Submission No 28

SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL LEARNER DRIVERS

Organisation: National Motorists Association of Australia

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NATIONAL MOTORISTS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA .

Introduction

The National Motorists Association of Australia is a small group of people with a deep interest in road safety. We are not involved in insurance, road side break-down assistance or any commercial function and we are not associated with any other motoring organisations.

We are all of mature years with a very wide range of experience both here and overseas. Most have achieved a high standard of driver training and most are university educated.

Our concern with improving road safety gives rise to acute observations of safety measures and their impact on risk reduction. We evaluate how systems can be improved both in terms of improved road safety and the amenities of road use for commercial vehicles, cars and other road users.

Our experiences and evaluations have lead us to the conclusions that there are far better systems to improve road safety than are currently being used in systems design, regulation, construction, enforcement, research and training.

Our observation is that Australia has very low standards of driver training and testing compared with Europe. For example, very few Australian trained drivers would pass the German driving test without significant remedial training.

The Authors

Michael Lane

Some 2 million kilometres, 60 years driving experience, initially 5 years in the UK thence in Australia and in recent years a regular driver in most of Western Europe. He has been closely involved in teaching his two children to drive but having professional instructors to teach them to pass their test.

Much of his professional life involved assessment of Industrial Research and Development projects including the technology, scientific methodology, innovation, managerial abilities, Finance prospects and commercial prospects.

He was appointed as National Spokesman for the NMAA in 2003.

Graham Pryor

Graham has had a life-long strong interest in road safety and was the first person in Australia to pass the advanced driving test to the gold standard with Australian Driver Education. Subsequently, he became an Instructor for the Chapter of Advanced Motorists of the VMA from the age of 21 until the Chapter was dissolved.

He is a graduate engineer and a qualified mine manager. Also, he achieved a Master of Management degree with an award from the Australian Institute of Management for academic excellence.

Graham operated potentially dangerous underground mines in private industry for more than 35 years and was employed previously as a District Inspector of Coal Mines for the NSW Mines Department. He attributes the reduction in fatalities in NSW mines to the "risk assessment" approach that is now required by legislation.

He was appointed to the Executive Committee of the NMAA in the year 2000 in the role of National Liaison Officer.

A) Challenges faced by learner drivers in rural and Regional areas.

There is a wide range of circumstances experienced by drivers in rural and regional areas of NSW. While population centres such as Albury, Bathurst and Lithgow have a wide range of road systems on which a driver can be trained, there are vast areas of the State where learners simply do not have the road systems on which learners can experience the full range of issues that they can face elsewhere. On a simple issue, for example, many areas will not have roundabouts or traffic lights for learners to experience on a regular basis.

On the other hand they would also have to deal with a range of different issues to city dwellers – there are no dirt roads in the Sydney metropolitan area.

The requirement for over one hundred hours of supervised driving can be difficult for those in impoverished family situations and this is likely to be more difficult in indigenous areas with a combination of poverty and hierarchial issues.

As the training and testing systems and standards are city-centric it may be beneficial to consider different emphases in these areas. For example, better knowledge of car control on dirt roads is more important in rural areas than in city areas.

Regional and rural new drivers will drive more frequently on roads with speed limits of 100 km/h and 110 km/h than city based new divers. The speed restrictions placed on learners and P-plate drivers make it impossible to teach many techniques necessary for safe driving. For example, safe overtaking is impossible to teach when the learner is restricted to less than the prevailing traffic speeds. When licenced, inexperienced drivers have to learn these techniques without assistance – too often by accident.

Drivers “learning by trial and error” is regarded as a “crash course in driving”.

B Options for learners to access driver training opportunities

Recommendations.

1 That trainers and testers ensure that regional and rural learner drivers are aware of and are practiced in the driving conditions which are different to city based conditions.

2 Local Governments be assisted to provide demonstration roundabouts and traffic lights in off road locations where these are not readily accessed.

3 Support for service clubs and Government community support agencies to act as supervising driver for those who do not have access to supervisors. This could extend to having a suitable vehicle in appropriate circumstances.

4 Encouraging, including financial assistance, qualified instructors to visit remote centres to provide instruction and to assist non-professional local people in supervision of learners.

C Support in other jurisdictions

We have no comment on this issue.

D Use of simulators.

Good driving simulators are expensive, however, they can be transported to different locations. Whilst other recommendations such as in B above are not specific to any area of Government it would be essential that input on the programming of simulators be provided by the Department of Transport.

Recommendation.

1 The NSW Department of Transport commission organisations with driving simulators and move them around the States Regional and Rural areas to provide wider experience to learners there.

2 The simulators should be able to replicate the effects of anti-lock braking systems (ABS) so that a learner can experience the feeling through the car. The “pulsing” of the brake pedal described in older car handbooks can cause the driver to reduce brake pedal pressure due to fright and a consequent crash.

E Changes in driver education since 2017

We consider that the standards in Australia are still inadequate compared with European standards. We would add that training in first-aid and traffic management at crash sites would be a valuable addition.

F Other related matters

We have attached our submission of Feb 2017 on the subject of Driver Training because we consider that it is relevant to this inquiry. We ask you to note that our position on crash cause **evaluation** is important in assessing the outcomes of driver training and testing systems. Correctly determined driver crash causes can be used to compare differences between City and Regional trained drivers.

NMAA Submission on Driver Training and Education, Feb 2017

a) Trends in road safety research and crash statistics

Crash cause analysis is the fundamental input into any safety programme. The aviation industry is as safe as it is now because of the intense evaluation of the causes of crashes and the application of the lessons learned to policy frameworks. Proper crash cause analysis is a two stage process; the first is a reconstruction of what occurred followed by analysis of why each contributory factor happened. It is axiomatic that this be undertaken by highly trained personnel with investigative skills and powers.

Within the English speaking world the UK Police system is outstanding as the best system of road crash cause analysis. Specially selected traffic officers, who are trained to a much higher standard than here, undergo an external training course and qualify as accident investigators under the auspices of the London based City and Guilds training and examination system. This course is regarded as difficult even for a science

graduate. These professionals do not initiate prosecutions and that is a function of senior prosecution specialists.

While this is expensive the fatality rate in Australia is the equivalent of several large aircraft (Boeing 747) crashes per year. There are many times this who suffer life changing injuries.

Our research shows that there is a wide variance between UK and NSW in claims of the importance of speed as a causal factor in crashes. The NMAA stance is that the more professional the investigators are the lower the contribution of speed is to crash causes. The reasons for this are complex, however, they centre on a bias, whether conscious or otherwise, to conduct research in such a manner that the operator's favourite causation is highlighted. The outcome of this distortion in crash causes impacts on both remedial measures and in the curriculum for driver training.

State and Territory governments in Australia do not analyse crash causation factors properly and consequently little or no data exists for non-serious injury crashes and the data for more serious crashes is, at best, unreliable. The NSW authorities habitually tick the "speed" box resulting in the preposterous claim by the then RTA that, in 2002, "46% of fatal crashes were caused by speed". This is based on summing "Speed in excess of speed limit" and "Speed excessive for circumstances" which are separately listed in the UK system as they are completely different causes. In 2014 the NSW Centre for Road Safety is still claiming that speeding causes 42% of fatal crashes although it cannot legitimately justify this statement. These claims are based on the inappropriate criteria which police are directed to utilise when attending a road crash.

The first stage of the UK system of crash cause analysis is discovering what happened. This involves taking measurements in a similar manner to the process used here if the crash investigation squad attend, however, with refinements including confirmation of coefficient of friction with the road surface and the development of a computerised comparison of the damage with manufacturer's test crashes (which have known parameters) to give a good assessment of the actual impact speed. The investigators then can select up to 6 contributory causes which are determined and reported in a standard format. This information together with the injury information is sent to the central government statistics office in addition to being used in the second stage of the investigation. The reporting methodology and contributory cause assessment is based on research work done by the UK Transport Research Laboratory (Report TRL 323).

The second stage involves determining why the contributory causes occurred. This may involve further site inspections and interrogation of witnesses and participants. The final report is then sent to senior officers for determination if any prosecution is warranted. The investigating officers do not initiate prosecutions, however, they may be called as expert witnesses. The second stage findings are not published. The Transport Research Laboratory report 323 suggests that only some 4 to 8 percent of fatal crashes have speed in excess of the speed limit as a significant or primary cause; speed in

excess of the limit in many cases derives from other primary causes such as intoxication, suicide etc.

The UK Institute of Advanced Motorists conducted an appraisal of 5 years of the official crash cause statistics held by the UK Government which is appended. Table 1 shows quite clearly that speed in excess of the speed limit was a CONTRIBUTORY (not necessarily significant) causal factor in less than 14% of fatal crashes and much less in serious (7.2%) or minor injury crashes (4.2%). The study covered some 700,000 accidents so should be regarded as robust.

(Attachment 1 - Institute of Advanced Motorists Factors in Accidents report)

The category of “Inappropriate speed for the conditions” is largely identified in inclement weather which is not as widespread here – NSW does not suffer the thick fogs nor widespread frost and snow of the UK.

The NSW Parliament’s Public Accounts Committee recently reported on the outcomes of various Auditor General’s reports. A copy of Chapter Six – Improving Road safety: Speed Cameras of the NSW Auditor General’s report is attached. Attention is directed to clauses 6.16 and 6.17 and to Recommendations 6 and 7. It is noted that one of the NMAA Committee members was mentioned.

(Attachment 2 – PAC Report Chapter 6)

The NSW government and its agencies are still quoting “speeding” as the cause of over 40% of fatal crashes. Given the highly professional international sources which state that exceeding the speed limit is a contributory cause in a fraction of this figure, it is considered that the official RMS figures are deceptive and grossly overstate the contribution of speed to crashes.

The estimate of speed in excess of the speed limit being the prime cause of between 4% and 8% of fatal crashes is supported by other sources.

Australian research by Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) determined that, if all vehicles were fitted with a satellite controlled system that prevented **every** vehicle from exceeding the posted speed limit, the maximum potential reduction in fatal road crashes would be 8 per cent.

See MUARC report #253 ‘On-road evaluation of Intelligent Speed Adaptation, Following Distance Warning and Seatbelt Reminder Systems: final results of the TAC SafeCar project’ at http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/muarc253.html.

Quote: “Based on the logged data, the ISA system by itself is expected to reduce the incidence of fatal crashes by up to 8 percent and serious injury crashes by up to 6 percent.”

It is often claimed by those who support low speed limits that the result is fewer fatal/serious injuries. This is only true if the speed of impact is similar to the speed of

travel which is often not the case. The argument on these grounds for lower speeds is tantamount to saying that it is okay to crash so long as you do so at low speeds and only injure or maim people. We are firmly of the belief that the objective of safety measures is to reduce crashes. Harm minimization is best achieved by engineering methods.

Crash statistics are often quoted relating to population however this can cause distortions. The optimum standard should relate to distance travelled as this reflects exposure rate more fully. However care should be taken when making comparisons between regions as there are many factors involved. For example, in urban areas paramedics should be on-site within a few minutes but in country regions it may be hours before medical assistance arrives. The first hour after an injury is critical to survival.

Recommendation

1) A specialist unit be developed within the NSW Police to conduct crash cause analysis to the UK standard and follow the operational methodology of the UK Police Services. Findings of this unit should be published annually. Training to be to the standard of the UK City and Guilds course.
2) That crash cause evaluation be used in developing and modifying the curriculum for driver training and testing.
3) That crash cause evaluation be used in developing effective crash counter measures including regulation and engineering standards.

b) Evaluating current driver training, including the effectiveness of refresher training and skills updating, and adaptation to changing vehicle technology

Current driver testing requires barely more than demonstrating a hill start, reverse parking and a three-point turn. Young and inexperienced drivers are over-represented in road fatalities, however, young and inexperienced pilots are not over-represented in aviation. The significant difference is in the standard of training required for a driver's licence and a pilot's licence.

The consequence of the very limited test system is that formal training by driving instructors is aimed at passing the test rather than the broader aspects of sound driving techniques.

Many countries do not permit unqualified instructors to supervise learners or do not accept periods of unqualified supervision in log book records.

Most driver training is done by parents/relatives and, to a lesser extent, friends of older learners. Unfortunately these people usually have bad driving habits, poor attitudes and rarely have an understanding of matters essential to making a good and safe road

driver beyond simplistic law compliance. For example, observation skills are critical to being aware of all that is going on around the vehicle and which could have an effect on what the driver must do. Sound observation skills will identify a problem before it happens; reading the “body language” of a vehicle/driver will pre-warn of an erratic action.

In longer distance driving moving the eyes around avoids the mesmerising effect of staring at the road in front; this helps early detection of erratic events which may require action.

Rarely, if ever, is the concept of courteous co-operation taught. This is not the same as encouraging people into a dangerous situation by, for example, stopping in a busy road and waving pedestrians across into the path of other vehicles! Such things as when on a freeway moving to the adjacent lane to allow traffic to enter from a slip road, which is termed doing a “zip merge”, when technically traffic on the entering lane should completely give way.

There are far too many instances of teaching about rights but not responsibilities.

There are many techniques that are preferable to teach a new driver which are not fully accepted by traditional drivers. Push-pull steering was valid when steering was heavy; in a modern power assisted steering system with few turns lock to lock the hand-over method is best and it is much better if a rapid steering correction is needed. As many cars are automatic, left foot braking can be taught; this will save up to half a second in reaction time, which equates to 7 metres stopping distance at urban speed. Every driver should be taught how to stop the vehicle in the shortest possible distance so as to be capable of avoiding a crash.

It is often suggested that driver training be conducted in high schools. There are good reasons not to do so. The school curriculum is already crowded, few teachers have adequate driving skills, pupils and parents are likely to object to the diversion of time during the critical Higher School Certificate year. However the simpler parts of the Highway Code (as detailed elsewhere) could be taught as part of Civics from an early age. The concepts of good manners and self-preservation never go astray.

The speed restrictions on learner drivers in NSW creates significant problems. There are obvious issues with having them on rural roads and freeways due to the speed differential however in terms of teaching it is impossible (legally) to teach learners merging techniques on entering freeway style roads or higher speed cornering (including adjusting speed from the normal highway cruise speed). Overtaking is a difficult task and the low speed permitted to learners makes this impossible to teach. New drivers have to learn these matters unsupervised and too often with disastrous results.

The National Motorists Association of Australia advocates a higher standard of training prior to the practical driving test and that all drivers be required to satisfactorily complete

an advanced roadcraft style course with an accredited training organisation before progressing beyond P-plates. The RMS does not support advanced training based on an old desk analysis of reports on the outcomes of advanced training overseas. This compared people who had volunteered to undertake “advanced” training with those who had not and found that it tended to create “over-confidence” in those who had undertaken these courses. There are obvious errors in these findings such as that the comparison is between different cohorts. Enthusiastic high exposure individuals are different from the average; the courses also tend to emphasise trackwork rather than roadcraft. A true comparison of the effect of more advanced driver training is when whole populations are required to undertake this, with an emphasis on roadcraft, and compared with other whole populations or by pre and post methods.

Adaptation to changing vehicle technology

The resistance from the government to higher driver training standards extends to refusing to include emergency braking in the training package which reduces the number of log book hours. The new driver thus has no idea what happens in hard braking; the feedback from an anti-lock braking system (ABS) can easily frighten them into releasing pressure on the brake pedal for example. Most new drivers have no idea of how long it takes to stop a car from normal speeds in dry and wet conditions. Unfortunately they too often learn by accident.

Learning how to stop a vehicle in the shortest possible distance is fundamental to most advanced roadcraft training courses. Some use the more brief term of “emergency barking” to describe stopping a vehicle in the shortest possible distance. Being able to brake efficiently is an effective means of avoiding many types of crashes. Anti-lock braking systems also facilitate “swerve and avoid” actions which cannot be taught on public roads.

GPS guidance systems are now common, however, they do require some guidance in their use. In the UK testing procedures are now being adjusted to testing the driver’s use of them. Instead of the tester directing each turn, the candidate is instructed to proceed to a place some distance away to test their ability to manage a GPS guidance system.

Before anti-lock braking systems became almost universal Germany required the instructor to certify that the new driver could perform an emergency stop from 130 km/h in wet conditions.

It has been reported that when Denmark changed its driver testing regime from compliance to advanced (defensive) driving that there was a significant reduction in young drivers involved in fatal crashes.

Refresher Training

Refresher training is a requirement for most professional vocations. There are clear benefits in all areas of skill training.

However, the government is not likely to contemplate legislating a requirement for regular driver refresher training, say at ten year intervals, as it would be electorally unpopular. The consequence is likely to be measured in increasing road fatality, injury and crash statistics.

Refresher training could be incorporated into penalty regimes where driving incompetency is observed rather than numerical breaches such as minor speed infringements. Some examples of such is when drivers swing outwards, often close to or even into, an adjacent lane when making a turn; failure to signal intent; failure to keep left unless overtaking etc.

This would require a different approach to policing.

In many countries a refresher course (and enhanced test) is required after a period of licence suspension.

The world's highest standard of driver training and testing is in Germany and this is discernible in comparison with other drivers on the road in Europe. Although it is often said that it would be impossible to upgrade existing drivers the re-unification of Germany provides an example to the contrary. After only a couple of years the "Ossis" had improved their driving standards to a commendable standard.

Recommendations

1)That the special speed limits for learners and P-platers be abolished and that they should comply with normal limits as posted or default.

2)That the standard of driver training during the learner period and the practical test be improved continuously with the aim of reaching the German standard as the world's best.

3)That a course of advanced roadcraft be successfully completed before progress from a provisional licence to a full licence.

4)That the government seeks the cooperation of vehicle manufacturers in providing driver training facilities. There are benefits in this for vehicle manufacturers and many of them have operated such training for many years, including Honda and BMW. These training facilities and the training they provide would be ideal for refresher training and advanced road craft courses.

The cost of attending the course should be borne by drivers. The cost of advanced roadcraft courses is far less than the cost of the "excess" payable on a car insurance claim.

5)That refresher courses/tests be introduced for those returning from licence suspension

6)That a refresher course be an alternative penalty in appropriate cases.

c) The needs of any particular driver groups

In the general case please refer to the NMMA response in topic (e).

Just as disabled drivers need specialised equipment on their vehicles so do they need specialised training to ensure that they are compatible with good driving skills. This is a very broad subject requiring co-operation between rehabilitation specialists and driving trainers.

Elderly drivers needing refresher courses and those who have been penalised (if that recommendation is adopted) will also require trainers with special aptitudes.

We cannot comment on the needs of heavy vehicle driver training as this is outside our knowledge base.

See recommendations in topic (d)

d) The needs of driver trainers, both professional and non-professional

The NMAA draws attention to the media release statement by Staysafe Chairman Mr Greg Aplin: ”We want to know what things we can do more effectively to **improve skills**, **change attitudes**, and deliver better road safety outcomes.”

Improving skills is a direct outcome of driver training. A significant aspect of driver training is that it is the ideal opportunity to **change the attitude** of the driver. The “attitude” of the driver to driving safely is a huge factor in deriving positive outcomes.

The current attitude of many drivers in NSW to the road rules is similar to the definitions of ignorance and apathy: “I don’t know and I don’t care”. Driving at or below the posted speed limit does not overcome inadequate skills nor inadequate knowledge of road rules nor good road manners. Unfortunately this attitude is too often passed on by non-professional trainers.

The government can create the goal for all drivers of achieving a high standard such as becoming an Advanced Motorist with the Institute of Advanced Motorists. An example would be granting a “gold” driver’s licence upon achieving that standard at any age. Non-professional driver trainers need the government to **encourage and support** achievement of a high standard of training. By such action the government would have a direct involvement in improving road safety at minimal cost.

Both professional and non-professional driver trainers need the government support of formally creating the goal for all drivers to achieve a high standard of driver training.

The best method of introducing advanced driver training is to initially encourage it by formally recognising the achievement with a notional award such as granting a “gold” driver’s licence. When the present driver training facilities have expanded to being able to meet the training needs for all drivers, then the government can evaluate the approach of making it compulsory.

Non-professional trainers have no incentive to upgrade/refresh their skills. While it would be possible to require such people to undertake a course and have a supervisors endorsement on their licence the intermittent supervisor domestic duties would create a form of resistance – if both parents and possibly elder siblings needed an endorsement it would be regarded as excessively onerous. Public persuasion would be the optimal compromise over compulsion.

Professional instructors in most advanced countries are required to have formal training and qualifications often graded. This ensures that they are knowledgeable of not only the laws but also the concepts of good driving which cannot be clearly defined in regulations. They must also demonstrate that they can teach. Regular updating is normally required.

This is one way to improve standards of driving instruction and thus outcomes on a continuous basis.

Recommendations

1)That non-professional trainers be encouraged to take refresher courses

2)Professional (on-road) trainers should be licenced with graded qualifications and this be subject to continuous improvement with the ultimate objective being world class standards.

3)High grade trainers would be needed for refresher training and they could be permitted to “sign off” on the trainee’s satisfactory achievement

e) The needs of metropolitan, rural and regional drivers

The NMAA disagrees that these groupings of drivers have different needs. All drivers should be trained to the same high standard so they are competent on all road surfaces and be equally competent in both city driving and driving on country roads. There is no excuse for lower standards in any area of NSW. There may not be freeway style roads but a good trainer will ensure that the trainee is well versed in that type of driving.

Rural learner drivers should not be excused from advanced driving training. It is a sad reflection on the government that rural based learner motorcycle drivers are not required to attend the rider training due residing a long distance from a motorcycle rider

training facility. An example of the consequence of that approach is the Eurobodalla Shire Council recognised that this exoneration was directly responsible for the above state average fatality rate for motorcyclists in that Shire and introduced a motorcycle rider training program to remedy the situation. The NMAA congratulates the Eurobodalla Shire Council on taking positive action to reduce motorcycle rider fatalities.

The NMAA also notes that a significant proportion of the population travel and drive overseas. Although the NSW Government does not have a direct responsibility for the actions of those travellers an additional benefit lies in the improved safety of NSW residents while overseas. The standard of driver training that should be aimed for in NSW is that of the highest in the first world – Germany.

f) The needs and expectations of passengers and other road users

Drivers have an implied “duty of care” for their passengers and all other road users. Driver “attitude” to driving safely is a major factor in achieving positive outcomes. A significant aspect of advanced driver training, and refresher training, is that it is the ideal opportunity to **position the attitude** of the driver.

As passengers we expect that the driver will be competent and not place us at risk by making errors of judgement. As road users we expect others to be competent (but wary of those that fail) and that they will exhibit good road manners.

g) The cost of driver training standards and how the costs should be allocated

The government continues to allow unqualified parents to be instructors for their children so the parents/learners avoid the cost of paying for professional training. The consequence is that inadequate skills and poor attitude is perpetuated in another generation of drivers. More onerous testing will drive learners into getting professional training.

The cost of driver training to obtain a licence in Germany is thousands of dollars. The difference is that Germany has one of the lowest fatality rates per vehicle kilometres driven in the world despite the unrestricted speeds (prima facie) on many autobahns and their winter conditions of fog, ice and snow on the roads as well as being the “cross roads” of Europe for road freight.

The cost must be the responsibility of the person being trained. Free driver training is not an “entitlement”. Being granted a driver’s licence is not an “entitlement” and it comes with responsibilities including an implied “duty of care” for their passengers and all other road users.

Charities may play a role in assisting the impecunious.

h) The experience of other jurisdictions, and interstate cross-border issues
Other jurisdictions

The world's highest standard of driver training and testing is in Germany and this is discernible in comparison with drivers trained in other countries in Europe which in turn are at a much higher standard than in Australia although there are local quirks – the French for example rarely signal exit on roundabouts.

German driver training is extremely thorough and includes several hours of classroom training as well as on road practice. The classroom training is given to groups which reduces costs. Significantly the training includes first aid (all German cars have a comprehensive first aid kit) and traffic management around a crash until officials arrive. It is a requirement in Germany to stop and render assistance at a crash even if you are not involved. It is regarded as unacceptable to breakdown on autobahns as it is dangerous to others as well as the occupants – fines are applied where the breakdown is avoidable eg running out of fuel. Pupils are taken to full speed on restricted roads (130 km/h) and up to 200 km/h on "unrestricted" (actually prima facie) autobahns. Road rage, even at the lowest level, is strictly controlled in Germany. These concepts are part of the intensive tuition.

German companies often send their employees who are required to drive as part of their duties to more advanced car control driving centres.

In Finland there is a greater emphasis on car control as in winter the roads are largely covered by ice and snow and, outside major roads, are usually gravel or stones.

The Dutch are Europe's most rule compliant drivers but have little understanding of what is happening around them. This is believed to be an outcome of a highly regimented system where obedience to rules and signs is more important than moving without integrating into other traffic.

Throughout Europe drivers are patient when people need to do things but can get quite loud when someone does something unreasonable; blocking an intersection will incur wrath but holding up traffic while an old person exits a car, even for several minutes, will be accepted. This is a matter of politeness.

Driver training is improved by the use of a "Code of conduct" system as in the UK's Highway Code and the French "Code de la route". This method explains the reason for doing things rather than setting blind rules. Most people accept a dictate when given a rational reason and they respond better when treated like an adult instead of a child. Some refer to this method as "appealing to the intellect".

The UK Police have a handbook "Roadcraft" available to the public which takes the principles of safe driving further. It is based on the methodology in police driver training (excluding pursuit methodology!) which has resulted in a marked reduction in their crash

rate. The original training to this standard reduced the crash rate of ordinary police by two thirds.

Recommendation

1) That NSW develops a Highway code and Roadcraft book based on the UK publications and that these be used as teaching aids.

2) That these be used as a basis for enhancing the practical test.

Interstate cross-border issues

Interstate cross-border issues include differences in state laws intended to minimise the impact of peer pressure on inexperienced drivers. For example, Victoria disallows more than one passenger between 16 and 22 years of age for 24 hours per day whereas NSW has a curfew disallowing a passenger under 21 years of age only between the hours of 11pm and 5am.

The states even disagree on what law applies to P-platers as it is reported that NSW insists the harsher restriction on Victorian P-plate licences also apply to them when driving in NSW and Victoria insists that the 24 hour curfew applies to NSW licensed P-plate drivers on Victorian roads.

Another example is the speed restrictions applied to P1 and P2 P-plate drivers in NSW which do not apply in other states.

A newspaper article in the Illawarra Mercury, dated 5 January 2017, highlights these issues under the heading “P-plate drivers sent in circles over contradicting road rules between NSW and Victoria”: www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/4386646/p-plate-drivers-sent-in-circles-over-road-rules

P-plates were introduced in 1966 with the intent of reducing new drivers’ crash rates. No information is available as to its effectiveness. Originally it was accompanied by a 50 mph (80 km/h) speed limit. This system has been supplemented by the P1, P2 system. Again there seems to be no assessment of benefits.

The P-plate system is an admission of the inadequacy of current training and testing – it states that the newly qualified driver is not sufficiently skilled to drive on the public roads without onerous restrictions. Some seem to be based on nothing more substantial than biased outrage; others are out of date because of changes in design. The prohibition on turbo charged or high powered vehicles are examples. These special restrictions lead to conflict with authority which is fundamentally undesirable in the young.

Our earlier recommendation of abolishing special speed limits for learners (and consequentially for P-platers) is based on enabling better driver training. Further improvements in training should enable the removal of further restrictions.

Recommendation

That restrictions on P-plate drivers be reviewed in the light of results and the outcomes of improved driver training.

i) Other related matters

The NMAA strongly recommends that every member of the Staysafe Committee completes an advanced driver training course. It is appropriate that the Staysafe committee members have a thorough knowledge in the areas where they make decisions. The NMAA is able to provide a list of organisations that provide suitable advanced driver training facilities. The life you save may be your own.

It is also strongly recommended that the Committee examine and test drive vehicles from the mid 1960s. The inaccurate steering, doubtful brakes, a steel rod steering column aimed at the sternum, below dash parcel shelves aimed at the knees, bonnet/headlight ornaments to spear pedestrians and complete lack of restraints, crumple zones, occupant restraints etc will help the Committee understand that these improvements have had an enormous effect on the road toll.