

**Third party parental policing of graduated driver licensing in the Australian Capital Territory**

Prepared by Alexia Lennon, Lyndel Bates, David Belsham, Sarah Matthews and Klaire Somoray

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Table of Contents

[Acknowledgements 4](#_Toc460344770)

[Executive Summary 5](#_Toc460344771)

[1 Introduction 6](#_Toc460344772)

[1.1 Background 6](#_Toc460344773)

[1.2 The Current Study 7](#_Toc460344774)

[1.3 Study Aims 8](#_Toc460344775)

[1.4 Structure of the Report 8](#_Toc460344776)

[2 Study 1: Interviews with parents of provisional licence holders and P-platers 8](#_Toc460344777)

[2.1 Introduction 8](#_Toc460344778)

[2.2 Method 8](#_Toc460344779)

[2.3 Findings 9](#_Toc460344780)

[2.3.1 Parents 10](#_Toc460344781)

[Awareness of the restrictions on provisional licences 10](#_Toc460344782)

[Ease of young people’s compliance with licencing restrictions 11](#_Toc460344783)

[What were parents most concerned about in relation to their young driver’s safety 11](#_Toc460344784)

[Parental strategies in relation to encouraging compliance with licence restrictions 13](#_Toc460344785)

[2.3.2 Themes from interviews with young provisional licence holders 15](#_Toc460344786)

[Awareness of the restrictions on provisional licences and complying with these 15](#_Toc460344787)

[Parental strategies to assist young people in complying with restrictions on their licences 17](#_Toc460344788)

[Summary 17](#_Toc460344789)

[3 Study 2: On-line survey of parents 17](#_Toc460344790)

[3.1 Introduction 17](#_Toc460344791)

[3.2 Method 18](#_Toc460344792)

[Measures 18](#_Toc460344793)

[Awareness of licencing restrictions 18](#_Toc460344794)

[Parenting style 18](#_Toc460344795)

[Strategies to encourage compliance 19](#_Toc460344796)

[Perceptions of social influences on young driver behaviour 19](#_Toc460344797)

[Perceptions of riskiness of driving 19](#_Toc460344798)

[Parental opinion of laws, police and crime 19](#_Toc460344799)

[Perceptions of parental control and support 19](#_Toc460344800)

[Sensation seeking 20](#_Toc460344801)

[Perceptions of riskiness of driving 20](#_Toc460344802)

[3.3 Results 20](#_Toc460344803)

[Parental awareness and perceptions of the importance of restrictions on ACT provisional licences 21](#_Toc460344804)

[Perceptions of the level of risk for young drivers 24](#_Toc460344805)

[Parenting Style 24](#_Toc460344806)

[Strategies to encourage compliance 24](#_Toc460344807)

[P-plater responses to the survey 26](#_Toc460344808)

[4 Discussion 27](#_Toc460344809)

[5 Intervening to increase young driver safety: Parents as third party enforcement partners with police 28](#_Toc460344810)

[6 Conclusions and Recommendations 31](#_Toc460344811)

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# Executive Summary

This report documents research funded by the NRMA ACT Road Safety Trust Fund in 2015 to investigate the strategies by which parents encourage their young provisionally licenced drivers to comply with the restrictions on their licences and with the road rules. The intention was to explore whether the construct of third party policing is a potentially useful way of attempting to increase the safety of young drivers. The aims of the study were to:

1. Assess the level of parental support for a more comprehensive GDL system within the ACT
2. Identify parental approaches and strategies in encouraging and enforcing their young adult’s compliance with the restrictions of graduated driver licencing (GDL) and the road rules more broadly
3. Describe the factors that facilitate or impede parental imposition of limits on the young driver
4. Identify and describe young driver (P plate) views of parental limit-setting and methods of ensuring compliance with GDL
5. Use the findings to inform the design of one or more interventions targeting parents to increase their young provisionally licenced driver’s compliance with road laws and with GDL restrictions

**Rationale for the study**

It appears that as they progress through the GDL system, provisional licence holders’ compliance with road rules decreases, resulting in greater levels of riskier driving and greater tendency to receive traffic infringements. Enforcement of traffic laws is the most common initiative used to modify driver behaviour and thus reduce the incidence of traffic crashes. However, this type of formal enforcement does not appear to be as effective with young new drivers. Indeed, an ‘emboldening’ effect, where drivers exposed to higher levels of police enforcement were more likely to report lower levels of compliance, has been reported in Australia. It appears that more effective methods of influencing young novice drivers may be needed.

Given that parents are more likely than other family members or non-family members to be the primary supervisor of a learner driver (Bates, Watson, & King, 2014), parental involvement during the provisional phase has the potential to encourage compliance with GDL restrictions and the road rules more broadly.

The research consisted of two studies: an interview based study with 16 parents of provisionally licenced drivers in the ACT and 11 young provisional drivers (the children of the interviewed parents). The second study was an on-line survey intended to obtain a larger and more diverse sample of parents.

**Key Findings**

Interviews with parents revealed that parental awareness of zero breath and blood alcohol requirements on provisional licences were very high though awareness of other restrictions was low. Some parents believed (incorrectly) that use of mobile phones was more restricted for provisional drivers than fully licenced drivers. Alcohol and mobile phone use were also the two issues that were of most concern to parents (both in the interviews and survey) in relation to their young drivers’ safety.

Parents in the ACT appear positively disposed towards greater levels of restriction on young novice driver mobile phone use while driving than is currently in place.

Parents were very willing to assist their young people to manage the potential for drink driving and offered alternative transport to help them to do this

Parents in the interview sample used a variety of strategies in encouraging their young person’s compliance with licencing restrictions and with safer driving in general. These included:

* Instrumental assistance e.g. transport, money for transport to encourage compliance with zero alcohol
* Setting a good example
* Maintaining open discussion about driving and their expectations of the young person
* Imposing additional family rules or restrictions (e.g. for mobile phones and/or peer passengers)

Parents in the survey endorsed the use of fewer strategies and did not seem to consider additional rules

Generally, parental views and values were consistent with those embodied in the law, and there was an overall acceptance among parents that they should be involved in the licencing process for young people including the provisional phase. Parenting style in these two samples were categorised as authoritative, and therefore likely to have a high level of acceptance of responsibility for protecting their young adults, monitoring their behaviour and potentially intervening if necessary. Moreover, family and friends were perceived as being are more influential than police on young people’s driving.

Thus results from both the interviews and the survey study support the notion that the licencing system is an important form of support for parents in their efforts and desire to protect their young people and that attempts to involve parents further in supporting young people’s compliance with road rules and licencing restrictions may be well received. Consistent with this, voluntary or mandated adoption of additional restrictions that are in keeping with best practice in graduated driver licencing would likely assist parents to influence their novice drivers. Thus it would seem that third party policing has potential as an intervention in the ACT.

# Introduction

## Background

The commencement of solo driving is characterized by an increase in crashes, possibly related to risky driving behaviours, particularly within the first six months of licensure (Bates, Davey, Watson, King, & Armstrong, 2014; Hartos, Eitel, & Simons-Morton, 2002; Lee, Simons-Morton, Klauer, Ouimet, & Dingus, 2011; Mayhew, Simpson, & Pak, 2003). The known risk factors for this group include age and inexperience (Curry, Pfeiffer, Durbin, & Elliott, 2015) along with high-risk driving conditions such as night time driving, peer passengers, alcohol impairment, and speeding (Bates, Davey, Watson, King & Armstrong, 2014; Beck, Hartos, & Simons-Morton, 2002; Shope, 2006). One of the most effective countermeasures developed to reduce crash rates for this high risk group is Graduated Driver Licencing (GDL) (Bates et al., 2014; Shope, 2007).

Graduated driver licensing systems, which consist of a learner, provisional and open licence, are designed to address this elevated crash risk by limiting (via restrictions and conditions on the licence type) the novice driver’s exposure to high risk situations while still allowing them to gain driving experience ([Bates, Allen, et al., 2014](#_ENREF_2); [McCartt, Teoh, Fields, Braitman, & Hellinga, 2010](#_ENREF_16); [Williams & Shults, 2010](#_ENREF_21)). Restrictions on novices are progressively relaxed at the different stages of licencing, allowing a graded exposure to riskier driving circumstances as novices gain driving experience (Bates, Allen, et al., 2014).

The ACT has a GDL system in place, although other jurisdictions within Australia and internationally have more evolved versions of the licensing system which may include elements mandated hours of practice requirements, exit tests and night driving and/or peer passenger restrictions. However, the ACT system does have an additional feature: a compulsory, pre-licence education program that seeks to encourage novice driver awareness of those specific behaviours that increase novice driver crash risk as well as to encourage understanding of the need for, and compliance with, the restrictions imposed under GDL.

Although different Australian states have different restrictions on provisional licence holders, all require zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels for new drivers, and police in every jurisdiction conduct random breath testing, many at a testing level of 1 test per licenced driver annually (Ferris et al., 2013). However, it appears that as they progress through the GDL system, provisional licence holders’ compliance with road rules decreases (Scott-Parker, Watson, King & Hyde, 2012; Allen, Murphy & Bates, online first; Bates, Darvell & Watson, online first). This decrease in compliance is consistent with patterns of compliance in the US, with one Californian study identifying that, within the first three years of driving unsupervised, 55 per cent of new teen drivers had received a traffic infringement (Chapman, Masten, & Browning, 2014).

Enforcement of traffic laws is the most common initiative used to modify driver behaviour and thus reduce the incidence of traffic crashes (Bates, 2014; Bates et al, 2012). Traditionally, traffic enforcement programs in Australia are underpinned by application of deterrence principles ([Bates, Soole, & Watson, 2012](#_ENREF_5); [Fleiter, Watson, & Lennon, 2013](#_ENREF_8)). However, this type of formal enforcement does not appear to be as effective with young new drivers (Allen, Murphy, & Bates, 2015, online first; Bates, Darvell, & Watson, 2015, online first). One Australian study used a deterrence theory framework to consider the effect of deterrence variables on self-reported compliance with road rules. This study found an ‘emboldening’ effect where drivers exposed to higher levels of police enforcement were more likely to report lower levels of compliance (Bates et al., 2015, online first). Additionally, it appears that young driver perceptions of police enforcement affect their self-reported compliance with the road rules. Those provisional drivers who perceived that police officers frequently enforce traffic rules were less likely to report violating fixed rules such as drink driving. However, perceptions of police enforcement did not affect young driver violations of transient offences such as speeding (Bates, Scott-Parker, Darvell, & Watson, Under review).

Given that parents are more likely than other family members or non-family members to be the primary supervisor of a learner driver (Bates, Watson, & King, 2014), parental involvement during the provisional phase has the potential to encourage compliance with GDL restrictions and the road rules more broadly. This parental involvement is frequently implied within GDL frameworks (Simons-Morton, 2007; Williams, Leaf, Simon-Morton & Hartos, 2006), though not necessarily formally supported in the form of practical assistance. Previous research has suggested that provisional drivers are more concerned about parental enforcement of their driving than with police enforcement (Allen, Murphy & Bates, online first; Bates, Darvell & Watson, online first). Moreover, parents generally appear to be aware of the risks faced by novice drivers and want to be involved in the licencing process so that they can reduce their teen’s risk (Williams, Leaf, Simons-Morton, & Hartos, 2006).

In an investigation of parental influence on adolescent compliance with GDL restrictions within the New Zealand Drivers Study, Brookland, Begg, Langley, and Ameratunga (2014) found that many parents were knowledgeable and supportive of licensing conditions. Their results suggest that limited parental knowledge is associated with a greater likelihood of adolescent breaches of the restrictions. Low adolescent GDL compliance was also associated with parental intention to enforce few rules regarding their adolescents driving (Brookland, Begg, Langley and Ameratunga, 2014). Hartos, Simons-Morton, Beck, and Leaf (2005) suggest that parental limits become stricter when a GDL system is in use. Such patterns suggest that parental knowledge of road rules is important in relation to influencing novice driver behaviour.

The importance of parents in the protection of young novices coupled with the potential lower effectiveness of formal policing with this group suggests that there is a need to explore other frameworks to assist in the development of more effective enforcement countermeasures for young drivers. One such model is third party policing. Third party policing occurs when the police partner with other organisations or groups (either willingly or unwillingly) to increase compliance ([Mazerolle & Ransley, 2005](#_ENREF_14)). As parents have been shown to have a greater influence than police over young driver compliance ([Allen, 2013](#_ENREF_1)) and GDL relies on parents to enforce its various provisions ([Chaudhary, Williams, & Casanova, 2010](#_ENREF_7); [Foss & Goodwin, 2003](#_ENREF_9); [Shults, 2010](#_ENREF_19); [Williams, Leaf, Simons-Morton, & Hartos, 2006](#_ENREF_20)), the application of a framework such as third party policing may be useful.

A considerable proportion of police work involves liaising with other individuals, groups or organisations that police believe have some capacity to prevent or reduce crime. Third party policing is an approach that involves police persuading or forcing other individuals, groups or organisations to assume a level of responsibility for the prevention or reduction of crime problems ([Buerger & Mazerolle, 1998](#_ENREF_6)). Third party policing essentially involves the exercise of influence by non-police (the third party) over a target group, or individuals within a target group: those who are committing the crime or disorderly behaviour ([Mazerolle & Ransley, 2002](#_ENREF_13)). In the context of graduated driver licencing, the target group is young novice drivers. For the current study, the third party is parents. Third party policing also requires some kind of legal lever which, in this case, can be regarded as driver licensing laws. Third party policing generally occurs in an ad hoc manner and need not involve police attempting to coerce the third party. Rather, it can be relatively benign, with police simply asking for the cooperation of a third party ([Mazerolle & Ransley, 2002](#_ENREF_13)).

## The Current Study

Currently, little is known about how parents go about implementing driving restrictions and traffic laws more broadly or monitoring their teenager’s compliance with them. A better understanding of this and whether parents find it to be effective is a first step towards identifying better ways to guide and support parents, and how to gain or support their assistance or alliance as third parties in enforcement. In addition, although GDL systems clearly identify the factors that are high-risk for novice drivers, and establish clear limits for parents on what is appropriate driving behaviour ([Hartos, Simons-Morton, Beck, & Leaf, 2005](#_ENREF_11)), effective enforcement of GDL provisions requires parents to be aware of the GDL system requirements in their jurisdiction ([Chaudhary et al., 2010](#_ENREF_7)). It is not clear to what extent parents actually are aware of the restrictions or the safety benefits that underpin them. In addition, it is unclear what aspects of the restrictions present difficulties for parents in relation to ensuring that young drivers comply, or the extent to which parents are willing and able to enforce them. An understanding of what parents experience as easy or difficult to enforce, and the success they achieve with specific approaches or methods, is a necessary initial step to designing interventions to assist parents in better protecting their young novice drivers. Lastly, some of the literature refers to the aspect of parent-teen communication and parenting style in influencing safe driving in young drivers (Ginsberg, Durbin, Garcia-Espana, Kalicka & Winston, 2009; Hartos et al., 2005) and earlier exploratory research by the authors suggests that parenting style may influence the degree to which young people value or are concerned about meeting or complying with their parents’ expectations or requests (Belsham, Lennon, Bates, & Matthews in preparation). For this reason, parenting style, as expressed through support and monitoring (Ginsberg, et al., 2009) was also a variable of interest.

In order to explore parental strategies in relation to encouraging their provisionally licensed young people to comply with the restrictions of their licences and the road rules and promoting safer driving generally, a mixed methods study was designed. Qualitative methods were used in the initial phase to explore ACT parental experiences with their young people and identify the strategies they had used to encourage compliance with licencing restrictions. Similarly, P-plate driver views on the provisional licence experience in the ACT and which parental approaches or actions had proved most helpful or effective were also sought. A quantitative on-line survey was then used to obtain a broader and larger sample of ACT parents and assess the extent to which the various strategies were being used by parents and their assessment of the effectiveness of these. The aims and methods of the study are described next.

While it was initially planned that an intervention based on the findings from the study would be designed and piloted as part of the project, challenges in the recruitment of participants to the study led to significant delays in the collection of data. As a result, the aims of the project were re-scoped. Accordingly, the study concludes by proposing the outline of an intervention to address the issue of encouraging greater novice driver compliance with provisional licencing restrictions which could be developed and piloted in the future.

## Study Aims

This report documents the methods and findings in relation to each of the following project objectives:

1. Assess the level of parental support for a more comprehensive GDL system within the ACT
2. Identify parental approaches and strategies in encouraging and enforcing their young adult’s compliance with the restrictions of graduated driver licencing (GDL) and the road rules more broadly
3. Describe the factors that facilitate or impede parental imposition of limits on the young driver
4. Identify and describe young driver (P plate) views of parental limit-setting and methods of ensuring compliance with GDL
5. Use the findings to inform the design of one or more interventions targeting parents to increase their young provisionally licenced driver’s compliance with road laws and with GDL restrictions

## Structure of the Report

Below, Section 2 outlines the qualitative study which examined parents’ experiences of the provisional licence phase and the strategies they used in relation to encouraging their provisionally licensed young people to comply with the restrictions of their licences and the road rules. Section 3 reports the findings from the on-line survey of parents. Section 4 brings the findings from the two studies together before Section 5 describes the outline of a proposed intervention to increase young driver safety. Finally, Section 6 briefly sets out the conclusions from the study and recommendations for future intervention and policy in the ACT.

# Study 1: Interviews with parents of provisional licence holders and P-platers

## Introduction

In order to explore the experiences and perspectives of parents in relation to the provisional driving licence phase in the ACT, qualitative telephone interviews were conducted with parents of provisionally licenced young people and with their current provisional licence holders.

## Method

**Participants and Procedure**

Parents were recruited through a variety of methods including email flyer promoting the study and distributed through Road Ready Centres, internet promotion and via radio and television coverage of the study. Promotional materials described the purpose of the study and explained that parents participating would be interviewed by telephone for approximately 30 minutes. Gift vouchers to the value of $30 were offered in recognition of parents’ time. Parents were informed that provisional drivers could also participate if they wished, but interviews would be shorter in duration (15 minutes) and would be separately compensated with gift vouchers of $15.

A final sample of 16 parents (14 mothers, 2 fathers) and 11 provisional drivers participated in the telephone interviews. Information and consent materials were emailed to participants before interview times were arranged. Eligibility criteria for parents were that they had to reside in the ACT and have at least one child currently on a provisional licence; their teenager did not have to be part of the study in order for parents to participate, but we offered the opportunity to each parent to invite their young people to be interviewed too.

For young people, eligibility criteria were that they were residents of the ACT, were currently on a provisional licence, and a parent had agreed to participate in the study and given consent to the young person to do so as well. Parent interviews were semi-structured and of 15-30 minutes in duration. Interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and participants gave consent to this process verbally prior to the start of the interviews. Parents were offered the opportunity for their young people to be interviewed too. Where the parent provided consent, researchers contacted the young person to invite participation. Consent from the young person was sought verbally after explaining the nature of the study and the questions.

In total, 16 parents described their experiences with 26 provisional drivers (12 girls; 14 boys) ranging in age from 17 years to 24 years, as some parents reported that they had up to three of their children either having completed provisional licensing or going through the process at the time of the interview.

Questions for parents focussed on their experiences in relation to their teen’s provisional licence phase, awareness or knowledge of the restrictions on provisional licences, beliefs about the purpose of these, their main concerns in relation to their teen’s licencing process, their views about the ease or difficulty their teens experienced in complying or otherwise, and their approaches and strategies to encouraging or enforcing compliance with these or with road rules generally and safe driving practices.

Eleven provisionally licenced children of the parents who were interviewed agreed to participate (6 males, 5 females), aged 17 (*n*=8) and 18 (*n*=3)

**Analysis**

Thematic analysis of the transcripts was carried out using NVivo to store the materials and to assist in the display of the coding. Analysis was conducted by two researchers (AL, DB) working independently on the transcripts of the interviews. In extracting the themes, each transcript was first read in detail (the first pass) and notes made of the overarching points each parent or young person made in relation to each of the research questions of interest, and thus was initially structured according to these questions. Following this, transcripts were again read in detail to capture the meanings, sections and text that were related to each of the main points/extracted themes as well as to identify any emergent themes.

Interviews with the provisional drivers were also analysed in relation to the parent’s approach to parenting in terms of the apparent level of support from the parent to his or her teen and the level of monitoring or control exercised in relation to the teen’s driving or general behaviour.

## Findings

Below, the main points that were identified in relation to each of the research questions has been detailed along with quotes from the interviews. The quotes are intended to both illustrate participant responses as well as to provide the reader with material that allows for an assessment of the trustworthiness of the interpretations the researcher (AL) has placed on these.

### 2.3.1 Parents

Awareness of the restrictions on provisional licences

In the ACT, restrictions on provisional licences consist of: Zero breath/blood alcohol; mandatory display of P plates (unless *Road Ready Plus* course has been completed or the driver is over 26 years and the provisional licence holder has applied for endorsement of his/her licence to ‘PC’); towing restrictions; and limiting of demerit points to the accumulation of no more than 4 points over a three year period (unless *Road Ready Plus* course has been completed, in which case demerit points increase to 8).

Parents were asked which of the restrictions on provisional licences they were aware of. All parents were aware of the requirement for zero blood alcohol levels for provisional drivers, with most mentioning this first, and only two parents requiring prompts. For the majority of parents interviewed this was also the issue of greatest concern to them in relation to their teen’s safety. All parents believed that their teens complied with this restriction and that they were both willing and anxious to do so. Parents had different explanations for their beliefs, with some citing their teen’s general compliant disposition, while others gave reasons that were more related to their son’s or daughter’s internal standards of behaviour, as illustrated here:

“I know I can trust him [to not drink and drive]…he’s basically a sensible kid”

“They’ve seen the effects of [alcohol on people close to them]. Neither of them are interested at this stage and their friends are not that way inclined either…they know the limit is zero and that’s all there is to it”

“She’s very strict [on herself]. If she’s going out, she doesn’t drink at all…I think she would prefer to be- to know-that she hasn’t had anything to drink and she’s safe to drive and to drive some of her friends…”

Around a third of parents were aware (unprompted) of the lower number of demerit points for provisional drivers. However, those parents who mentioned this restriction seemed vague about the details or then went on to talk about the increase of points available to provisional drivers who complete the *Road Ready Plus* course. Views about this provision were mixed. Two parents whose sons had completed the course expressed views that suggested they had initially thought the course a good idea as a source of additional protection for their young people. However, based on reports from their sons (who had completed the course), they had changed their minds, concluding that the young people attracted to the course were primarily motivated by wanting to increase their demerit limits (because they had already lost points) rather than a desire to be safer drivers. Both of these parents were careful to highlight that their sons had not lost points and were not motivated by intentions to cover the possibility that they might do so during their P phase. One parent described it as “crazy” to allow young drivers who had already committed infractions and lost points to then be rewarded by removal of the P plates and additional points by completing the course.

Three parents mentioned, without being prompted, that provisional licence holders need to display their P plates at all times. Most parents were aware of this requirement once prompted, and it is likely that using and displaying P plates is such a routine behaviour for young drivers that it didn’t occur to parents to think of it in terms of a licencing requirement.

Only two parents were aware of the towing restrictions, even when prompted. However, some parents believed there were additional restrictions in relation to passengers and use of a mobile phone. Several parents talked about the difference in maximum permitted driving speeds for P platers in NSW compared to the ACT, and there were mixed opinions as to whether this was a desirable feature of the NSW system or not. Some parents thought that being limited to a slower speed than the rest of the traffic in which they were driving made their young driver less safe, as it irritated other drivers and caused them to take unnecessary risks, especially in overtaking manoeuvres. Others believed that the lower speed limits were protective for inexperienced drivers.

Ease of young people’s compliance with licencing restrictions

Possibly because there are few restrictions on provisional licences in the ACT compared to those of other states that are within feasible driving distance (e.g. NSW, Victoria, SA), parents thought that their young people had few problems complying. All parents thought the restrictions were to protect young people and underpinned by safety considerations (rather than any attempts to discriminate against young people or exercise undue regulation or control). However, some parents appeared to have a poor understanding of the factors that are associated with crashes for young people, and one parent expressed the view that passenger restrictions were unnecessary in the ACT: “we don’t need it in Canberra where roads are good and traffic is like a country town”. Similarly, several parents appeared to be unaware of the association between overconfidence and elevated crash risk for novice drivers and thought that all young people should have to complete a defensive driving course as part of their licencing. Some had encouraged or required their teen to do so. These opinions appeared to be underpinned by a focus on vehicle handling skills rather than an understanding of the attitudinal and risk-related behaviours of young drivers. That is, some parents appeared to be acting on beliefs that skilled drivers are safe drivers, as illustrated by these parents’ views:

I think that’s very important for everybody to go through because they need to be aware of how, you know, to…get control of a car if it gets out of control. You know if you’re going too fast around a corner….how to correct the wheel properly…so any defensive training, I reckon, should be part of the actual drivers’ licence.

I said to him that I had done a course when I was in my twenties…and that I thought it would be good for him…just to be aware of how to manage the car…He came back from the defensive driving course on a quite a high and they learnt a lot about how the car works, which I think meant handles on the road….the heavy braking and doing, sort of, hairpin turns and getting to actually practice a lot of things that you don’t do on the road unless….something has gone wrong.

Some parents had an appreciation of risk factors for novice drivers’ crashes and indicated that they had attempted to share this with their teens. One parent put it:

I like the idea of you being on your Ps for a year. It just gives you that time and other people are more aware that you’re still a new driver…

While all parents believed that the restriction on alcohol to zero was an effective safety measure, they had mixed views in relation to the effectiveness of the display of P plates, with some parents expressing concerns that the P plate made their young person a target for the aggressive and risky driving of others. There were several accounts of incidents where it appeared that another driver had attempted to intimidate a P plater, and parents spoke of other drivers deliberately following too closely behind their P plater, or overtaking them in a risky manner.

What were parents most concerned about in relation to their young driver’s safety

Consistent with their awareness of the zero alcohol requirement on provisional licences, parents indicated high levels of concern about alcohol, both in terms of the potential for their own teen’s impairment and for the legal ramifications, as illustrated in this parent’s words:

Parent: I just worried about the alcohol consuming…because they go out to parties and, like, there is obviously alcohol passed around and she knows that zero tolerance is zero. And I do worry about that, initially

Interviewer: Right, so it sounds like you stopped worrying about it?

Parent: Yes because I think she got done a random breath test once and she hadn't been drinking, and I think that really scared her. Also she said to me “Mum I value my license very much. I wouldn't be able to get to work ad go out to all these places. So I will never, ever drink. You can be happy knowing that.” So we've never had a problem…I think the RBT [being] picked up one night when she was least expecting it and she was in the car by herself and it really pushed the adrenalin forward. I think she realised that they can be anywhere, any time. That really got her, but she hadn't been drinking fortunately...

Parents were also concerned about the element of pressure from peers to drink alcohol and then to run the risk of driving afterwards. For instance:

He will go to a party with no intention of drinking whatsoever, but unfortunately with the age group that, you know, “we’ll just have a beer, or “have a beer!”” [and] he’ll ring me and he’ll say “I’ve just had one. Can you come and pick me up?” and I’ve always said it doesn’t matter what time, I will come…..he’s taken me up on that maybe four times…and I always remind him [that I will] each time he goes out

There are a lot of eighteenth birthdays on at the moment…[and] I’ve said to him for these parties “if you want to take your own one low alcohol and have it when you first get there, then that’s ok”… [and] “I would prefer you to stay if anything is going on, or call me. But whatever you do don’t drive”

While most parents who were interviewed were aware that all drivers must only use a mobile phone in hands free mode, some had a poor understanding of the rules and the underlying purpose of these, apparently focussing on the call function rather than the potential for distraction generally:

they’re [teenagers] good with their mobiles. My daughter has it where she can see it. I’m not 100% clear on the rules…if she’s stopped at traffic lights she’ll look at it but she won’t text while she’s driving. She will text if she is sitting at traffic lights- a real quick message and keep going. If it rings she will let it ring out

However, several parents were very aware of, and concerned about, the potential distractions from mobile phones on their young people. For example:

...no one is allowed to use their mobile [hand held]…he’s [his son, a P plater] got Bluetooth in his car…[so] he probably uses it when he’s driving if I’m to be honest.

Parents recognised the pressures on young people and the important role of mobile phones for them. One mother put it:

…[not using a mobile phone] is a drama with all the young ones yeah…they like to check their messages, or see whether they’ve been invited to go somewhere …mobile phones are just so important to that connection….most of the older cars that P platers have when they get their licence don’t have the technology…where you can actually check your text messages…as you’re driving…[so] you don’t have to touch your phone…so there’s a lot more temptation to pick up their phones and check…[and he doesn’t do it when I’m in the car] but I’m sure when I’m not in the car that he would be checking

Another called for technological assistance:

I think there should be apps that actually prevent the phones from being able to work in, probably, all cars…you know, if the phone is ringing, it is just a bit of an urge….it’s too hard for an adult to resist [answering it] let alone a young adult…the mobile phone I think is probably as dangerous as alcohol…and I would prefer if there was legislation around that, or at least options for parents to do something in agreement with their young driver…they are completely on their phones all the time so it must be quite hard for them to put that away. I have actually asked him to put it [phone] in the boot at this point…until he gets more confident

[My daughter doesn’t have difficulty complying with not using mobile phone while driving] but I don’t think she would tell me if she did…and I am aware that it is such a temptation. Like, I myself just have my phone [switched] off…otherwise it interrupts work and can be a distraction driving. And I kind of wish that…there was some tool that would make their phones switch off as soon as they were in the car

Evident in two of these quotes is a parental desire for support from more official sources such as legislation and technology. Presumably this is to allow them to have a greater sense of legitimacy in attempting to influence the level of risk to their young people from mobile phones. Mobile phone use was an area that other parents had put in place strategies to try and reduce the level of risk or temptation. As for the first parent above, some parents did this via family requests or rules in relation to how novice drivers could make it difficult to use their phones: put it in the boot, in the glovebox, in the rear of the car, switch it off were all suggested ways of managing the temptation. Some parents described approaching the issue through discussion with their young people, as here:

…we have stressed that you know “you’re not to change [the music on mobile phone]…or texting…we have gone through the dangers of driving and texting and getting your attention off the road. They don’t do it when I am in the car, but...I can’t promise that they don’t when I’m not

Others apparently felt strongly enough about the issue to have put consequences in place:

If I caught my daughter on her mobile phone she would lose her car privileges! PERIOD! Forever! Until she could leave home and pay for it herself…she knows when I’m serious.

Two parents expressed strong concerns about the influence of peers on their young person’s driving. While they recognised that this might not be deliberate attempts on the part of same-aged friends to cause a problem for the driver, the potential for distraction was still real:

where I am concerned is when two or three or four of them in the car and they are all talking or texting and that sort of thing. I’ve tried to stress with [daughter] that if something like that is going on she needs to shut that out and not participate…that is where the distractions are

The only other restriction I did give him was that he wasn’t to drive a whole heap of his friends around…[because] of distractions…I have said [to son] “I don’t mind you having one [passenger] in the car and it is a reasonable and responsible person, but I don’t want five kids being driven somewhere

A third parent, while not identifying passenger distractions as a big concern of her own, referred to her daughter’s management of the issue:

she was the oldest in her group of friends so she was the first one to drive…[and] she would tell them, you know, “this is nerve wracking for me and I’m responsible for your life. So let me do my job [and don’t distract me]”’

Parental strategies in relation to encouraging compliance with licence restrictions

As described in previous sections (above), parents referred to various ways in which they attempted to influence or assist their young people to comply with restrictions on their licences or with the road rules more generally. In relation to alcohol, all the parents that we interviewed had strategies in place to manage this. All parents described offering instrumental support to their young people to assist them to comply with the zero breath/blood alcohol requirement, mostly in the form of picking young people up after any occasions when they might have consumed alcohol and thus be at risk of breaching the restriction. There was recognition that this might not be voluntary exposure to alcohol, as here:

…and we’ve told her that if there’s ever any situation where she thinks someone may have spiked her drink….or given her alcohol accidentally, that she can ring us any time [and we’ll pick her up]

Some parents organised and paid for taxis, or insisted that young people arrange overnight accommodation if they were going to be drinking. Most parents also appeared quite knowledgeable about their young person’s behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol, with some identifying their teen as a non-drinker or being in the habit of being the designated driver for their friends, a responsibility the young people took seriously.

They’ve [son and daughter] seen the effects of [alcohol on people close to them]. Neither of them are interested at this stage and their friends are not that way inclined either…they know the limit is zero and that’s all there is to it

She’s very strict. If she’s going out, she doesn’t drink at all…I think she would prefer to be-to know-that she hasn’t had anything to drink and she’s safe to drive and to drive some of her friends…

Parents also described putting additional and complementary rules or restrictions in place to increase the safety of young people or assist them in complying with their licence restrictions. As referred to above, some parents put additional restrictions in place in relation to alcohol (e.g. only have a single drink; stay overnight if drinking; don’t drive at all). Several parents also described additional rules in relation to mobile phone use. In some cases, the basis of this was that parents were misinformed and thought there was a requirement that provisional drivers not use a mobile phone at all while driving. Others put additional expectations in place because they believed that mobile phones present too great a risk of distraction for novice drivers to deal with on top of the demands of becoming good drivers (as can be discerned in the quotes above in relation to mobile phone use).

Several parents described additional restrictions they used with their teens around passengers and night time driving. For one parent, family rules had been put in place because the parent believed that similar passenger restrictions to those applicable in other states applied in the ACT. Others were concerned about the influence of peers (see above for examples) on their young people and so had instituted their own rules. These varied in content from those who didn’t permit the young person to carry any non-family passengers, through those who only permitted pre-arranged passengers (whose parents had also been consulted and agreed), to those who expressed a preference for particular types of passenger, but left it to the novice driver to organise compliance.

The majority of parents in the sample interviewed spoke about the importance of discussions with their teens around the responsibilities of driving and their expectations in relation to driving behaviour and avoidance of risks:

...lots of talking and discussing things that we’d seen on TV, or you know, accidents that people had…her friend wrote off her car after she got her Ps so that was a kind of catalyst for her …to just remind her…this is what we expect of you [not use your phone, not drink drive]…and setting expectations and discussing problems if they come up…[for example, before she got her Ps] we said we didn’t like the idea of her driving with people we didn’t know…and she’s found that [since she got her Ps] a couple of friends parents have said they’re allowed to drive with her but not other people…and we would prefer to come and pick her up…than have her come home with…somebody that we didn’t know what kind of driver they were…or whether they were likely to take risks

This reliance on their relationship with their young person appeared to be a key strategy for most parents. Some highlighted that their teen was very “sensible”, “reliable” or in other ways, very trustworthy and indicated that they thought this made the process of compliance easier. Some thought that their teens had strong internalised acceptance of high safety and compliance standards, so that it was less necessary for them to coerce compliance as the young person did this him or herself. For example, one mother commented on her daughter:

…if people are talking about using their mobile phones [while driving] she’ll be like “what are you doing? Why would you do that?”…and she comes home and tells me that…[some friends] text all the time while they’re driving…so hopefully she can have a bit of influence on them…

Only a few parents had teens who were reportedly more difficult to manage in relation to either the licencing process or driving in general.

Modelling responsible behaviour or leading by example were mentioned by parents as primary strategies they used to encourage safe driving behaviours and compliance with restrictions. For example:

I had a bad habit in the beginning you know, to have it [mobile phone] with me. But then eventually I started putting it in the boot of my car…so that’s what I try to get [my son] to do…at least to the glovebox to ensure that it’s in a safe place and not reachable.

As illustrated in some of the quotes above, parents also used the experiences of others to alert their teens to the need to comply, the underlying reasons for restrictions and the likely outcomes if they chose to breach restrictions. Mostly these were to do with people close to the teen, but some parents also used more distal examples from media reports and social media (e.g. hearing about the crashes of others).

### 2.3.2 Themes from interviews with young provisional licence holders

Awareness of the restrictions on provisional licences and complying with these

Around half of the young people interviewed identified the zero alcohol restriction on provisional licences without being prompted:

I know that I can’t have any alcohol in my system… that’s really it that I can think of

However, when prompted, all the young people recognised the restrictions related to alcohol and displaying P plates. Awareness of other restrictions was fairly low, and similarly to parents, some young people believed that there were passenger restrictions on ACT provisional licences:

zero blood alcohol limit. And there was the limit to the amount of passengers in a car

There was also some confusion about whether there were restrictions on the maximum speed permitted or night time restrictions for provisional licence holders.

like the ACT is only restriction, I think, it is a maximum [speed on a P licence] of a hundred kilometres. I think that’s literally it. And you can’t be drunk and that’s it. That’s all the restrictions there are in the ACT.

wear your P plates, obviously. Like, lose points. I am not sure that like...in the ACT now, about like, after curfew, after 11 … I think that is just NSW... don't know what else there is actually?

Young people appeared to understand the reason for the zero alcohol requirement and thought that it was easy to comply with this. Some felt very strongly about the potential for others to drive after drinking too, as expressed by one young person:

like I’m completely against driving under the influence whether it’s alcohol or drugs I find it absolutely stupid and practically suicide. If somebody does that, no I just do not agree with that so driving under the influence is just not something I’d ever do in the first place. So I completely understand the restrictions and comply with them entirely

Another said:

I just don’t drink anything, really. Some people in my friends group would say, “Oh yeah, I’ll just take a taste of that,” I wouldn’t… I’m just, not, into doing it at all…[and] it’s hard to judge [how much you’ve had], and you’re on zero [alcohol] anyway. But some people say, “Oh yeah, it doesn’t really matter”,

Only one young person commented that complying with alcohol restrictions was a problem, though she appeared to agree with the reasoning behind the requirement:

You can’t enjoy a glass of wine for dinner if you are planning on driving out a little bit later. So sure, that’s irritating. But overall, I’m not complaining. I think it’s important that P platers don’t have any alcohol in their system if they’re driving. So I understand where they’re coming from

Several of the young people referred to dealing with the issue by recruiting friends and family to provide lifts and transport home if they were planning on having alcohol, as here:

there’s normally someone who has got something on the next day [so won’t be drinking] so they drive to a party. Or if they don’t go, you can always sort of ring someone. So I’ve never really had an issue [complying with zero alcohol] and if worse comes to worse, Mum could just come and pick me up so I’ve been pretty lucky with that

Young people were specifically asked about their use of mobile phones while driving. Most appeared to be aware that hand-held mobile phone use is not permitted while driving regardless of the type of licence. Some young people described themselves as fully complying with this restriction:

I haven’t ever gotten a call while I’m driving, and I’m not sure how to do that through my Bluetooth, but I’ll figure it out one day. But I’ve never wanted to pick up or message someone back or whatever, because I just figure I can do it when I get to wherever I’m going

Another person commented:

personally I don’t use the phone, like I don’t text I don’t call etc. I just have a blue tooth system and my phone just sits in a cradle on the window which I just use for like you know I just tap on the screen and just push it to change songs etc.….[and] most of my friends are very strongly against it [too]

However, other responses suggested that understanding of the law in relation to phone use was partial and compliance was interpreted loosely, with texting when at lights somehow not ‘counting’ as use. For example, one young person said:

I keep my phone on silent and I keep it in my pocket. If I ever have to do anything it would be like a one word answer and it would be at a stop light but even then I feel pretty bad about that and try not to do it too much, only if it’s desperate…I have been in the car where someone has used the phone when driving, while going around a corner in fact, and I was a bit iffy about it…and I was kinda like “Hey, do you want me take your phone?” Just pretty quickly. So, I tried to stop that but yeah...

Similarly, one person commented:

Look, admittedly I’ll maybe check my phone or reply to a text if I’m stopped at a traffic light or something but other than that, if I’m actually moving I just don’t touch my phone. Or even look at it. I make a point of putting it face down. [If I do respond to a text] then if I don’t finish it, I again, put the phone down and say [to myself] “I’ll finish it at the next lights”

A third P plater put it thus:

At traffic lights especially, you sort of have a look at it and you text message the odd reply. I’m not as bad at it now compared to when I first got my licence I’ve sort of … little trips and stuff I can just leave it, put it in the glovebox and not touch it. But especially when I first got my licence I was pretty bad with it

Parental strategies to assist young people in complying with restrictions on their licences

Young people reported that their parents were very likely to assist them to comply with the zero alcohol requirement by providing them with alternative methods of getting to and from places where they intended to consume alcohol or where there would be a high likelihood that they would.

like I just really did not want to drink and drive at all, like I had no motive to...especially like with Mum, like she said, like no matter what time of the morning it is she will come and pick me up. So I think that definitely helps...helps a lot

Other participants described themselves as using a designated driver system with their friends or as being the designated driver themselves and so managed compliance with zero alcohol this way (see quotes above). Some of the young people who were interviewed were too young to be legally permitted to buy or be supplied with alcohol. Most of these P platers described themselves as non-drinkers or as having little interest in beginning to drink alcohol, and so regarded the issue of drink driving as not applicable to them. Accordingly, they did not identify any parental strategies for managing their compliance. There were also no descriptions of specific parental strategies in relation to avoiding mobile phone use.

When asked what their parents did that was helpful or unhelpful almost all young people focussed on their parents’ involvement in the process of learning to drive, and reported helpful activities. They described their parents providing them with varied driving experiences (including practicing driving with in-car distractions), helping with the organization of trips, practice or specific events, having helpful discussions, and assisting them with specific difficulties or hurdles in the learning process (e.g. anxiety; automatic versus manual transmissions).

### Summary

These parents appeared very aware of the zero breath and blood alcohol requirement for provisional licences and motivated to assist their young people to comply. It appears the message about the relationship between impaired driving and crashing has been absorbed by parents who perceived this requirement as safety related. Parents appeared to be less aware of other restrictions. Most parents thought that their young people found the restrictions easy to comply with.

Parents attempted to manage the licencing restrictions and issues of young novice driving safety in three main ways: providing instrumental help, such as transport or money for alternative transport; by maintaining discussions with their young people about safety and driving issues; and by using additional rules or restrictions on their young person’s driving. Additional rules focussed on mobile phone and peer passengers.

Young people appeared to agree that they found licencing restrictions easy to comply with, and acknowledged that this was facilitated by instrumental help from their parents. It appears that mobile phone use, particularly for texting among young provisionally licenced drivers may be of concern.

# Study 2: On-line survey of parents

## Introduction

In order to explore parent views and experiences with a broader cross section of parents, the original project outline included a second data collection method: an online survey targeting parents of provisionally licenced drivers. Findings from the qualitative component of the study as well as from the literature in the area, especially that related to strategies and parenting styles, were used to inform the content of the survey questions.

## Method

### Measures

In addition to demographic details, several other constructs and variables were of interest in this study. Each of these and the measures used are described below.

Awareness of licencing restrictions

As had been in the interviews with parents, the research interests for the survey included parent awareness of the restrictions on provisional licences, their understanding of the purpose of these, the extent to which they thought that their teen driver experienced difficulty complying with restrictions, and their beliefs in relation to how their young person actually complied with the restrictions.

Parenting style

In order to explore the relationship between parenting style and the strategies parents used, four items asked the extent to which parents perceived themselves as supportive and how much they thought they monitored their provisional driver. Items that were used to ask about these factors were taken from Ginsberg et al. (2009). Accordingly, four items assessed parenting control and support. Responses were on a 5 point scale from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’. Three items targeted the control factor (rules and monitoring) and were averaged to obtain the measure of Control (e.g. In my family, there are clear rules about what my young person can and cannot do). A single item asked about supportiveness (Support: I give my child support when he/she needs it). High scores were regarded as those equivalent to an average overall response of ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly agree’. Parenting style was then categorised into one of four types: Authoritarian (high Control, low Support); Authoritative (high Control, high Support); Permissive (low Control, high Support); Uninvolved (low Control, low Support) (see Figure 1).

Authoritative

Parenting

Authoritarian

Parenting

Permissive

Parenting

Disengaged

Parenting

High in Support

Low in Support

High in Control

Low in Control

*Figure 1:* Parenting styles as defined by dimensions of parental rules and monitoring (Control) and supportiveness (Support) towards adolescent children (adapted from Ginsberg et al, 2009).

### Strategies to encourage compliance

Based on the strategies identified in the earlier parent interviews as well as earlier work by the research team, a list of potential strategies to encourage compliance with licencing restrictions was developed. Parents were asked to select all those that applied from the list (see Table 4).

Perceptions of social influences on young driver behaviour

One construct from Aker’s Social Learning theory, Differential Association, was used to underpin some of the items in the survey. The research interest was in determining the extent to which parents perceived their young people’s driving behaviour was influenced by particular groups. Specifically, parents were asked to rate how important (‘not at all important- very important’) each of six influences (family, close friends, wider peers, social groups (e.g. sporting groups), police, and media) were to their young person’s driving.

Perceptions of riskiness of driving

Previous research on parental approaches to their teens’ driving has suggested that perceptions of risk are a potentially very important influence on driving-specific parenting (Hartos et al., 2004; Williams, 2006). Accordingly, in the current study, parents were asked to rate the riskiness (5 point scale, “Not very risky-Very risky”) of different phases of graduated licensing (Learner driver when first learning; Learner driver when ready to sit the practical test; Provisional driver; Fully licenced driver).

Parental opinion of laws, police and crime

Parental attitudes towards laws, police and crime generally were of interest as a context to the potential influence of these over teen drivers. The measure consisted of a set of 17 items. Perceptions of law legitimacy were drawn from Murphy and Cherney (2009) and focussed on whether parents thought compliance with the law was discretionary (2 items: “You should obey police decisions because that is the proper or right thing to do”; “You should obey the directives of the police if you consider actions lawful” on a 4-point scale ‘Strongly disagree- Strongly agree’). Items related to perceptions of police legitimacy were adapted from Murphy & Cherney (2012) and measured the extent to which parents’ own positions were consistent with the law (4 items, e.g. ‘My own feelings about what is right and wrong usually agree with the laws that are enforced by the police’, 5-point scale Strongly disagree- Strongly agree). Seven items assessed parental views of police performance (e.g. How good a job do you think the police are doing in your neighbourhood at…preventing crime; 5-point response scale of ‘Very poor job- Very good job’) (Mazerolle, Bates, Bennett, White, Ferris & Antrobus, 2015).

**Participants**

**The Provisional driver sample (P-Platers)**

The survey was structured to allow provisionally licenced young people to participate if they wished. Questions for P platers covered some of the same areas of interest as those for parents but included measures of sensation seeking and perceptions of their parents’ approaches and strategies in relation to helping them comply with the requirements of their licences.

Perceptions of parental control and support

Questions for young people sought their perceptions of their parents support and level of monitoring of their driving activities. Seven items were used to gauge perceptions of parenting approach. Four of these were worded similarly the 4 items used in the parent section in relation to parenting approach were used (e.g. “In my family, there are clear rules about what I can and cannot do”), with response options on a 5 point scale (Strongly disagree-Strongly Agree). An additional three items asked about the young person’s agreement in relation to whether parents applied driving-specific restrictions: “There are restrictions on where I can go in the car”; There are restrictions on who can be with me in the car”; and “There are restrictions on how late I can be out with the car”. An open-ended question asked participants to identify any other rules that were placed on the young person’s driving.

Parental strategies to encourage compliance with licence restrictions was assessed with a single opened item that sought free text responses: “What do your parents so that helps you in complying with the restrictions currently imposed on your licence?”

Sensation seeking

Two measures of sensation seeking were used. General sensation seeking was assessed with 8 items (based on Huba et al, 1981) including “I like to do frightening things” and “I like wild parties”. Responses were on a 5 point scale (Strongly disagree- to Strongly agree). Eight items asked about driving-specific forms of sensation seeking (Stradling, Meadows & Beatty, 2004). Example items are: “I enjoy the sensation of accelerating rapidly” and “I like to raise my adrenaline levels while driving”. Response options were on a 10 point scale, “Do not agree at all – Agree strongly”. A composite score on general sensation seeking and driving-specific sensation seeking was calculated by summing scores for all individual items.

Perceptions of riskiness of driving

Young people were asked the same four items in relation to their perceptions of the risk of the different phases of licencing.

**Procedure**

The on-line survey was developed using Key Survey to display the questions and information and the final version posted on a QUT-based website between late July 2016 and mid-August. Participant information and consent formed the first page of the survey and agreement to participate was required (via a checkbox) in order to access the survey questions. Participation was anonymous and acknowledgement of participant time was via the opportunity to enter a random draw for one of four $50 gift vouchers. Entry to the draw was conducted separately from the responses to the questions in order to preserve confidentiality. Personal details related to entry into the draw were destroyed following the despatch of gift vouchers (via registered post).

Recruitment was via several means. Email promotional material was distributed to student email lists for the Open University and via *Road Ready* centres. Researchers contacted sporting clubs in the ACT and sought their assistance in distributing the promotional materials to members of the club and their parents. Two public notices advertising the study were placed in the Canberra Times, midweek and on a Saturday, with the web link to the study given within the text. Media releases discussing the study and its wider context were sent to radio and print media in the ACT. The Canberra Times contacted the researchers and conducted a telephone interview in relation to the study and its purpose.

## Results

**Participant characteristics**

Despite the multiple methods used to promote the study, response was poor, with only 100 participants completing the survey. Of the 99 valid responses (one person did not complete), 63 were parents of P-Platers and 36 were young P-Plate drivers. Of these responses, 24 parents and 2 P-Platers indicated that they lived in the ACT. Analyses reported below thus relate only to the sample of 24 parents.

Basic descriptive data is also given for the 2 young ACT provisional drivers who responded. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the parent sample while Table 2 presents the characteristics of the young people for whom parents were responding (i.e. their children).

### Parental awareness and perceptions of the importance of restrictions on ACT provisional licences

Table 3 shows the proportion of parents who indicated that they thought particular restrictions were currently in place on provisional licences in the ACT, their opinions on whether these restrictions should be applied in the ACT, and perceptions of the relative importance of these.

All parents from the ACT were aware that provisionally licenced drivers must display P plates. However, only 21% regarded this as one of the three ‘most important’. While the proportion of parents who were aware of the requirement for zero-alcohol on provisional drivers was lower (90%, 22/24), all thought this was a restriction that should apply, and regarded it as the ‘most important’ restriction.

Levels of awareness of restrictions on mobile phone use for provisional drivers were somewhat lower than for display of P plates or alcohol, at 71% (17/24) parents. Given that this restriction consists of prohibiting hand-held mobile phone use, and applies to all drivers in the ACT (regardless of licence class), it is unclear whether parents interpreted the question as referring to additional restrictions on provisional licence holders or not. A greater proportion thought that this restriction should apply (83%, 20/24), and two thirds (67%) selected it as one of their three ‘most important’ restrictions.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Parents (N = 63, on-line survey)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** |  | *n* |
| Gender | Male | 4 |
|  | Female | 20 |
| Age group | 41 – 50 years | 11 |
|  | 51 – 60 years | 13 |
|  |  |  |
| Highest Education Achieved | Completed Grade 10 | 1 |
|  | Completed Grade 12 | 3 |
|  | Trade or Technical Certificate or Diploma | 6 |
|  | University Degree (incomplete) | 2 |
|  | University Degree (completed) | 5 |
|  | Postgraduate Degree or Diploma | 7 |
|  |  |  |
| Family Income Band | Less than 65,000 per annum | 1 |
|  | 65,001 - 95,000 per annum | 3 |
|  | 95,001 - 120,000 per annum | 4 |
|  | 120,001 or more per annum | 15 |

Consistent with the findings from the interview study, some parents (3/24) believed that there were passenger restrictions on provisional licences in the ACT. Half of the parents (12/24) thought there should be passenger restrictions. However, only one parent nominated this as one of the three most important restrictions.

Eleven (46%) and seven parents (29%) believed that ACT provisional licence conditions include restrictions on vehicle power and speed, respectively. Presumably, these errors in belief are based on awareness of legislation in other states (speed restriction applies to provisional drivers in NSW; vehicle power restriction in Queensland and Victoria). However, high proportions (92% for vehicle power, 46% for speed) thought that there should be such restrictions on ACT provisional licences. Similarly, high relative proportions (71%, 21% respectively) nominated this restriction as one of their three most important.

Restrictions on towing was the least well known: only 7 (29%) parents were aware that this already applies in the ACT. While over 70% (17/24) of parents agreed that it should apply in the ACT, none nominated it as one of the three most important restrictions.

None of the parents identified night time driving as an existing restriction on ACT provisional licences (a correct perception) and only 6 parents (25%) thought that this restriction should apply in the ACT.

Table 2

*Characteristics of the Provisionally Licenced Drivers for Whom Parents Responded*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** |  | ***n*** | **Percentage** |
| P-plater’s Gender | Male | 12 | 50% |
|  | Female | 12 | 50% |
|  |  |  |  |
| P-plater’s Age | 17 | 2 | 8.3% |
|  | 18 | 6 | 25.0% |
|  | 19 | 13 | 54.2% |
|  | 20 | 1 | 4.2% |
|  | 21 | 1 | 4.2% |
|  | 22 or older | 1 | 4.2% |
|  |  |  |  |
| How long on a provisional license? | Less than a year | 10 | 41.7% |
|  | A year or more | 14 | 58.3% |
|  |  |  |  |
| Does the P-plater live at home with parent? | Yes | 23 | 95.8% |
|  | No | 1 | 4.2% |
| Does the P-plater own/ have exclusive use of a vehicle? | Yes | 17 | 70.8% |
|  | No | 7 | 29.2% |

Table 3

*Parental Beliefs and Perceptions of the Importance of Restrictions on Provisional Licences in ACT (ACT sample only, n = 24)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Provisional licence restriction | Believe currently applied | | Think should be applied | | | Most important to be applied\* | |
|  | *n* | % | | *n* | % | *n* | % |
| Display of P Plates | 24 | 100% | | 18 | 75% | 5 | 21% |
| Zero-alcohol | 22 | 92% | | 24 | 100% | 24 | 100% |
| Mobile Phone restrictions | 17 | 71% | | 20 | 83% | 16 | 67% |
| High-powered vehicle restriction | 11 | 46% | | 22 | 92% | 17 | 71% |
| Peer-aged passenger restrictions | 3 | 13% | | 12 | 50% | 1 | 4% |
| Towing Restrictions | 7 | 29% | | 17 | 71% | 0 | 0% |
| Night time driving restrictions | 0 | 0% | | 6 | 25% | 0 | 0% |
| Lower maximum speed on highways restrictions | 7 | 29% | | 11 | 46% | 5 | 21% |

*Note.* \*Could select up to three

*Figure 2:* ACT parental beliefs and perceptions of the importance of restrictions on provisional licences in ACT (ACT sample only, *n* = 24)

Perceptions of the level of risk for young drivers

Responses to the items on perceptions of risk for drivers in the different phases of licensing suggested that parents in this sample regarded Learner drivers at the start of learning to drive as at equal risk as drivers on a provisional licence (M = 3.8, SD = 1.1 for both). Learner drivers about to sit their practical driving test were rated as somewhat less risky (M = 3.2, SD = 1.0), while fully licenced drivers were regarded as both the least risky and at relatively low risk (M = 2.9, SD = 1.3) with the mean score for this corresponding to responses of “not very risky” or “not risky”).

Parenting Style

The majority of parents were categorised as having an authoritative parenting style (67%, 16/24). A further seven parents (29%) were categorised as having a permissive parenting style, 1 (4%) parent was categorised as an authoritarian parenting style, and there were no parents categorised as uninvolved.

Fifty-eight percent (14/24) of the ACT parents indicated that they agreed with the statement that “parents should be responsible for the driving of their children who are currently on their provisional licence”.

Strategies to encourage compliance

Most parents who responded to the question about strategies selected several strategies by which they had attempted to assist their young people to comply with the restrictions on their provisional licences (see Table 4). The most popular of these was modelling of the type of driving the parent expected from the P plater (87.5%) or setting a good example to their children. Highlighting examples of other people’s poor driving behaviours, providing advice and educational information on driving risks, and reminding their P-platers of the rules were also common strategies. Three quarters of the parents who responded indicated that they used forward planning with their young drivers to encourage them to avoid potential situations where they might breach the restrictions on their licences (such as when going out drinking, socialising or to parties). The least common strategy was that of setting additional rules. Only a quarter of parents in ACT (25.0%) indicated that their P-platers comply with the current provisional licence restrictions within their state.

Table 4

*Parental Endorsement of Strategies to Encourage or Enforce their Teen Driver’s Compliance with Restrictions on their Provisional Licences (in order of most helpful to least helpful)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strategy, Rule or Action | *n* | Percentage |
| Ensure that I drive as I expect them to | 21 | 87.5% |
| Highlight examples of others' poor driving | 19 | 79.2% |
| Remind them of the rules | 18 | 75.0% |
| Help them plan their driving activities so they can meet the restrictions (i.e. before long road trips, parties, social events etc.) | 18 | 75.0% |
| Offer lifts when needed | 15 | 62.5% |
| Talk to them about their driving whilst they are driving | 14 | 58.3% |
| Trust them to know the rules | 13 | 54.2% |
| Provide them with information/advice that they may not be aware of (i.e. how long alcohol can remain in your system) | 12 | 50.0% |
| Share examples of serious crash consequences | 9 | 37.5% |
| Use media (and social media) to prompt discussions about the risks associated with driving | 3 | 12.5% |
| Set additional rules | 1 | 4.2% |

***Perceptions of the social influences on young driver behaviour***

Parents regarded their young people’s driving behaviour as most influenced by family (including the parent), with the mean rating being 4.3 (on a 5-point scale). Of the other groups, close friends and police were seen as the next most, and equally, influential (see Table 5). More distant social groups were seen as the least influential.

Table 5

*Parental Perceptions of the Influence of Different Groups on the Driving Behaviours of P-platers*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Groups | | |
|  | *M* | *SD* |
| Their family (You, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles) | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| Their close friends | 3.9 | 1.3 |
| Police | 3.8 | 1.1 |
| Media (i.e. Television, Social Media) | 3.4 | 1.1 |
| Their wider peer group | 3.1 | 1.2 |
| Social groups (i.e. sporting groups, Church groups) | 2.6 | 1.1 |

***Parental opinion of laws, police and crime***

In relation to police, law enforcement and crime, parents indicated relatively high levels of law legitimacy in this sample, with mean agreement that their views and beliefs were consistent with the law being M = 4.4 (SD = 0.7). Levels of perception of police legitimacy were also high, with mean agreement that the decisions of the police should be obeyed because it is the right thing to do being M = 3.6 (SD = 0.5) (on a 4-point scale) and that one should obey the police if believing it is accordance to the law being M = 3.7 (SD = 0.5). Parents indicated that they were ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to assist the police by calling them if they witnessed a crime, to report suspicious activity, or to provide information about a suspect. Parents were also of the view that, overall, police were doing a good job in keeping their neighbourhood in order, safe and enforcing traffic laws (M = 3.9; SD = 0.8).

### P-plater responses to the survey

Responses to the survey were received from two P-platers in the ACT, both male. The first, aged 18 years, was in the first 12 months of his provisional licence, indicated that he drove the family car (no personal vehicle) and was still living with his parents. The second was aged 19 years, licenced for more than 12 months, had his own car, and was living independently.

In response to the item on the extent to which they complied with the restrictions on their licences, one indicated that he sometimes complied, while the other indicated that he always complied.

Scores on the general sensation seeking measures were similar for the two participants and indicated relatively low levels of sensation seeking (total score = 18 out of a possible score of 40). Driving related thrill and sensation scores were also relatively low, (total scores of 29 and 37 out of a possible score of 80) and equivalent to disagreeing that any of the listed driving behaviours were enjoyable.

Based on their responses to the items about parental monitoring and support, parenting style was categorised as authoritative for both participants.

In relation to driving-specific restrictions, as might be expected, the young person who no longer lived in the parental home also indicated that his parents did not place restrictions on where he could drive, who he could drive with (e.g., passenger restrictions) or the time of night for him to be driving. The young person still living with his parents indicated that while his parents did not place restrictions on where he could drive, they had rules about his passengers and how late he could stay out in the car.

Perceptions of the riskiness of Learners, Provisional and fully licenced drivers, both participants rated learner drivers just beginning to learn as the most at risk and drivers who were fully licenced as at least risk.

# Discussion

Parental awareness of zero breath and blood alcohol requirements on provisional licences were very high across both studies (interviews, survey), and unsurprisingly, were regarded as of high concern for young people’s safety and very important in relation to compliance. It appears that parents were very willing to assist their young people to avoid breaching this requirement. Parents who were interviewed gave two reasons for this: their concern about their own young person’s impairment and also their young person’s exposure to greater risk as a result of others’ impairment. Both of these reasons would seem to be important potential levers in relation to engaging parents in their teens’ driving.

Awareness of the other restrictions on provisional licences was lower, especially for the restriction on weights when towing. For display of P plates and the lower demerit points, this was a little surprising. However, as mentioned above, it may be that parents regard the display of P plates as so obvious that they do not think of it as a licence restriction or condition and therefore did not think to identify it as such. Somewhat similarly, parents may not regard demerit points so much as a restriction on their young person’s licence especially as the majority of parents would probably expect their young drivers to comply with the law and there not be influenced or affected by the number of demerits available to them. Lack of awareness of restrictions on towing or supervising a learner driver is probably not surprising as these are likely to be less common behaviours.

The perception that mobile phone use was more restricted for provisional drivers than fully licenced drivers may be related to the greater level of parental concern about these as a potential distraction for young drivers. In turn their concern may be a result of the level of media attention that has been given to this issue. It may also be they are accurate in their concerns that young people are using their phones while driving, an interpretation consistent with some of the comments from the interviews with young drivers and prior research (e.g. Gauld, Lewis, White & Watson, 2016). In relation to these, it was particularly concerning that some young people do not regard texting at the lights as using their phones, or somehow think that brief use is less risky than other forms of use. It may be that young people have different conceptualisations of mobile phones and their use from those of their parents or older people. These raises the potential for future studies that examine young people’s definitioins and perspectives in relation to what constitutes mobile phone use. The contradictions evident their comments suggest that while some young people recognise that texting while driving may be dangerous, their perceptions of the risks associated with this do not appear to outweigh the perceived benefits of continuing to do so, and they may not include texting as part of the illegal uses of a mobile phone.

Results in relation to mobile phones from the parent survey were consistent with the more detailed information in the interviews and suggest that parents in the ACT are positively disposed towards greater levels of restriction on young novice driver mobile phone use while driving than is currently in place: two thirds of the survey parent sample indicated that mobile phone restrictions were one of the top three most important restrictions. Moreover, parent comments in the interviews suggest that they recognise that young people’s self-regulation for this behaviour may not be effective. It appears that parents in this sample are not aware that the technology to allow them to restrict the extent to which mobile phones can be used while driving already exists and is readily available. It may be useful to bring such developments to the greater general attention of parents to encourage voluntary adoption of protective measures. This may also be evidence that there would be support if the ACT Government chose to introduce further restrictions such as a mobile phone restriction for young drivers.

Parents in the interview sample spoke about several different strategies they used to assist them in encouraging their young person’s compliance with licencing restrictions and with safer driving in general. An important strategy appeared to be additional family rules or restrictions in relation to alcohol, mobile phones and/or peer passengers. While this strategy was included in those presented on the survey, only 1 parent who responded to the survey agreed that this was something he/she already used. This suggests that it may be helpful to alert parents to other parents’ positive experiences with additional voluntary restrictions and their potential benefits. As parents indicated that they already believe that family has the greatest influence over their young people’s driving behaviour, parents may be receptive to such suggestions, particularly if couched in terms that reinforce parental successes in providing guidance up to the point of provisional licencing.

Generally, parents in this sample thought that their own views and values were consistent with those embodied in the law, and were respectful and appreciative of police and their efforts. Coupled with the overall acceptance among parents that they should be involved in the licencing process for young people including the provisional phase (consistent with results from other Australian studies, (Allen, Murphy & Bates, 2015), this suggests that attempts to involve them further in supporting young people’s compliance with road rules and licencing restrictions may be well received. Thus it would seem that third party policing has potential as an intervention in the ACT. Moreover, parental perceptions that family and friends are more influential than police on young people’s driving suggest that the rationale for greater involvement would be clear to parents.

The results from both the interviews and the survey study support the notion that the licencing system is an important form of support for parents in their efforts and desire to protect their young people. Although the parents who were interviewed reported using additional rules to help their provisional drivers to stay safer, the parents responding to the survey did not. For both sets of parents, adoption of additional restrictions that are in keeping with best practice in graduated driver licencing (please see Bates, et al, 2014 for a review of graduated driver licensing) would assist them to influence their novice drivers: parents already imposing rules would have their actions legitimised; parents not currently using such additional rules may nevertheless be likely to cooperate with them. Further, inclusion of restrictions in relation to mobile phone use and passenger restrictions in particular would alert parents to the importance of these in relation to young novice crashes.

Finally, the categorisation of parents into parenting styles suggested that most parents in these two samples were authoritative, being both supportive of their young people as well as maintaining a moderate level of monitoring of their activities. Parents with this style of parenting are likely to have a high level of acceptance of responsibility for protecting their young adults, monitoring their behaviour and potentially intervening if necessary.

# Intervening to increase young driver safety: Parents as third party enforcement partners with police

Findings from the interviews and survey with parents suggest that parents are both positively disposed towards assisting their young drivers to be safer when driving as well as to comply with the restrictions on their licences. While not universally true for all the parents in this study, many parents also seem receptive to the idea that the restrictions on provisional licences in the ACT could be extended to include some of those applicable in other states, especially in relation to mobile phones and peer-aged passengers.

Parents described ways in which they attempted to influence or assist their teen drivers to comply, particularly in relation to avoiding drink driving or any sort. However, it is likely that parents are an underutilised resource in this respect.

There have been a number of interventions with the parents of novice drivers in other countries, particularly states in the US. Some of these have been evaluated as effective and might prove useful for an Australian application, though difference in the features of the individual graduated licencing systems would necessitate modifying and pilot testing interventions developed for other populations and cultures. The types of these interventions vary and include providing educational materials to parents, web-based, face-to-face delivery programs and other types of interventions. A brief summary is given next.

*Dissemination of educational materials to parents*

Several interventions have sent educational materials to parents. For instance, in Tennessee within the US, parents were sent one of three types of intervention: (i) a letter only; (ii) a more detailed letter plus a booklet; and (iii) more detailed letter, booklet and information cards sent at various periods. The evaluation of this intervention suggested that the inclusion of additional material in the second and third groups did not appear to significantly influence parental behaviour (Chaudhary, Ferguson, & Herbel, 2004). Although targeted at the parents of learner drivers (as opposed to those who have started to drive without supervision), an intervention where educational material was provided at the time a learner licence was obtained did not appear to influence parental behaviours (Goodwin, Waller, Foss, & Margolis, 2006).

*Web-based educational interventions*

A web-based educational intervention, the Teen Driving Plan (TDP), designed to improve the supervised practice experience of learner drivers was very well received by parents (Mirman, Lee, Kay, Durbin, & Winston, 2012). This intervention consisted of 53 short videos regarding how to develop young driver specific skills, a log to record driving hours, and follow-up telephone calls to encourage engagement with the program. A randomised control trial of the intervention indicated that it improved the range of practice driving that learner drivers undertook with their parents (Mirman et al., 2014).

*Training programs*

A number of face-to-face education and/or training interventions with parents of learner or novice drivers have been used in the US. Several jurisdictions have compulsory programs. For example, some jurisdictions in Virginia mandate parental attendance at training programs as part of a range of measures to reduce young driver crashes. Georgia has a free, optional program for parents (Governor's Highway Safety Association, 2012).

Some programs have been evaluated, though there are few programs which are both compulsory and have been evaluated for their effectiveness.

Connecticut in the US mandates parental and new driver participation in a two hour training program (Governor's Highway Safety Association, 2012). Research found that parents were supportive of the program and that they were aware of basic information regarding licensing restrictions (Chaudhary, Williams, & Casanova, 2010). However, evaluation of the impact of the program on behaviour and crashes is yet to be undertaken.

Massachusetts also has a two hour parent training program. However, the new drivers do not attend. This training is viewed as a ‘train-the-trainer’ program and focuses on developing those skills that will enable the parent to mentor their new driver during the learner stage. The program has not been evaluated (Governor's Highway Safety Association, 2012).

The *Steering Teens Safe* intervention provides parents with a 45 minute training session regarding motivational interviewing techniques and 19 print-based lessons about safe driving. Evaluation of this program was carried out using a treatment and control group design and found that the training had a small effect on self-reported risky driving behaviours (Peek-Asa et al., 2014; Ramirez et al., 2013).

*Checkpoints program*

One of the most well researched interventions is the Checkpoints program. The main component of the Checkpoints program is an agreement voluntarily undertaken between parents and young drivers. This helps develop consensus from both parties on what driving rules will apply as well as the consequences that will result if the agreement is broken. The agreement also highlights four high-risk driving situations for which there is evidence of elevated novice driver crash risk: night time driving; driving with peer-aged passengers; driving in bad weather; driving on high speed roads. The intervention is designed to encourage review of the rules at four pre-agreed time points. There are two types of Checkpoints program. In the first, families receive a video through the post as well as newsletters throughout the graduated driver licensing process. In the second program, these materials are delivered in a 30 minute face-to-face program (Governor's Highway Safety Association, 2012). One of the drawbacks of the second program is the difficulty in encouraging parents to attend a facilitated program (Governor's Highway Safety Association, 2012).

Research regarding the original Checkpoints program identified that it increased parental limit setting and it increased perceptions of risk (Simons-Morton, 2007; Simons-Morton, Hartos, & Beck, 2004; Simons-Morton & Ouimet, 2006). However, the program does not appear to protect young drivers against being involved in a crash (Simons-Morton, Hartos, Leaf, & Preusser, 2006).

*Other types of interventions*

*Telematics*. One intervention involved the use of in-vehicle data recorders to provide information to family members about their driving. In terms of the design of the project, one of the ‘treatment’ conditions delivered information to parents about how to be vigilant regarding their young male driver’s behaviour. Results suggested that this group was more likely to access feedback from the in-vehicle data recorder (Farah et al., 2014) and that the young male drivers of these parents were less likely to experience risky driving events (Shimshoni et al., 2015).

Though not based on in-vehicle data, it is also possible for parents in some US states to be notified when their teen driver is involved in a crash, is issued with a ticket or has their licence revoked, providing parents with feedback on some aspects of their teen’s driving. Alternatively, some parents are given access to their child’s official driving record (Governor's Highway Safety Association, 2012).

*Driving contracts*. The *I Promise Program* consists of parent-novice driver contracts, following which the young driver displays a sticker on the rear window of the vehicle. Follow-up research with families undertaking the program suggested that there was minimal recall of what was agreed within the contract after six months. Additionally, the sticker did not have a lasting impact. Families also identified that the $49 cost of the program was too expensive. Impact assessment of the effect program on risky driving has not been conducted (Votta & MacKay, 2005).

*One to one educational visits*. A further intervention involved two visits to families to discuss driving related issues: the first prior to licensure and the second after the young person received their licence (Haggerty, Fleming, Catalano, Harachi, & Abbott, 2006). This intervention was evaluated using a randomised control design. Those families who received the visits were more likely to report having a written driving contract and less likely to report engaging in risky driving behaviours (Haggerty et al., 2006).

A review of several interventions identified that those which focussed on the parent and young driver partnership, provided concrete tools to parents (e.g. a weekly report card), had ongoing or direct contact with parents as well as a strong theoretical framework were the most successful (Curry, Peek-Asa, Hamann, & Mirman, 2015). However, we are still learning about the most appropriate ways to influence parents so that they remain involved with their novice driver after licensure (Subcommittee on Young Drivers, 2009).

**A proposed outline for an intervention with parents**

The research on existing interventions with parents of young drivers suggests that, depending on the design of program, they have the potential to improve young driver risk taking propensity and therefore safety outcomes. Additionally, there is community support for parental involvement with measures designed to keep young novice drivers safe such as driver education (Hartos & Huff, 2008) and supervising novice drivers while practicing (Bates, Watson, & King, 2014).

Based on both our review of existing interventions and the findings reported above as well as other related research carried out in Queensland, we propose an outline of an intervention with parents using the principles of third party policing. Given the inherent difficulties in persuading parents to attend a facilitated session, and the uncertainty identified in the literature about the content that should be delivered in such sessions (Goodwin et al., 2013), it appears more appropriate an intervention aim not to place an undue burden on parents to be physically present. This might also enable wider reach, particularly for people located in more sparsely populated areas such as the outlying communities in the ACT. Thus, the intervention design favoured here is a multimedia design with the main messages/components being delivered via an online site.

Our suggestion would be that the materials include documents that parents can download as well as a series of YouTube style videos of interviews with real parents talking about their approaches and successes with their provisionally licensed young people. These should focus on positive experiences that reinforce the rewards from adopting particular strategies or actions. There should also be at least one video clip that is delivered by a police person in uniform, preferably addressing a topic that can be couched in positive terms e.g. illustrating a positive interaction with a young driver or parent of a young driver and where there is a potential action or behaviour that parents could adopt. Each video should be short, around 1-3 minutes in duration and address only one issue or strategy in order to increase the likelihood that these will be accessed/used. Issues or topics could include the three main concerns of alcohol, mobile phones and peer-aged passengers, but could extend to other issues such as speeding, night time driving, displaying P plates, and fatigued driving. Although addressing a different topic, examples of this style of delivering messages to parents can be found on <https://www.talkingfamilies.qld.gov.au> . Similarly, see the recent approach to encouraging designated driver behaviour in ‘Join the Drive’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onW5XUJ0LM8>

We would also recommend at least two ‘factsheets’, one of which that summarises the restrictions on provisional licences and which also includes a brief description of the safety rationale that underpins the restriction, available as both a printable version or a short video. Each restriction could be encapsulated in a visual symbol to partially address potential literacy barriers. However, we would also recommend that materials be offered in several different language versions. A second factsheet could summarise the factors most associated with young novice driver crash risk and some suggested strategies that parents can use to manage this risk. Currently there is content of this nature as part of the *Road Ready* program, but parents are not generally exposed to this material. This resource should also include an introduction that advises parents that they may be more influential than they realise and encourages them to maintain their influence over their young drivers (e.g. encouraging parents to continue discussing driving related risk with their children even if their adolescents have left home to study or work in a different city). It should also attempt to reinforce the types of strategies that they are currently doing very well (e.g. providing support to their young drivers so they do not need to drive home if they have been drinking). An example of road safety material delivered in this way can be seen on Queensland’s ‘Join the drive to save lives’ site e.g. <https://jointhedrive.qld.gov.au/seatbelts-and-restraints#js-modal-video-the-facts-about-seatbelts>

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, it appears that third party policing as an approach to improve young driver safety has strong potential in the ACT. This is based on the findings of both the interviews and the survey indicating that parents have a strong interest in ensuring the safety of their children when they commence their driving careers. However, the research also indicated that parents’ knowledge of the licensing system and best practice approaches to keeping young drivers safe is limited. Parents had better knowledge of the licensing system than they did of best practice approaches. Therefore, one recommendation to support parents is to introduce a more developed graduated driver licensing system into the ACT. This licensing system should be evidence-based and follow best practice.

Additionally, the provision of materials to improve parental understanding of both the laws and best practice initiatives would appear beneficial. As outlined above, this intervention could include a series of YouTube style videos (including one involving a senior police officer) and fact sheets directly targeting parents that can be downloaded from a website. Finally, the introduction of this intervention should be evaluated to identify its effectiveness. One type of evaluation could be a pre and post comparison.

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**Appendix A: Participant information – Interview study with parents of P-platers and parental consent forms for contacting P-plater**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane Australia](http://www.qut.edu.au/) | **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT**  **– Interviews – Parents –** |
| **Parental experiences of Graduated Driver Licencing (GDL) restrictions during their children’s P plate licencing phase**  **QUT Ethics Approval Number 1500000210** | |

**RESEARCH TEAM**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Principal Researchers: | Dr Alexia Lennon, Senior Lecturer  Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q)  Queensland University of Technology (QUT) |
|  | Dr Lyndel Bates, Lecturer  School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University |
| Associate Researcher: | Sarah Matthews, Research Officer  Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q)  Queensland University of Technology (QUT) |

**Description**

The purpose of this project is to explore what parents do to encourage their young P plate drivers to comply with the restrictions under the graduated driver licensing system in the ACT, and whether parents and their young P plate drivers have shared expectations about their driving restrictions. It is anticipated that this information will help us to design more effective ways of assisting parents to protect their P plate and novice driver children.

You are invited to participate in this project because you are the parent of a novice driver who has held their P plate licence for less than 12 months.

**Participation**

Your participation will involve taking part in a telephone interview with a member of the research team that will take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. You will be asked a variety of questions about your awareness of provisional licensing requirements as well as any strategies or methods you use to ensure your P plate driver complies with the provisions.

Examples of these questions are:

*What do you think is the purpose of the restrictions on P plate drivers? Which, if any, of these do you think are the most important?*

*How do you go about getting your P plate driver to comply with the restrictions? Which are the easiest to manage? Which ones have proved more challenging?*

*How does your P plate driver respond to what you do?*

To recognize your participation, you will be offered a $30 Coles/Myer gift voucher in recognition of your time.

Because we are also hoping to interview P plate drivers to find out their perceptions, we will be asking your permission to contact your young person to participate in this study. However, this is separate from your participation and you can still be part of the study even if you would prefer not to agree to us contacting your young person – we still value your input.

If you agree to us contacting your P plate driver, his/her participation would involve a telephone interview similar to that described above. They will be provided with an information sheet and will also be asked to consent to participate in the project. If your young person agrees to participate we will offer him/her compensation separately ($10 gift voucher).

Your participation and your young person’s participation in this project are entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you and/or your young person can withdraw from the project at any point during the interviews. Your decision to participate or not participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with CARRS-Q, QUT, or Road Ready centres.

**Expected benefits**

It is expected that this project will not benefit you directly. However, it may benefit the wider community through advancing knowledge about how parents manage the process of encouraging P plate driver compliance with provisional licence restrictions.

**Risks**

There are minimal risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project. However, some may experience discomfort at sharing their views and experiences about provisional licences or parenting to a researcher.

Some people may have experienced a negative road event, such as a crash, or may know someone who has. It is possible that this may make telling us about your experiences of provisional licences with your child uncomfortable. If you think this might be the case for you, please carefully consider whether you want to agree to participate.

While it is not an explicit intention of this study to elicit information on any prior instances where you may have known your child did not comply with the provisions of his/her licence, it is possible that such issues may be discussed. We would advise that you not reveal any illegal behaviours that are currently unresolved or are on-going.

So that we can undertake the interview without having to worry about remembering what was said, we would like to audio record them for later transcription. We will ask you to consent to this verbally. No identifying details about you are needed, and nothing that identifies you will be included in the transcript.

QUT provides for limited free psychology, family therapy or counselling services for research participants of QUT projects who may experience discomfort or distress as a result of their participation in the research. Should you wish to access this service please contact the Clinic Receptionist of the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic on 3138 0999. Please indicate to the receptionist that you are a research participant.

**PRIVACY AND Confidentiality**

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

We are seeking your verbal consent to audio record the interview and have it transcribed by a researcher. You will not have the opportunity to verify comments and responses after the interview has taken place.

All responses will be kept confidential and be made anonymous (de-identified) once transcribed, so there will be no negative outcomes from any information disclosed in the interview (including legal ones). If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty, and you are free to not answer any question you feel uncomfortable about.

If you and your young person have both agreed to participation, we plan to match up your comments where this is possible.

You should be aware that once the transcripts have been de-identified, if you do decide to withdraw from the study, it will no longer be possible to identify which responses were yours and so we will not be able to delete your responses from the data. You should also be aware that there is a possibility that the de-identified data may be used in future projects.

The project is funded by the NRMA ACT Road Safety Trust. Road Ready centres are helping us to contact people who may be interested in being participants. These organisations will not have access to the data obtained during the project.

**Consent to Participate**

We will be seeking your verbal consent to participate in this project. When you are contacted for the interview, the interviewer will ask you whether you have read and agree to the conditions (as above) of the study and consent to participating. The interviewer will not proceed unless you indicate that you have read the information and give your consent.

We will also be seeking your consent (via email) to contact your young person to ask them to participate in this study.

**Questions / further information about the project**

If have any questions or require further information please contact one of the research team members below. Please retain this participant information sheet and feel free to contact the research team if interested in hearing about the results of the study (which should be available in late 2015).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dr Alexia Lennon | aj.lennon@qut.edu.au | 07 3138 4675 |
| Sarah Matthews | s23.matthews@qut.edu.au | 07 3138 0395 |

**Concerns / complaints regarding the conduct of the project**

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email [ethicscontact@qut.edu.au](mailto:ethicscontact@qut.edu.au). The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

***Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information*.**

**Appendix B: Email consent request to parents to contact P-plater**

Email to parents: Consent to contact 16-18 year olds to participate in the Parental Third Party Policing Graduated Driver Licencing project (to be sent after talking to parents on the phone).

Dear xxx

Thank you for speaking to me on the phone about our research project investigating how parents encourage their P platers to comply with graduated driver licencing restrictions. We are seeking your permission to contact your P plate driver to ask them to participate in our research project.

**What does the study involve?**

As discussed, the study involves interviewing young people who are on their P plates over the phone. We are interested in their perceptions of what their parents do to encourage them to comply with the restrictions on their P plate licence, and whether the P plater and parent have shared perceptions about these restrictions. The interview would take approximately 10 minutes and the young person will be offered a $10 Coles/Myer gift voucher in recognition of their time.

The types of questions asked in the interview will include the following:

What do you think is the main purpose for the restrictions on P plate drivers?

What do your parents do to ensure that you comply with the restrictions on your licence?

Which of these methods have been helpful for you in assisting you to comply?

We plan to match the data from the parent interviews with the data from the P plater’s interview at the end of the study. Once the two sets of data have been matched we will remove all identifying details, so that there will be no way to tell what specific people said.

If you consent to us contacting your young person, he or she will be provided with an information sheet and will be asked to give verbal consent to participate in the study.

**Privacy and confidentiality**

Please be assured that your decision to allow us to contact your young person is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to agree, there will be no negative effects on you or your young person. Your young person’s decision to participate is also entirely voluntary. If your child does agree to participate, he or she can also change his or her mind later, and withdraw from the study (and they don’t have to give us a reason). However once we have destroyed the identifying details, it will not be possible to withdraw as we won’t be able to tell which data belongs to particular individuals.

**Risks**

We think that being part of our study is not harmful to people. However, we will be talking to your young person on the phone. The researchers who do this will all have clearance for working with young people (Blue Card in Queensland or Working with Vulnerable People card in the ACT).

The information we supply to your child will tell them that they should think about how they feel about talking to other people about their thoughts and feelings, and if they believe they would be too uncomfortable about this, they should carefully consider whether to participate. The information will also note that people who have experienced a negative road event such as a crash, or know someone who has, might be uncomfortable talking about road safety or driving. If you think this might be the case for you or your child, please carefully consider whether you want to agree to your child participating.

For your information only (you don’t have to do anything with this), the Participant Information Sheet about the project is attached to this email.

If you wish to ask any further questions, please feel free to contact us at this email or on 07 3138 4675.

If you are happy for us to contact your young driver to invite them to participate, please **respond to this email with ‘I agree’ in the subject line**.

We will then contact your young driver and will send them detailed information about participating (a copy of this is also attached for you).

Thank you for your interest in our study.

Warm regards

Alexia Lennon

**Appendix C: Interview question schedule**

PARENTS: Parental 3rd party policing of GDL restrictions.

Introduce both oneself and the project. Address any questions that participants have about the study or the session.

Remind participants that they are agreeing to an audio-recording of the session and that any of their responses will be anonymous and confidential once transcribed. Invite anyone uncomfortable with the process to leave at this point. Emphasise that need to regard what others say in the group as confidential and that there are no right or wrong ‘answers’ to any questions that we might discuss.

Outline process for session.

Questions:

How old is your son/daughter?

How long have they been on their P plates?

How has that been going for you?

As you know, there are some restrictions on your teenager’s P-plates. Which of these restrictions are you aware of? (Display P plates; 4 demerit points (or 8 with Road Ready Plus); No alcohol or drugs; No mobile phone use; Towing restriction of 750kg ) What do you think is the purpose of these restrictions? Do any seem more important than others? Are any harder for your teenager to comply with?

What did you do in relation to encouraging your teenager to comply with the restrictions (methods, strategies)?

What did your child think about what you did?

How easy or hard was it to enforce what you wanted your child to do or not do?

How effective do you think what you did was in getting compliance?

How do you feel about having the role of getting your children to comply with the restrictions?

What would you have found helpful to support you in the process of getting through this period?

**Appendix D: Online survey**



























