



ACRS

The Australian College of Road Safety

News Letter



September 2003
Issue No. 1

Victorian Chapter

YOUNG DRIVERS EDITION

Welcome to the first edition of the ACRS—Victorian Chapter Newsletter. The Newsletter will bring College members some of the latest information about activities in both the College and in Road Safety locally and internationally. The Newsletter Committee looks forward to bringing you this publication and hope that you find it informative.

YOUNG DRIVERS FORUM



Young Drivers under the age of 25 are the most vulnerable road users in Australia. They make up about one sixth of all drivers but close to one third of drivers killed. ACRS through its policies supports measures to better prepare new drivers before licensing and to enhance their capacity to consolidate driving skills under low risk conditions during the provisional licence period. The Victorian Chapter of the College recently hosted a Youth Forum inviting four local, but internationally recognised road safety practitioners to give an update on recent road safety issues related to youth.

Senior Policy Adviser and Psychologist from VicRoads, Antonietta Cavallo opened the Young Driver Safety Forum, by providing an introduction to the issues currently facing Young Driver Safety in Victoria.

Ms Cavallo's presentation stressed the fact that young and novice drivers continue to be over represented in road crashes, whilst pointing out that more supervised on-road learner experience was one of the key ways in which the over representation could be reduced.

In highlighting the potential benefits of increased on-road experience, Ms Cavallo also discussed a number of programs and initiatives to increase the experience of learner drivers in Victoria, such as Keys Please, Drive 120 and an interactive website, The L-Site (www.lsite.vicroads.vic.gov.au).

Psychologist and Consultant, Warren Harrison from Eastern Professional Services Pty Ltd, presented his views on the current challenges in young driver research and program development. Mr Harrison covered the areas of Graduated Licensing Schemes (GLS), training, driver development, enforcement and public education examining the various contexts under which they operate. Regarding GLS, the locations and times when novices are at a highest risk are readily identifiable and there is evidence GLS can have a positive effect through exposure reduction. The key challenge therefore is to understand the mobility needs of novices and their parents and how they will be affected by changes to ensure negative consequences on mobility are avoided or minimised.

Senior Research Scientist John Catchpole of ARRB Transport Research presented key findings from two studies that shed some light on factors influencing the amount and variety of supervised driving experience accumulated by learners before graduating to a solo licence.

The first study investigated the amount of supervised driving experience accumulated by South Australian drivers who qualified for a solo licence through Competency-Based Training and Assessment as compared with those in South Australia and New South Wales who qualified through traditional tests¹. The second study examined the amount and variety of supervision during experience accumulated by learner drivers in Victoria prior to obtaining a probationary licence².

Based on the findings of these two studies, Mr Catchpole argued that graduated licensing systems should impose a minimum age for a first solo licence which is at least one year older than the minimum age for a learner permit. They should also impose a minimum period of at least 6 months for which the learner permit must be held before the driver becomes eligible to qualify for a solo licence. He also proposed a number of measures to increase the variety of driving conditions experienced by learner permit holders and to encourage learners to undertake practice drives supervised by family or friends in addition to lessons with professional instructors.

Psychologist and Consultant, Dr Ron Christie from RCSC Services Pty Ltd, was the final speaker. He concluded with a presentation that he prepared for the Transport Research Board (TRB) conference held in the US early this year on novice drivers and graduated licensing.

The key issues covered during the presentation included:

- The rationale for GLS for novice drivers. Evaluations show significant reductions in novice driver crashes ranging from 7% to over 55% (Nova Scotia evaluation and California evaluation).
- Improvements to GLS programs, such as night time restrictions, passenger restrictions, and compliance and enforcement of the GLS.
- The value of novice driver training/education for novice drivers in a GLS. It was argued that discounts on the graduated period should not be allowed in exchange for driver education/training.
- The potential for greater parental involvement in the GLS.

The forum concluded with a panel session, inviting attendees to ask questions of presenters and discuss key issues raised. The College would like to thank each presenter for their contributions to the forum and for allowing their material to be referenced in this Newsletter.

For further information the presenters can be contacted via email:

Ms Antonietta Cavallo: Antonietta.Cavallo@roads.vic.gov.au
Mr Warren Harrison: info@eastprof.com.au
Mr John Catchpole: johnca@arrb.org.au
Dr Ron Christie: christie@melbpc.org.au



NEW RESEARCH



RACV Report: Public perception of rest areas in Victoria (2003): A recent study commissioned by RACV to explore public perceptions of rest areas in Victoria, has generated a number of interesting findings related to fatigue and rest taking behaviour of young drivers (18-24) on long distance trips.

The study involved a market research approach, including both a qualitative focus group component and a quantitative component involving approximately 500 telephone surveys. The proportion of young drivers aged 18-24 was relatively small. However a number of interesting commonalities emerged in terms of their attitudes and habits when driving on long distance trips.

- The quantitative surveys showed that a smaller proportion of younger drivers are likely to take a rest break (36%) compared to older drivers aged 55+ (70%).
- On holiday trips, younger drivers want to get to their destination as quickly as possible and will push themselves harder than their older counterparts who tend to consider the journey as part of the holiday.
- Younger drivers tend to consider themselves in better physical condition and able to drive longer distances without being affected by fatigue.

These findings are of particular concern given the over representation of young drivers in crashes and the increased tendency for young drivers to be involved in fatigue related crashes.

For more information or for a copy of the report email: Thanuja_Gunatillake@racv.com.au

Additional Research:

The following is recently published research relating to some of the issues already discussed in this newsletter:

Hedland, J., Shults, R.A. & Compton, R. (2003). *What We Know, What We Don't Know, and What We Need to Know about Graduated Driver Licensing*. Journal of Safety Research, 34, 107-115.

Begg, D. & Stephenson, S. (2003). *Graduated Driver Licensing: the New Zealand Experience*. Journal of Safety Research, 34, 99-105.

Simons-Morton, B.G. & Hartos, J.L. (2003). *How Well do Parents Manage Young Driver Crash Risks?* Journal of Safety Research, 34, 91-97.

McKnight, A.J. & Peck, R.C. (2003). *Graduated Driver Licensing and Safer Driving*. Journal of Safety Research, 34, 85-89.

Foss, R. & Goodwin, A. (2003). *Enhancing the Effectiveness of Graduated Driver Licensing Legislation*. Journal of Safety Research, 34, 79-84.

VEHICLE SAFETY



It has already been stated that novice drivers are over represented in road trauma. This makes the safety of the vehicles they drive all the more important. Safety features that help the driver avoid a crash (crash prevention, e.g. ABS), and provide much greater levels of protection in the event of a crash (crashworthiness, e.g. airbags) should be high on the list for anyone purchasing a vehicle.

Buying a first car is one of the most anticipated and important things young people do. There are many choices and decisions involved, primarily revolving around price. However, price is not the only determinant of safety. New and used cars of a similar age and price can vary markedly in the safety they can provide to the occupant.

If you are offering advice to young people about vehicle purchase, the Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) and the Used Car Safety Ratings are useful tools for checking and comparing the safety of vehicles to help them make the safest purchase. See www.howsafeisyourcar.com.au or pick up some brochures at VicRoads offices or RACV shops for more information.

FUTURE EDITIONS

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¹ **Austroads** (1999). Investigation of learner driver experience under three driver licensing systems in Australia. Report No. AP-140/99. (Austroads: Sydney, New South Wales)

² **Catchpole J and Coutts M** (2002). Continued monitoring of driving experience among learner drivers: 1999-2000. ARRB Research Report No. ARR 357. (ARRB Transport Research Ltd: Vermont South, Victoria).

ACRS Victorian Chapter Newsletter Committee

Paul Tierney - Email: paul_tierney@tac.vic.gov.au Shannon Newman - Email: shannon@tim-newman.com
Natasha Anderson - Email: natasha_anderson@racv.com.au Dale Cofield - Email: Dale.Cofield@roads.vic.gov.au
Website: <http://www.acrs.org.au>

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