - all of which affect the value of the learner driver education.

The RACV commissioned RCSC Services Pty Ltd to perform an extensive review of the international literature concerning driver training, particularly programs for learner drivers, young/recently licensed drivers and experienced drivers. It looked at evaluations and reviews published in scientific journals, conference proceedings or by reputable sources such as government agencies, universities, and research organisations published in Australia, New Zealand, North America, United Kingdom and Europe over the last three decades were examined.

The review suggests ... *"that driver training cannot be considered an effective crash countermeasure and that other approaches such as increased supervision and graduated licensing for novice drivers are likely to make greater and more lasting contributions to road safety."* (RACV 2005)

Why Does In Car Driver Training Alone Not Seem To Be Effective In Reducing Crashes?

Advocating driver training alone as a means of improving driving skills and knowledge assumes:

- (i) That there are deficiencies in the skills or knowledge of drivers and that these can be remedied by the application of training, and
- (ii) That such deficiencies increase the risk of crash involvement. These assumptions although persistent in the community are often false and based on beliefs not supported by the weight of research evidence.

However the key points are :

- It's unreasonable to expect an educational or instructional tool such as driver training to deliver crash reductions as improving knowledge and skill does not always lead to a change in behaviour among trainees.
- A driver trainer has little control over the post-course behaviour and attitudes of trainees, the motivation of trainees to apply what has been learned or the many other risk factors that may contribute to crash causation.
- Drivers, particularly young drivers, can and do take risks that have less to do with how much skill and/or knowledge they possess, but more to do with motivation and higher-order factors.
- Most conventional driver training tends to concentrate on skills and knowledge relevant to crash avoidance or dealing with driving emergencies. However, as accidents, particularly those involving death or injury, are rare events for the average driver this knowledge or skill seldom needs to be applied, or is to a large extent forgotten when required at some time in the future.
- Drivers quickly forget those behaviours which they do not have to use regularly.

Quality of driver training

One of the key concerns of NRMA is that poor learner driver education simply teaches how to pass the license tests, that is, knowledge requirements for the test questions and basic, sufficient car handling skills.

Better learner driver education is that which emphasizes how important a driver's attitude is and the factors associated with crash risks. It helps a learner driver become a safe driver as well as teaching the essential car handling skills and road rules.

Experience under supervision

In 2005 and 2006 NRMA supported the measure of additional supervised driving for learners. NRMA actually called for it to be mandatory that some of those hours be undertaken at night. NRMA supported the RTA announcement of increasing the mandatory number of supervised driving for Learner Drivers on road experience from 50 to 120 hours (20 hours to be at night) and extending the tenure period for a Learner License.

Attachments

ANCAP brochures

Used car Safety Ratings

Fact sheets

Articles from *The Open Road*

The Young Driver Booklet - by NRMA, RTA and The Daily Telegraph

Survey research on young driver restrictions (February 2005)