



# Targeting Parents to Influence the Safety of their Young Drivers

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**TAC** TRANSPORT  
ACCIDENT  
COMMISSION

State Government  
**Victoria**

# Introduction

- Parents targeted by road safety organisations
- Research now suggests parents role in preventing or reducing the risky behaviours
- Parental modelling, monitoring and control can have an important role.

# Communicating with Parents

- TAC, VicRoads and RACV have a long history of communicating with learners, probationary drivers and their parents
- TAC and VicRoads completed a review of all key messages in 2009 (Elliot)
- Most information was about licensing/experience issues not post- licensing risk
- Cross agency project to look at role parents could play
  - specific road safety messages.
  - parenting skills
- Development of a communication strategy.

# Strategy Development - Exploratory Research

- Number of agency knowledge gaps were identified
  - parents awareness of their young driver's road safety risk,
  - what strategies, if any, they currently implement
  - their thoughts about intervening with their children, ability to intervene and barriers to intervening
- Extensive focus group research with parents
  - two pilot focus groups were conducted with fathers and mothers
  - ten focus groups were then conducted with parents and another four groups were conducted with first year probationary drivers (P1)\*

\*Min 18 years old

# General Attitudes to Parenting and Road Safety

- Parents can continue to have a high level of influence on their children
- Young people generally had a high level of respect for their parents
- Young people more open to their parents' influence than many parents actually believe
- From mid teens, parenting style needs to be more focussed on guidance, advice and negotiation
- Most parents do not really start to think about solo driving issues until close to obtaining their licence (around a month before)

# Ideas for Parental Influence

1. Parents could restrict their kids from late night driving in the first three to six months of solo driving
2. During the early months of driving, parents could reduce the crash risk for their kids at night by picking them up or giving them taxi money
3. If kids are using the family car, parents could negotiate their kid's use of the car in the early months of driving
4. Parents who help pay for their kid's first car could attach restrictions on its use in the early months of driving
5. Parents could reduce the risk for their kids by allowing them to use the safest car in the family

# Idea 1

## Parents could restrict their kids from late night driving in the first three months of solo driving

- Awareness of late night driving crash risk was very low amongst parents (but not novices)
- 120 hours including 10 hours of night time driving, passing VicRoads Drive Test = competent solo driver
- Term restriction - unpalatable
- Late night restrictions should be legislated rather than left to parents

# Idea 2

**During the early months of driving, parents could reduce the crash risk for their kids at night by picking them up or giving them taxi money**

- Agreement with the idea of picking their children up, at least from night time events
- Many parents were already picking up or assisting them with transport
- Some young drivers were concerned about burdening their parents
- Taxi money was less appealing

# Idea 3

**If kids are using the family car, parents could negotiate use of the car in the early months of driving**

- Parents receptive to the term 'negotiate'
- Using negotiation consistent with how parents view own parenting styles
- Possible to negotiate use of the family car
- Parents still sceptical about the late night driving crash risk

# Idea 4

**Parents who help pay for their kid's first car could attach restrictions on its use in the early months of driving**

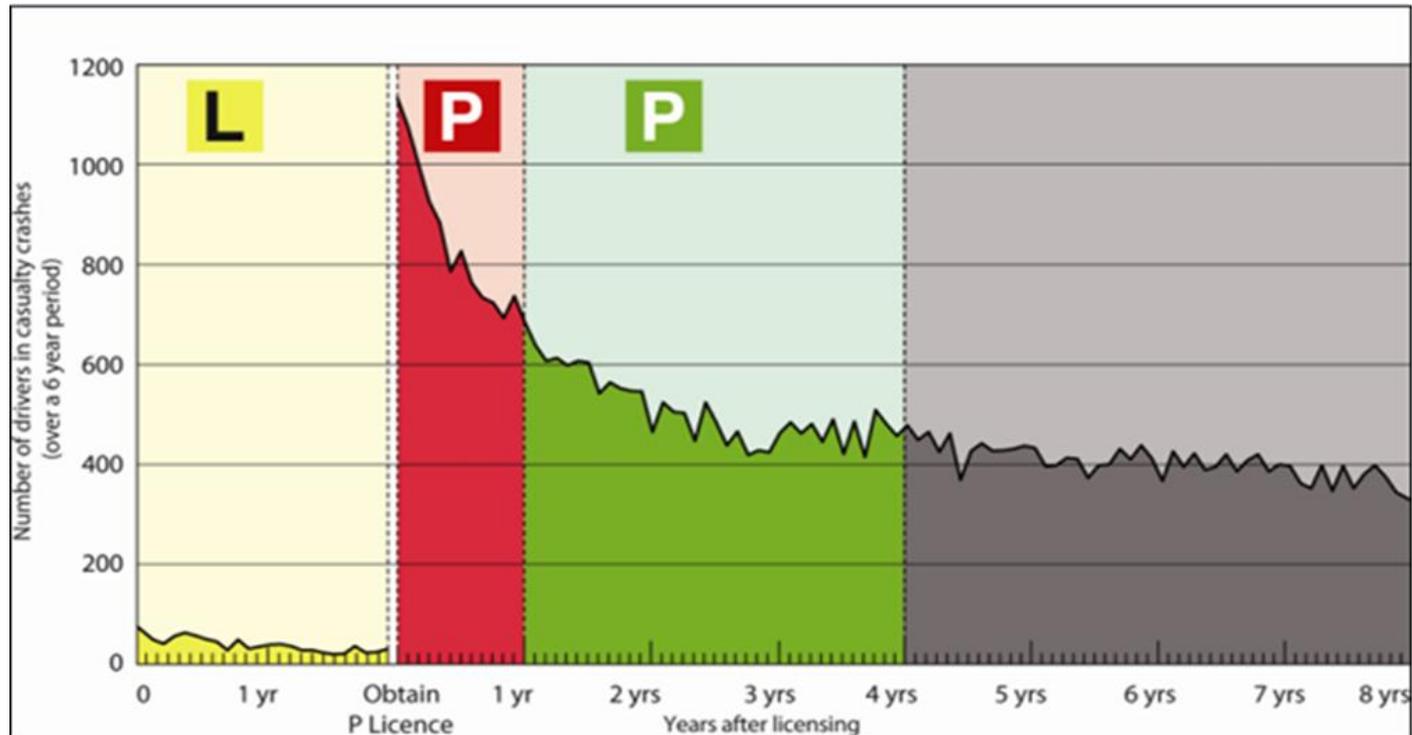
- Only if agreed to before the car was purchased
- Inappropriate if car was a gift or financial assistance was provided

# Idea 5

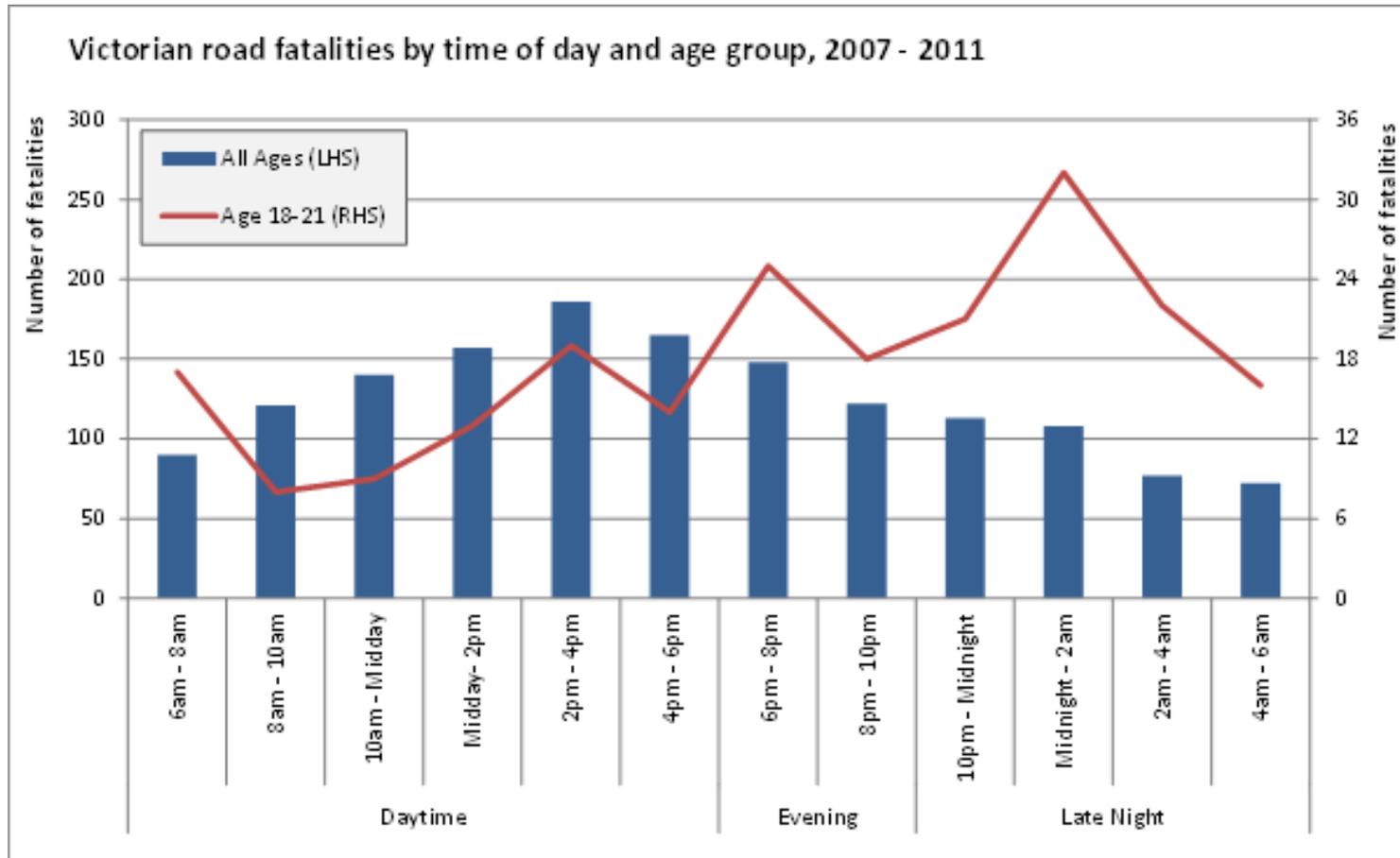
**Parents could reduce the risks for their kids by allowing them to use the safest car in the family**

- Some resistance
- Lack of knowledge about car safety
- Lack of knowledge about impact of a safer vehicle on crash survival
- High insurance was raised as an issue.

# Young Drivers and Crash Risk



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- P1 drivers were aware of their elevated crash risk by time after licensing.
- Small proportion of parents recalled having seen the crash risk graph (time after licensing)
- No participants had previously seen the night time graph
- Parent's responses tended to be polarised
  - complete denial of the risk
  - refused to think about it or even look at the graphs
  - others felt immediate action needed
- Approaches are likely to reflect differing parenting styles.

# Strategy development

- **Exploratory research informed a communication strategy**
- **Communication strategy then informed a broader Parents and Road Safety Strategy**
- **Stage one of communication strategy**
  - Targets parents (1<sup>st</sup>) & young drivers (2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - Agenda setting – highlights the risks of first 6 months
  - Encourage parents to engage with their young driver about risk they face
  - Website will provide high level support and further information.
  - Launched November

# Conclusion

- **TAC, VicRoads and RACV have recognised the potential for parents to influence road safety of their children.**
- **Based on literature, behaviour change principles, focus group research and identified strategies agencies now in the process of implementing Parents and Road Safety Strategy.**
- **TAC currently developing a targeted media campaign aimed at parents**

# Thank You

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