

**Submission  
No 37**

## **SUPPORT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL LEARNER DRIVERS**

**Organisation:** National Roads and Motorists' Association (NRMA)

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21 May 2021

Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety  
Parliament of NSW  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

To the Committee

**Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Support for Rural and Regional Learner Drivers**

Please find attached a submission from the NRMA to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Support for Rural and Regional Learner Drivers.

As the largest mutual in Australia with more than 2.6 million Members, the NRMA works with government, industry and community to advocate for continued improvements to Australia's road and transport networks to ensure safety, efficiency and equitability.

Through collaboration, the NRMA strives to ensure that mobility networks and associated infrastructure and services are considered holistically to improve planning, utilisation and productivity.

Should further information on the NRMA's submission be required, please do not hesitate to contact

Yours faithfully

**Robert Giltinan**  
Director of Policy & Public Affairs



## **Submission to the Inquiry into Support for Rural and Regional Learner Drivers**

### ***Inexperienced and Young Drivers***

The NRMA has long supported measures to improve the safety of inexperienced drivers.

Inexperienced drivers contribute disproportionately to road trauma in NSW. Government data suggests that P1 (Red Provisional) drivers are 10 times more likely to be involved in a crash than a learner driver.<sup>1</sup>

Following a profound deterioration in road safety outcomes for inexperienced drivers during the early-to-mid 2000s, the NRMA was a vocal contributor to debate and discussion, and strongly supported the transition to a more stringent graduated licensing scheme, which most recently saw material changes in 2007 and 2008. This involved a suite of measures, which included increasing learner hour requirements; restricted speed limits; mandating a quota for highway and night driver training; peer passenger restrictions; and three-for-one recognition of learner hours with a driving instructor.

These measures have contributed to a reported 50 per cent reduction in the number of young drivers killed on NSW roads.<sup>2</sup> These positive outcomes for young drivers contribute to the 'Towards Zero' vision for deaths and serious road trauma on NSW roads.

### ***Areas for Further Inquiry***

With respect to the current Inquiry, the NRMA would like to take this opportunity to reiterate support for existing measures to support driver training and education. Based on government data, it is clear that road trauma outcomes for inexperienced drivers have materially improved over the medium term.

Notwithstanding, there are always additional actions that can be taken to further mitigate risk and improve road safety outcomes for the broader community. The following points are provided for the consideration of the Committee:

- Rural and regional learner drivers can experience challenges in accessing formal driver training and education. Accessibility to driving instructors is a vital aspect of learning safe driving behaviours through formal driver training channels.

Consideration may be given to the establishment of driver training hubs in key rural and regional centres to enhance driver training opportunities and better match the level of support provided in urban areas. Consideration may also be given to supporting modern driver training technologies, including driver simulators, with appropriate recognition of training hours if a module is completed through one of these hubs.

- Rural and regional residents can be more dependent on driving than those residing in metropolitan areas, including for social and economic inclusion. While in urban areas people have access to public transport and point-to-point options, services in rural and regional areas tend to be far more scarce or non-existent. People who are unable to drive in rural and regional areas are placed at relative social and economic disadvantage.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/roads/licence/driver/get-driver-licence.html>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/downloads/gls.pdf>.



- Motor vehicles and ongoing vehicle costs are a material household expense. The AAA's *Transport Affordability Index* estimates that a typical household in Wagga Wagga spends nearly \$13,000 per year on transport costs.<sup>3</sup>

Given newer vehicles have more advanced vehicular technology and safety measures, ensuring young drivers are in the safest possible car they can afford is critically important.

Research suggests that the average risk of death or serious injury to the driver in a crash in a vehicle manufactured in 2018 is around 43 per cent less than in a vehicle manufactured in 2000.

As an example, a 1999–2003 Mazda 323 has a 1-star driver protection rating; a 2003–2009 Mazda 3 has a 2-star driver protection rating; a 2009–2013 Mazda 3 has a 3-star driver protection rating; and a 2013–2018 Mazda 3 has a 4-star driver protection rating.<sup>4</sup>

- The NRMA receives considerable community feedback about the efficacy and impact of graduated speed limits imposed by the graduated licensing scheme. The NRMA supports the current graduated speed limits imposed on inexperienced drivers.
- While recognising the NRMA does support the graduated licensing scheme, the NRMA does not support training measures which would likely be associated with 'advanced driver training'.

There is no credible evidence to suggest that advanced driver training improves driver behaviour or road safety outcomes for young people. In fact, evidence suggests that young people who complete advanced driver training may have a higher crash risk due to being overconfident behind the wheel.

- The Keys2Drive program has been tremendously successful in providing knowledge and information to driver trainers. This program was established to 'teach the teachers', and involves a free, one hour driving lesson for the learner driver and their supervisor.

Sentiment around the program has been overwhelmingly positive. In mid-2020, the NRMA provided its 750,000<sup>th</sup> Keys2Drive lesson.<sup>5</sup>

The NRMA commends the Committee for reviewing rural and regional learner driver opportunities.

The NRMA will closely review the outcomes of the Inquiry and continue to work closely with government, industry and community to ensure ongoing improvements in road safety.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aaa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Transport-Affordability-Index-Q4-2020.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/downloads/ucsr-2020.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mynrma.com.au/community/news-and-media-centre/750000-free-professional-driving-lessons>.