

**Submission
No. 64**

DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

Name: Mr Jerry Van Wyk
Organisation: Awesome Driving School
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To whom it may concern,

Awesome Driving School was registered as a business on the 24th March 2004 and our first driving lesson was completed in April 2004. The business was started by Jerry Van Wyk servicing the Central Coast region of NSW.

In 2009, Awesome Driving School won the Central Coast Business Achievers Award for the Community and Other Education category.

We currently have 10 driving instructors with 2 more instructors starting soon. We have been the largest driving school on the Central Coast for several years now. We have a full-time secretary in the office also who maintains diaries, handles incoming calls and liaises with agencies, etc.

A lot has changed in driver education since starting the business in 2004. Keys2drive has been an exciting new government initiative since June 2009 that offers a free government-funded lesson that focuses on teaching driving skills for life, not just for the driving test. 8 out of 10 of our current instructors are currently registered and completing keys2drive lessons with our students, with some of our instructors achieving the top 100 most done in Australia and Jerry has completed the 4th most in Australia/3rd most in New South Wales. This has been a brilliant, federally funded program, educating the learner drivers, not just about passing their P's test, but about becoming a safer P-plate driver. It has also really re-educated the parents how to teach their kids to drive. Hopefully the fantastic keys2drive program can continue as the parent program has been great.

It would be good to have a workshop where driving schools can educate parents on the steps involved to obtaining a licence including the supervisor's role in teaching the learner driver, etc. This sort of workshop would be so beneficial to be held in schools also helping to educate more kids about safer driving skills including braking distances, roundabouts, etc.

We started facilitating and coaching Safer Driver Courses with PCYC in August 2013. Since August 2013, Awesome Driving School staff have facilitated and coached 168 Safer Driver Courses with 1735 students through both PCYC and TAFE WSI. This has been a brilliant course for learner drivers once they have completed their 50 hours of face-to-face driving lessons. The Safer driver course was developed to teach kids how to recognise and respond to hazards and distractions, educate on the 5 most common crash risks including alcohol, speed and fatigue, teaching low-risk driving strategies.

I feel that there should be a committee looking at how the providers are delivering these Safer Driver Courses as far as, customer satisfaction into booking into courses, and as far as coaches and facilitators dealing with the providers. It is so important that the current frustrations that customers are feeling dealing with one of the providers that we have worked with are dealt with. Issues with providers paying facilitators and coaches is also a huge problem with payments taking 3 months + sometimes to be received for facilitating and coaching. This is unacceptable for any business to wait so long for payment for a course that is prepaid.

- Address: 14 Carlo Close, Kincumber NSW 2251 • Ph: 4369 2230 •
- Mob: 0416 161 024 • email: info@awesomedrivingschool.com.au •
- www.awesomedrivingschool.com.au • ABN: 411 353 08 630 •



Awesome Driving School currently works with many organisations who help disadvantaged students to obtain driving lessons free of charge. Our largest contract at present is through Bara Barang where we have delivered more than 200 hours of driving lessons since August 2016, with 13 out of 50 students passing their P's test so far through this program. Driver education for disadvantaged and disabled students through these programs are crucial to help them get out of the poverty cycle and obtain employment.

The introduction of the NDIS on the Central Coast has also helped boost availability for these disadvantaged students which is fantastic. Awesome Driving School is currently the only driving school who is a registered NDIS provider. Although the NDIS is amazingly beneficial for so many students, it has become apparent that the processes involved with signing up and being approved are deterring many people. There are countless occasions each week where people call me upset that the NDIS is not returning calls or that the NDIS is promising things that they do not actually deliver. 3 different students this week alone have told me that their case-workers will get them approved for driving lessons in their program however are never contacting them back. The phone line to call the NDIS is over-stretched and the hold times before someone answers is always over 45 minutes which is also unacceptable. This new roll-out should have had sufficient staff allocated to accommodate the influx of calls etc. in my opinion.

Older Driver Assessments are also conducted through Awesome Driving School. 6 of our driving instructors are now trained to conduct these assessments. Going into Retirement Villages, etc. to do talks, I feel, would be so important to update their knowledge of road rules, etc. before they are forced to conduct an aged assessment. A recent older driver came to us for a driving lesson before her RMS booked Older Driver Exam. She was unfortunately a very un-safe driver who had lost most of her skills learnt many years ago when she obtained her licence. After being told that she would not pass her test and that she should complete some more driving lessons, this customer then simply appeared to the Service NSW for her booking for an aged assessment but instead of completing the test that she would have failed, she simply requested a restricted area licence and was granted this without a driving assessment. This, in my opinion, is outrageous as the whole point of the aged assessments is to remove unsafe drivers from the roads.

Older Driver Assessments should probably be introduced sooner than 85 years also, to ensure that drivers with medical conditions that have not been reported to the RMS are being recognised.

Provisional driving tests need a serious revamp also unfortunately. Training and assessment as you go could be an option rather than a standardised test on one day.

Defensive Driver Training is also a crucial component of driver education that should be mandatory for all students before they can receive their P's. Awesome Driving School conducts Defensive Driver Training lessons for students that go for 3.5 hours and include sudden braking, freeway driving, gravel road driving, etc. An initiative from the government should be considered, like the Safer Driver Course, where perhaps students who complete this course are rewarded with bonus hours in their log book etc. Currently, students who complete a Safer Driver Course get a bonus 20 hours in their log book for completing the 5 hour course.

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Students should perhaps also be allowed to travel at 110km/h with the instruction of a professional driving instructor when they are reaching the end of their hours so that they can experience 110km driving before they do it unsupervised later. The feeling of driving 110km should be experienced before a student moves to their black licence. Perhaps a driving test after Green P's would be beneficial for students that would include a freeway drive etc. or forced professional driving lesson etc.

Education is key and unfortunately, too many kids are currently completing their Learner education without much guidance from professionals. This is another reason why education workshops in schools would be so beneficial. Driving Schools should also offer for parents to sit in with driving lessons more often to help educate parents and supervisors on how to help teach their kids, but also, in turn, re-educating the parents on road rules.

Mandatory workshops should also be considered for parents on how to be a positive supervisor driver as well as how to fill out the log book correctly etc. How can we expect parents and guardians to be able to successfully teach learner drivers to drive, when they themselves are not up-to-date with current road rules, and probably were tested more than 25-30 years ago, themselves? Education is vital and needs to be enforced more.

Education on how friends can influence your behaviour etc. also needs to be addressed somehow.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 4369 2230 or [REDACTED]

Regards,

Jerry Van Wyk
Awesome Driving School