

Enhancing road safety for young drivers: How Graduate Driver Licensing initiatives can complement “anti-hooning” legislation.

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Enhancing road safety for young drivers: How Graduated Driver Licensing initiatives can complement “anti-hooning” legislation

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ABSTRACT

Street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours have attracted increasing concern in recent years. While New Zealand and all Australian jurisdictions have introduced “anti-hooning” legislation and allocated significant police resources to managing the problem, there is limited evidence of the road safety implications of hooning. However, international and Australian data suggests that drivers charged with a hooning offence tend to be young males who are accompanied by one or more peers, and hooning-related crashes tend to occur at night. In this regard, there is considerable evidence that drivers under the age of 25 are over-represented in crash statistics, and are particularly vulnerable soon after obtaining a Provisional licence, when driving at night, and when carrying peer-aged passengers. The similarity between the nature of hooning offenders, offences and crashes, and road safety risks for young drivers in general, suggests that hooning is an issue that may be viewed as part of the broader young driver problem. Many jurisdictions have recently implemented a range of evidence-based strategies to address young driver road safety, and this paper will present Queensland crash and offence data to highlight the potential benefit of Graduated Driver Licensing initiatives, such as night driving restrictions and peer-aged passenger restrictions, to related road safety issues, including hooning. An understanding of potential flow-on effects is important for evaluations of anti-hooning legislation and Graduated Driver Licensing programs, and may have implications for future law enforcement resource allocation and policy development.

INTRODUCTION

What is “hooning”?

Street racing and associated behaviours have received significant negative media attention in recent years, reflecting general public concern. For example, in an investigation undertaken by the Canadian Road Safety Monitor, it was found that the majority of respondents were concerned or extremely concerned about street racing, and considered it a serious problem (Beirness, Mayhew, Simpson, & Desmond, 2004; Singhal, Simpson, Vanlaar, & Mayhew, 2006).

“Hooning”, as this group of behaviours is generally known in Australia, refers to activities such as “burnouts”¹, “donuts”², “drifting”³, unnecessary speed or acceleration, as well as

¹ A **burnout** is when the rear tyres of a vehicle are spun at high revolutions per minute until they heat and smoke. More smoke is generated if the road surface has oil or petrol spills.

² A **donut** is when a driver turns the front tyres of a vehicle until the steering is fully locked during a burnout, so that the car rotates and a circular (donut) pattern of tread marks from the rear wheels remains on the road surface.

³ **Drifting** is when a vehicle slides sideways through a turn taken at high speed.

speed trials⁴ and illegal street racing, which can be highly organised or spontaneous in nature (Knight, Cook, & Olson, 2004; Peak & Glensor, 2004; Warn, Tranter, & Kingham, 2004).

Highly organised races are typically staged at night in industrial areas (Warn et al., 2004), although they may even be held in the middle of a highway. These events can be well-organised, with start and finish lines marked a quarter of a mile apart (the traditional distance for legal drag races) (Leigh, 1996). Some groups use walkie-talkies and even police tape and false signs to block traffic (Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002), while others use rolling road blocks⁵. Illegal street racing can also be spontaneous, involving impromptu races between persons who do not know one another (Peak & Glensor, 2004). For example, drivers stopped at traffic signals on a straight stretch of a double-laned road may race, with the traffic signals providing a start signal (Warn et al., 2004).

There is no clear definition of hooning behaviours in the general road safety literature. In lieu of this, the definition of street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours adopted for the purposes of this program of research is consistent with the prescribed offences under Queensland's "anti-hooning" legislation (*Police Powers and Responsibilities Act and Another Act Amendment Act 2002*): dangerous operation of a motor vehicle; careless driving of a motor vehicle; racing and speed trials on roads; and wilfully starting a vehicle, or driving a vehicle, in a way that makes unnecessary noise or smoke. Unless otherwise stated, the term "hooning" in this paper refers to this group of behaviours.

Who is involved in the street racing or "hooning" scene?

The available evidence suggests that it is predominantly young (age 16 to 25) males involved in the street racing or hooning scene (Leigh, 1996; Peak & Glensor, 2004; Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002; Warn et al., 2004), however the number of females attending events is increasing (Armstrong & Steinhardt, 2005). It appears that these are transitory activities, as most people do not continue to participate for more than two or three years (Leigh, 1996). While the Queensland Police Service believes this to also be the case in Queensland (I. Crang, personal communication, May 22, 2006), drivers engaging in hooning behaviours are yet to be profiled in a systematic way.

Leigh (1996) reports that drivers in the Sydney street racing scene are predominantly Anglo-Saxon (although there are many children of Italian and Greek migrants), and most are employed on a full-time basis as mechanics or in other trades, while others are involved in full-time education at high school or TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Colleges (Leigh, 1996). This group shows higher participation in employment and education than their peers, and it is suggested that this may be because street racing is an expensive enterprise. Some respondents had spent \$10,000 to \$25,000 on their vehicles, and several thousand dollars in fines for traffic offences and vehicle defect notices (Leigh, 1996).

This is in contrast to the Helsinki street racing scene, where "cruising club" boys were typically from working class families, rarely completed secondary school, and took low-paying factory and construction jobs to finance their interest in cars (Vaaranen, 2004).

⁴ **Speed trials** are when the acceleration and top-speed capability of a vehicle and / or the skill of its driver are tested, usually on a straight stretch of road of a set distance. Speed trials also include attempts to establish or break records.

⁵ **Rolling road blocks** refer to the practice of a large number of vehicles travelling as a convoy across all lanes of a road, slowing or blocking the progress of other vehicles until a clear "race-track" is created for some distance ahead.

A sample of 1,038 drivers who were charged with a hooning offence in Queensland between November 17, 2004 and September 30, 2006 were identified. These hooning offenders were predominantly Caucasian⁶ ($N = 933$, 89.9%), male ($N = 1,011$, 97.4%), and aged under 25 years ($N = 793$, 76.4%). The occupation of the offender was known for 653 of these drivers (62.9%). The most common occupations were unemployed ($N = 124$, 19.0%), mechanic ($N = 53$, 8.1%), labourer ($N = 50$, 7.7%) and student ($N = 44$, 6.7%).

THE ROAD SAFETY IMPLICATIONS OF STREET RACING AND ASSOCIATED (HOONING) BEHAVIOURS

Illegal street racing is a socially problematic behaviour (Warn et al., 2004), and a number of specific potential harms caused by illegal street racing have been identified, including: crashes; noise (from racing vehicles and crowds); vandalism and litter at racing locations (including businesses where racers commonly gather); loss of commercial revenue (if racing crowds obstruct or intimidate potential customers); and excess wear and tear on public streets (painted street markings are commonly damaged by the burning rubber of vehicle tyres) (Peak & Glensor, 2004). The crash risk is not limited to drivers and passengers, as illegal street races encourage spectators to stand near possibly inexperienced drivers and poorly maintained vehicles, which is a potentially deadly combination for spectators standing only a few feet away from vehicles racing at highway speeds or greater (Peak & Glensor, 2004). Although it is assumed that street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours pose a significant road safety risk, there is a need to support this claim with empirical evidence. There is limited data available to demonstrate the risk of these behaviours, largely because street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours are often not specifically identified in crash databases.

However, the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in the United States, added illegal street racing as a factor in 1998. Knight and colleagues (2004) examined FARS data for the years 1998 to 2001 to determine the involvement of street racing in fatal crashes. A total of 315 (0.21%) fatal crashes involved street racing, resulting in 399 fatalities (Knight et al., 2004). In 74.9 percent of cases (299 fatalities), either the driver or passenger in the street racing vehicle was killed (Knight et al., 2004), meaning that one in four fatally injured persons were innocent “victims” of street racing. Compared to all fatal crashes, street racing fatal crashes were: more likely to occur on urban roadways; more likely to occur at *travel speeds* greater than or equal to 65 miles per hour, but less likely to occur on roadways with a *speed limit* greater than or equal to 65 miles per hour; and, more likely to occur in the late evening and early morning hours (Knight et al., 2004). Compared to all drivers involved in fatal crashes, street racers were more likely to be teenagers, and male (Knight et al., 2004).

A limitation of this research is that it has not examined the role of street racing in non-fatal crashes. Further, hooning behaviours in the Australian context encompass a broader group of behaviours than illegal street racing alone. Current data entry practices in Queensland do not specifically identify street racing or hooning as factors contributing to crashes. However, it is possible to search for these terms in free text fields, although their inclusion in official data sets is dependent upon police attendance at the crash, and the police officer having knowledge of the behaviour and recording this on the crash

⁶ Racial appearance was based on the assessment of the attending police officer.

investigation form. As a result, searches of the Queensland Road Crash Information System for hooning terms yield few crashes, and are therefore likely to underestimate the true involvement of hooning in crashes.

In consideration of these issues, “hooning-related” crashes in Queensland were identified by searching the crash descriptions of all crashes involving drivers aged between 12 and 24 years old that occurred between 1999 and 2004 for words such as “hoon”, “racing”, “burnout” and “donut” (Armstrong & Steinhardt, 2005). A total of 169 “hooning-related” crashes were identified⁷. Most of these crashes (78%) occurred within 60 kilometres per hour and lower speed zones, as 60 percent of these crashes occurred on metropolitan roads. Most crashes (72%) occurred during the evenings or at night (between 5pm and 4am). The researchers argued that these trends suggest that hooning-related crashes are largely urban, night time incidents occurring on suburban streets (Armstrong & Steinhardt, 2005), similar to the findings of Knight and colleagues (2004).

An alternative method of establishing the risk associated with hooning is to explore the crash involvement of drivers who engage in the behaviours. For example, Finnish research suggests that drivers who engage in illegal street racing have a history of crash involvement, as most of the “cruising club” boys revealed that they had been involved in six or seven crashes; most of them minor, although some were fatal (Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002). The majority of these crashes occurred when the driver lost control at a high speed, and the car ran off the road (Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002). This research also found that heavy alcohol use and careless risk-taking were common among street racers (Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002). Similarly, Knight and colleagues (2004) found that compared to drivers in all fatal crashes, drivers involved in street racing were more likely to have been involved in a crash previously and have committed driving violations. Street racers were more likely to be impaired by alcohol at the time of the crash and to have had a previous licence suspension (Knight et al., 2004). However, Australian research suggests that there is virtually no involvement of alcohol or drugs among drivers in the Sydney street racing scene (Leigh, 1996), although alcohol and drug use among observers may be more prevalent.

Queensland research currently underway is exploring the crash risk associated with hooning by analysing the crash involvement of drivers who have been charged with a hooning offence. The crash involvement of these drivers is being explored for two reasons: firstly, to determine whether crashes they have been involved in show indications of hooning behaviours; and secondly, to determine whether their crash history suggests that they are a risky driver generally. Analysis of their traffic histories (i.e., previous offences) will also provide insight into their risk on the road, and whether they have a history of engaging in hooning behaviour prior to the implementation of the legislation. To explore the crash risk of hooning relative to established road safety problems, the crash involvement of hooning offenders is being compared to matched samples of drivers who have been charged with either drink driving or unlicensed driving.

Current approaches to dealing with the problem – “anti-hooning” legislation

New Zealand and all Australian jurisdictions now have “anti-hooning” legislation in place. For example, in response to a growing number of community complaints regarding street racing, “burnouts” and other hooning behaviours in Queensland, and the potential for serious injury, the *Police Powers and Responsibilities and Another Act Amendment Act*

⁷ A total of 59,014 crashes met the driver age requirements. However, not all crash descriptions were examined – only those that included the search terms.

2002 was introduced on November 4, 2002 to target this group of behaviours. Among other sanctions imposed (including fines, demerit points, and licence disqualification), vehicles of drivers charged under this legislation may be immediately seized and impounded by police, and the length of the impoundment period increases with repeat offences. The vehicles of drivers charged with a hooning offence are impounded for 48 hours for a first offence, for three months after a second offence within three years, and forfeited to the state after a third offence within three years.

Prior to the implementation of “anti-hooning” legislation, police typically dealt with street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours by attending meeting places and issuing vehicle defect notices or tickets for other public nuisance or traffic offences (Leigh, 1996). The purpose of this practice was to discourage street racers from meeting in public places, and move them along to private spaces or legal racing meets (Leigh, 1996). Even with formal “anti-hooning” legislation in place, this approach is still common in cases when there is insufficient evidence to substantiate a hooning offence (I. Crang, personal communication, May 22, 2006).

In Queensland, since the introduction of the “anti-hooning” legislation and until the end of December, 2006, 3,221 vehicles have been impounded for a period of 48 hours. A small number of these drivers (72, 2.2%) have committed a second hooning offence, while four drivers (0.1%) have committed third (or fourth, $n = 1$) offences (L.-M. Folkman, personal communication, February 6, 2007). The Queensland Government has argued that the low rate of repeat offending indicates that the legislation is successfully deterring hooning behaviours (Queensland Transport, 2006). However, the effectiveness of the implementation, procedures and deterrent effects of the legislation has not been evaluated. Similarly, no other jurisdictions in New Zealand or Australia have conducted evaluations of their “anti-hooning” legislation.

LINKS BETWEEN HOONING AND OTHER AREAS OF ROAD SAFETY

While there is limited research specifically addressing the road safety implications of street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours, research from other areas of road safety may be applicable. For example, it is well established in the road safety literature that as the travel speed of a vehicle increases, so too does the risk of crashing, as well as the risk of serious injury (Kloeden, McLean, Moore, & Ponte, 1997). While this has implications for the illegal street racing aspect of hooning, as stated previously, hooning behaviours encompass a broader group of behaviours.

There is considerable research on the crash involvement of young drivers, particularly risk taking behaviour or risky driving among young drivers, in the road safety literature (e.g., Arnett, Offer, & Fine, 1997; Begg & Langley, 2001; Beirness et al., 2004; Deery & Fildes, 1999; Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2003; Harré, Brandt, & Dawe, 2000). It has been suggested that teenage risky driving seems to be most associated with driving for recreational purposes, such as when out with friends on a Friday night (Preusser, Ferguson, & Williams, 1998). As street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours tend to occur in group settings (I. Crang, personal communication, May 22, 2006) and on weekends⁸, this research may also be relevant to hooning.

⁸ Most hooning offences occur over the weekends in Queensland, particularly on Fridays ($N = 217$, 20.9%), Saturdays ($N = 215$, 20.7%), Sundays ($N = 187$, 18.0%) and Thursdays ($N = 177$, 17.1%).

A longitudinal cohort study conducted in Dunedin, New Zealand, found that males were more likely to “drive fast for the thrill of it” and “drive faster than other drivers” often or fairly often at age 21 than at age 26 (Begg & Langley, 2001). Females were more likely to “drive fast for the thrill of it” often or fairly often at age 21 than at age 26 (Begg & Langley, 2001). Risky driving (engaging in risky behaviours often or fairly often) was a predominantly male activity, however by 26 years of age, many had “matured out” of this behaviour (Begg & Langley, 2001). Among the females, there were few significant changes between ages 21 and 26 years, and at both ages, the prevalence of risky driving and thrill-seeking was relatively low (Begg & Langley, 2001). The findings of this research are similar to those of street racing research, as participants are predominantly male and tend to “mature out” of the behaviour (Leigh, 1996; Peak & Glensor, 2004; Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002; Warn et al., 2004).

Similarly, Beirness and colleagues (2004) found that young drivers in Canada are more likely than older drivers to engage in a variety of high-risk driving behaviours. For example: 38 percent of respondents aged 16 to 19 and 33 percent of respondents aged 20 to 24 reported taking a risk while driving “for fun” at least occasionally, while only 12 percent of respondents aged 45 to 54 reported doing so; and 66 percent of respondents aged 16 to 19 and 43 percent of respondents aged 20 to 24 reported going driving “just for the fun of it” at least occasionally, while only around one-third of respondents aged 35 to 54 reported doing so (Beirness et al., 2004).

Given that street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours tend to occur in group settings in Queensland, the carriage of passengers may further increase the crash risk of the hooning driver. Data obtained from FARS (from 1990 through 1995) was used to analyse the effect of passenger presence on the fatal crash risk of teenaged drivers. The results indicated that passenger presence was associated with proportionately more at-fault fatal crashes for young drivers (aged under 24) (Preusser et al., 1998). However, there was no effect of passengers for drivers aged 25 to 29, and passengers were associated with *fewer* at-fault involvements for drivers aged 30 and over. The relative risk of fatal crash involvement was particularly high for teenaged drivers travelling, day or night, with two or more teenaged passengers (Preusser et al., 1998).

A case-control study investigated the effects of passenger carriage for serious (hospitalisation and fatal) crashes in Auckland, New Zealand (Lam, Norton, Woodward, Connor, & Ameratunga, 2003). Older drivers (aged 25 and over) were more likely than younger drivers (aged under 25) to be alone when they crashed (59% vs. 34%). Compared to the older drivers, younger drivers were more likely to: be male; crash at night; self-report alcohol consumption; report sleepiness prior to the crash; and drive less each week (Lam et al., 2003). Consequently, these potential confounding variables were included in the analyses. After adjusting for confounding variables, it was found that compared to unaccompanied drivers, the odds of car crash injury among younger drivers was: 2.39 times greater when carrying one same aged passenger; 15.55 times greater when carrying two or more same aged passengers; 3.49 times greater when carrying one other aged passenger; and 10.19 times greater when carrying two or more other aged passengers (Lam et al., 2003). In comparison, no increase in risk was observed for older drivers who carried passengers, regardless of passenger age. Thus it was concluded that the carriage of two or more passengers, irrespective of the ages of passengers, significantly increases the risk of car crash injury among younger drivers (Lam et al., 2003).

However, one study has found that while adolescents drive faster when with friends than when with a parent, they also report driving just as fast when they are alone as when they are with friends (Arnett et al., 1997). Thus, this study found that while the presence of a parent seems to inhibit this behaviour (and other examples of reckless driving), the presence of friends does not appear to influence them to drive any more recklessly than they do when driving alone (Arnett et al., 1997).

YOUNG AND NOVICE DRIVER CRASH RISK

Beirness and colleagues (2004) have argued that young drivers are at high risk of crash involvement not only because they are relatively new drivers and lack the experience required to help develop higher-order driving skills, but also because of other factors, such as a sense of invulnerability, susceptibility to peer pressure and a willingness to take risks. They challenge the assertion that the reason young people have such high crash rates is that they drive more, as they found that respondents aged 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 drove the least number of kilometres in an average month of any age group (300 and 590 kilometres, respectively), while the median number of kilometres travelled in a typical month for the older age groups was approximately 1000 (Beirness et al., 2004). Thus when the amount of driving is taken into consideration, the risk of young driver involvement in fatal crashes *increases* relative to older drivers (Beirness et al., 2004).

Young drivers are also over-represented in crashes in Queensland. While drivers and riders aged between 17 and 19 represented 3.5 percent of Queensland licence holders in 2002, they accounted for 13.6 percent of reported road traffic crashes between 1998 and 2002 (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, 2003). Young drivers and riders are also more likely to be at fault for their crashes compared to drivers and riders aged 20 years and over (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, 2003). The most common contributing circumstances⁹ for crashes where the driver or rider was aged under 20 included: inexperience / lack of expertise (41.1%)¹⁰; undue care and attention (15.3%); over prescribed concentration of alcohol (3.1%); and excessive speed for the circumstances (2.9%) (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, 2003).

Similarly, novice drivers (those in possession of a provisional licence who are therefore in their first years of unsupervised driving) are over-represented in Queensland crashes. While novice drivers comprised 6.5 percent of licence holders in 2002, they accounted for 16.5 percent of reported road traffic crashes between 1998 and 2002 (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, 2003). Like young drivers and riders, novice drivers¹¹ were more likely to be at fault for their crashes compared to open licence holders, and the most common contributing circumstances for crashes where the driver or rider was a provisional licence holder also included: inexperience / lack of expertise (40.2%); undue care and attention (16.1%); over prescribed concentration of alcohol (3.4%); and excessive speed for the circumstances (2.3%) (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, 2003).

Thus almost half of all young and novice driver crashes in Queensland are attributed to their inexperience or lack of expertise. In contrast, only 0.5 percent of open licence holder crashes are attributed to this circumstance (Queensland Parliamentary Travelsafe Committee, 2003). The data presented above highlights the strong relationship between

⁹ Contributing circumstances are based on the assessment of the attending police officer.

¹⁰ Crashes may have multiple contributing circumstances.

¹¹ 87.1% of Provisional licence holders in Queensland in 2002 were aged less than 25 years.

age and inexperience, which makes it difficult to determine which factor is the better or more important predictor of crash risk¹².

Current approaches to dealing with the problem – Graduated Driver Licensing

While errors in the early stages of acquiring a new skill as complex as driving are to be expected, the risk taking literature presented previously highlights that this type of recklessness is more common among young drivers. Graduated Driver Licensing programs cannot directly address deliberate risk taking on the part of the new driver, rather “a fundamental purpose of graduated licensing is to provide new drivers with the opportunity to gain driving experience under conditions that minimize the exposure to risk” (Simpson, 2003, p. 27). Graduated Driver Licensing programs impose a number of restrictions on the novice driver that are gradually and systematically removed as they gain on-road unsupervised driving experience, and these programs usually impose penalties on the novice driver at a lower threshold than what applies to open (or full) licence holders (Simpson, 2003). Many Australian jurisdictions have strengthened their existing Driver Licensing programs in recent years. While there are many similarities across jurisdictions, this paper will primarily discuss the new Graduated Licensing System that commenced on July 1, 2007 in Queensland as an illustrative example.

The minimum age for obtaining a Learner Licence in Queensland was reduced from 16 and a half years to 16 years, while the minimum period of time the licence must be held was increased from six to 12 months. Learner licence holders must display L plates, carry their licence while driving, and have a BAC of zero percent. If the Learner is under 25, neither they nor any occupants of the vehicle may use a mobile phone (hands-free or not) while the Learner is driving. Similar restrictions apply in Victoria (Cavallo, 2006). The Learner licence has only four demerit points, as is also the case in Western Australia (Farley, 2006), and accumulation of four or more points in a 12 month period will result in a three month suspension or “Good Driving Behaviour (GDB)” option¹³ for 12 months. Learners must keep a log book¹⁴ of their driving to demonstrate 100 hours of experience prior to attempting the practical driving test to obtain their P1¹⁵ licence (Queensland Transport, 2007a, 2007c). Similarly, the new licensing systems in Victoria and Western Australia include a requirement of 120 hours driving experience for Learners (Cavallo, 2006; Farley, 2006).

The P1 licence phase in Queensland lasts for a minimum of one year. P1 licence holders must display red P plates, carry their licence while driving, and have a BAC of zero percent. As per the Learner licence, the P1 licence has only four demerit points, and accumulation of four or more points in a 12 month period will result in a three month suspension or GDB option for 12 months. Restrictions on the P1 licence include peer-aged passenger restrictions between 11pm and 5am (one non-family member only), mobile phone restrictions (no mobile phone use by the driver [including hands-free kits], and no loudspeaker mobile phone use by passengers), and restrictions on vehicle power¹⁶. In addition to these restrictions, P1 licence holders who accumulate more than

¹² It is possible that simply being young may increase the likelihood of having a crash attributed to inexperience.

¹³ During the 12 month GDB period, no more than one demerit point can be accumulated. If two or more demerit points are accrued, the original licence suspension period is doubled to six months.

¹⁴ Learner drivers aged 25 and over can volunteer to complete a logbook.

¹⁵ Learner drivers aged 25 and over progress to a P licence upon passing the practical driving test.

¹⁶ P1 licence holders may not drive: eight cylinder vehicles; turbo- or super-charged vehicles (except diesel); vehicles with an engine output of more than 200kw; vehicles with a rotary engine above 1146cc; or vehicles with an engine performance modification that is not standard to the original manufacturer’s vehicle specifications and requires approval from an approved person.

four demerit points will have a late night (11pm to 5am) driving restriction imposed. P1 licence holders must pass a Hazard Perception Test (HPT) in order to graduate to the P2 licence¹⁷ (Queensland Transport, 2007b, 2007c). The Provisional phase of Western Australia's new licensing system also includes night driving restrictions, peer-aged passenger restrictions and a zero percent BAC limit (Farley, 2006). Victoria's new licensing system also includes P1 and P2 phases, where restrictions on vehicle power apply, and progression from P1 to P2 requires a good driving record (Cavallo, 2006).

The P2 licence phase in Queensland lasts for a minimum of two years for drivers under 23, or 12 months for drivers aged 23 years. P and P2 licence holders must display green P plates, and carry their licence while driving. P2 licence holders must have a BAC of zero percent, while the maximum is 0.05 percent for the P licence. As per the Learner and P1 licence phases, the P and P2 licences have only four demerit points, and accumulation of four or more points in a 12 month period will result in a three month suspension or GDB option for 12 months. The vehicle power restrictions for P1 licence holders also apply to P2 licence holders. In addition, P2 licence holders who accumulate more than four demerit points will have a late night (11pm to 5am) driving restriction imposed. Once the minimum time period has elapsed (cumulatively), drivers graduate to an Open licence (Queensland Transport, 2007b, 2007c).

Regardless of driver age, the Open licence in Queensland has a maximum BAC of 0.05 percent, and accumulation of 12 or more demerit points in a three year period results in a three month suspension or GDB option for 12 months (Queensland Transport, 2007c).

VIEWING HOONING AS PART OF THE BROADER “YOUNG DRIVER PROBLEM” - IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, ENFORCEMENT AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper has argued that while there is growing community concern about street racing and associated (hooning) behaviours, there is limited empirical evidence of the road safety implications of these behaviours. Further, drivers likely to engage in hooning behaviours are young males, a group known to be at-risk of involvement in a road traffic crash. Thus it is unclear whether the risk (if any) associated with hooning behaviours is due to the behaviour/s *per se*, or the drivers likely to engage in the behaviours. In addition to this similarity between the hooning and young driver populations, there are also similarities between the countermeasures employed to address hooning and young driver issues.

With regards to hooning offences, vehicle impoundment serves to punish the offender by seizing an object they value. However, it can also be considered a method of exposure control, as the sanction constrains the driver's ability to re-offending during the impoundment period. It is also presumed that the risk of detection and punishment serves as a deterrent for future hooning behaviour.

Graduated Driver Licensing initiatives can also be considered a means of exposure control, as they are primarily designed to minimise risk. For example, peer-aged passenger restrictions and mobile phone use restrictions are designed to minimise distraction for the driver. It was noted previously that hooning tends to occur in a group setting. Hooning research currently underway in Queensland will further explore the prevalence of peer-aged passengers in hooning offences and hooning-related crashes.

¹⁷ P1 licence holders aged 24 years progress to an Open licence upon successful completion of the HPT.

Further, it remains to be seen whether mobile phone use is also relevant to hooning. For example, many mobile phones allow the user to record video footage. Drivers or passengers may film hooning behaviours to upload to internet sites such as YouTube or MySpace. Video call functions may also allow “on-the-spot” live commentary to spectators or friends.

High powered vehicle restrictions have been included in Queensland’s new licensing system as research suggests that drivers take more risks, such as speeding and reckless driving, when in such vehicles (e.g., Horswill & Coster, 2002; Leigh, 1996; Peak & Glensor, 2004). Among the Queensland hooning offences described previously, vehicle models were available for 949 drivers (91.4%). The most common vehicles involved in hooning offences were the Holden Commodore ($N = 352$, 37.1%), Ford Falcon ($N = 116$, 12.2%) and vehicles in the Nissan Silvia / Skyline range ($N = 97$, 10.2%). These restrictions are also relevant to hooning, as a number of hooning offences also occurred in vehicles that are no longer permitted to be driven by novice drivers in Queensland, such as the Subaru WRX, and V8 and turbo-charged vehicles.

Finally, late night driving restrictions have been included in the new licensing system as the fatal crash risk for young drivers is approximately three times greater at night than during the day. Similarly, the “hooning-related” crashes described by Armstrong and Steinhardt (2005) tended to occur late at night.

It is clear that hooning and young drivers are related road safety issues. Future research on the nature of hooning offenders, offences and crashes may shed further light on this relationship. An improved understanding of hooning behaviours will allow police services and transport agencies to maximise the road safety benefits of their policy and enforcement initiatives, as well-enforced Graduated Driver Licensing initiatives with high rates of compliance may have a flow-on effect of reducing hooning behaviours. While this is advantageous for police services and transport agencies, the overlap in target populations highlights the importance of accounting for these complementary effects in evaluations of the effectiveness of “anti-hooning” legislation and Graduated Driver Licensing programs.

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